

Environment & Urban Renewal PPB – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q1

Reporting Period: 1st April to 31st March 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the first quarter of 2024 / 25 for service areas within the remit of the Environment and Urban Renewal Directorates (EUR) Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2024 - 25 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various functional areas reporting to Environment and Urban Renewal Directorates (EUR) Policy & Performance Board i.e.
- Economy, Enterprise & Property extracts for
Development & Investment Services incl Regeneration and External Funding
 - Policy, Planning & Transportation extracts for
Highways & Transportation, Logistics & Transport Management (incl. Road Safety), and Building Control & Contaminated Land.
 - Community & Environment extracts for
**Waste & Environmental Improvement
Open Spaces (incl. Cemeteries & Crematoria)**
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.
- 1.4 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council’s business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 2.2 The Councils latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:
<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

3.0 Performance Overview

The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.




Development & Investment Services incl Regeneration and External Funding

Key Objectives / milestones







Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy. Regeneration
EEP 01	Regeneration of Widnes Town Centre

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Secure Liverpool City Region (LCR) capacity funding by June 2024		Approved in principle, waiting for the legal agreement from LCR.
Develop & agree project brief by the end of June 2024		Discussions to develop the brief have commenced and should be concluded by end of July 2024. Additional work has been identified to support the work and further budget is being finalised.
Start procurement process in July 2024		This will be slightly delayed due to the time required to develop the brief and secure additional funding. A new member of staff starting 1 st August will pick up this work.
Agree first draft of Framework - March 2025		On Track
Present Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework to Town Panel by March 2025		On Track






Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy Regeneration
EEP 02	Regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Board member submission to DLUHC by 1 st June.		Information submitted to DLUHC. Currently waiting for feedback and approval confirmation which has been delayed due to the General Election.
Submission to DLUHC by 1 st November 2024		Currently procuring consultants to provide consultancy support and public engagement work to ensure the submission is completed by 1 st November deadline.
Agree 10 year vision and 3 year investment plan by March 2025		On Track

Corporate Priority	Priority 2 – Building a strong sustainable local economy Regeneration
EEP 03	Support development & growth at Sci-tech Daresbury







Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Assist JV to secure funding from the CA by July 2024		Currently at SOC stage with CA panels. Project Violet Phase 2 is in the first tranche of projects approved by CA.
Secure Investment Zone funding by September 2024		As above, currently in CA approval process with Full Business Case approval anticipated in Q3.
Commence delivery of Project Violet Phase 2 – October 2024		Start on site is unlikely to be by October 2024 due to an increase in the viability gap which will require additional funding
Confirm funding arrangements for long term expansion by December 2024		The use of the Enterprise Zone Funding mechanism is likely to be able to support the costs of the land acquisition for the long-term expansion of the campus.
Report to Exec Board Q3 2024-25		Work is ongoing to compile the necessary supporting documentation for a report in Q3.
Agreed funding package for Project Violet by September 2024		Work is ongoing on the overall package, but it is unlikely this will be finalised by September due to the viability issues and the need to secure additional funding via the CA.

Corporate Priority	Priority Six – Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community Regeneration
EEP 04	Providing new homes that meet Halton’s needs








Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Sign the MOU by August 2024		At its meeting on 11 th July 2024, Executive Board approved entering into a Strategic Place Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with partners, leading to production of a Business Plan and new governance arrangements to be established. See Report: Liverpool City Region Strategic Place Partnership.pdf (halton.gov.uk)
Agreeing Halton’s Place Priorities by September 2024		At its meeting on 11 th July 2024, Executive Board provided delegated authority to the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Climate Change, to agree details for the formation of the Strategic Place Partnership and finalise Halton’s Priorities. Halton Place Priorities were presented as a draft ‘Place on a Page’ to Executive Board.
Establish Place Group by October 2024		The Halton Place Group is Officer level meeting held quarterly with representation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority LCR CA) and Homes England (HE). This Group will be chaired by the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property. Council Officer representation on the Halton Place Group has now been agreed. Awaiting confirmation from LCR CA to confirm Place Group meeting cycle, First meeting anticipated in October 2024.
Produce a housing project pipeline, in line with Halton Place Priorities, by March 2025		Housing project pipeline will reflect the priorities identified within the Halton ‘Place on Page’. Pipeline drafting has commenced, awaiting information requirements from LCR CA to progress.
Secure first draft of Housing Strategy by March 2025		At its meeting on 18 th August 2024, Executive Board approved production of a new Borough wide Housing Strategy and supporting evidence base. The Procurement process for specialist consultants is now in its final stages.

		Once the consultant is procured we will get a timeframe for the first draft. See Report: ProductionofBoroughwideHousingStrategy.pdf (halton.gov.uk)
Production of Housing Strategy by March 2025	U	As above



Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy Business Investment & Growth
EEP 05	To provide support to all Halton’s businesses and encourage start-ups.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Deliver four sector network events and two business events by March 2025		The Green Growth Network met in the first quarter of this year and the Advanced Manufacturing network is working towards a bespoke project to improve advanced manufacturing capacity in Halton and the City Region. Partners and businesses have been approached to develop the logistics network proposal and a plan is in place for the ICT network. This work is spearheaded with a Halton Economic Forum planned for September 2024 with a second in February 2025.
Carry out 150 diagnostics by March 25		The systems are in place by the end of quarter 1 to deliver diagnostics and diagnostics are being delivered with pace picking up to deliver the target.
Provide support to forty-seven town centre businesses by March 25		A diagnostic process and accompanying paperwork are commissioned and agreed which is bespoke to town centre business support. An audit is underway with a view to creating a sample frame to choose businesses for diagnostics from. The programme will be delivered from the autumn.
Provide support to 67 Halton businesses by March 25		On course for delivery with 23 businesses supported by the end of the first quarter.
Provide support to 114 businesses across the Borough by March 2025		On course for delivery with the programmes combined.
Support sixteen business startups by March 2025		Four businesses started in the first quarter and on track for delivery.


Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence Programmes Office
EEP 06	Maximise new external funding opportunities and effectively manage and monitor existing funding programmes

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Produce monthly funding bulletins.		Monthly funding bulletins continue to be produced and widely disseminated
Deliver quarterly training sessions for colleagues.		Training session delivered for colleagues in June 2024, next session due Sep/Oct 2024
Submit compliant claims for all grant programmes		Compliant quarterly claims submitted for Town Deal, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Destination Marketing Programme and Ways to Work
Report annual financial position to Corporate PPB in July 2024		Report will be presented to the Corporate PPB on Sept 3 rd
Produce a pipeline of future regeneration projects to maximise the potential to secure future funding by October 2024		Regeneration Pipeline currently being developed for a deadline of 30 th Sept.
Agree pipeline with members and the CA by March 2025		On Track
Produce project pipeline spreadsheet by March 2025		See above – duplicate Milestone




Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community Planning & Development
EEP 13	Create and maintain statutory plans, generated through community consultation, that guide decisions on future development proposals and address the needs and opportunities of the area

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Delivery during the plan period (2037)		Local Development Strategy agreed 6 SPD's identified within the work programme and quarterly updates given
As per Local Plan Monitoring Framework & Annual Monitoring Report		Annual AMR reporting to Environment and Urban renewal PPB reported on time.

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Planning & Development
EEP 14	Providing new homes that meet Halton's needs

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Granting of planning permission for housing and other forms of accommodation		<p>There has been 7 applications for residential development received. This includes 1 full application and 1 reserved matters application each for a single dwelling. The remaining 5 were S73 applications i.e. applications to vary a previous permission.</p> <p>A total of 12 applications have been approved for residential development for a range of application types such as Outline, Full and Reserved matters and 3 for S73 applications.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Planning & Development
EEP 15	Provide an efficient Planning service that supports business investment in Halton

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
60% major determined within 13 weeks (or agreed extension)		80% - 8 of 10 Applications therefore above target
70% minor application determined in 8 weeks (or agreed extension)		78.5% - 11 of 14 Applications therefore above target
70% other application determined in 8 weeks (or agreed extension)		98.6% - 71 of 72 Applications therefore above target

Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Planning & Development
EEP 16	Provide improvements to Biodiversity







Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The amount of BNG secured as part of planning applications.	U	Applications have been received that are expected to be liable for BNG but none yet determined

Highways & Transportation, Logistics & Transport Management



Corporate Priority	Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Logistics
EEP 17	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Percentage number of public transport journeys on-time at intermediate timing points Baseline 87% Target 95%	U	Bus punctuality/Reliability is a fundamental element of making the public transport attractive to users and potential users. The Q1 performance result stands at 85.82% of journeys operating within the bus punctuality/ reliability guidelines of more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late. Improvement is required and liaison with bus operators will continue to identify a way forward for improvement.
Percentage number of public transport journeys departing the terminus on-time Baseline 96% Target 97%	U	Bus punctuality/Reliability is a fundamental element of making the public transport attractive to users and potential users. The Q1 performance result stands at 85.71% of journeys operating within the bus punctuality/ reliability guidelines of more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late. Improvement is required and liaison with bus operators will continue to identify a way forward for improvement.



Corporate Priority	Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Logistics
EEP 19	Maintain Corporate Fleet Availability

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Number of vehicle maintenance & safety inspections completed within the statutory timeframe.		This is a mandatory requirement under the conditions attached to the Council's Operator's Licence under section 22 of the Goods Vehicles (Licencing of Operators) Act 1995. 100% achieved in reporting period.
Number of litres of diesel consumed.		Used to monitor and calculate carbon output from the Council's operational vehicle fleet. 95642.8 litres consumed in reporting period.
Number of Community Meals delivered within the two hour timeframe.		9497 hot and cold meals delivered to vulnerable adults in reporting period.
Number of student passenger journeys		28,126, calculated on actual school days in period .
Number of school transport routes		158 during period.
Cost of externally contracted school transport		Cost for period: £711,479.64.





Corporate Priority	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Logistics
EEP 20	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon.



Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Number of referrals for travel training and number of successful uptakes from the referrals.		18 referrals during the reporting period with 8 individuals (44.4%) taking up the travel training offer.
Number of students who engage in group classroom and outdoor tailored practical sessions.		39 individuals have taken part in weekly classroom based sessions, 9 have taken part in weekly outdoor practical group sessions and 26 individuals have taken part in 1-2-1 ITT sessions in the same time frame.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Highways
EEP 21	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon





Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Securing and Investing funding in Travel schemes		Remainder of ATF3 currently under construction, funding secured. LCWIP Astmoor to Daresbury is now substantially complete, funding secured. Runcorn Busway Phases 4 & 5 are through LCR Gateway 3 with indicatively secured funding, working towards submission in December for LCR Gateway 4 to fully secure funding. East Runcorn Connectivity Active Travel Routes have indicatively secured funding, aiming for Gateway 4 in Q3.
Length of schemes implemented / delivered.		3.373km (LCWIP 2.655km, ATF3 0.718km)



Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Highways
EEP 22	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Securing and Investing funding in highway maintenance to protect the asset.		Capital funding secured via 5 year CRSTS1 allocation, currently in Year 3. Available Revenue funding is being used where absolutely necessary only to help offset wider Corporate finance overspends.
Total length of highway asset		606 km of roads and 838km of footpaths, therefore approx. 1400km network
Length of maintenance schemes implemented / delivered.		26.871km (53742 sqm of footway at 2m width)
Value of insurance claims for highways defects		We currently have 5 claims for April to June 2024 with a total reserve of £20,868. We have made one payment of £880 for vehicle damage.

Number of bridges and structures maintained		SJB under deck painting works ongoing and due to complete in Q2. Abutment works completed for the new replacement Ironbridge at Spike Island, Bridge due to be installed Q2.
Number of street lights maintained		21000 street lights in total across the Borough


Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence Traffic
EEP 23	Deliver travel choices that are safe, inclusive, affordable, and low carbon

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Programme of education relating to road safety		In Q1 the Road Safety Team undertook the following: Show you care weekly campaigns outside schools X 4 Riverside College Drink Drive/bike safety X 2 Junior Safety Officer Visits X 31 Child Safety/in car safety X 2 (Tesco & Halton Lea) Drug/Drink Drive X 2 Secondary School Assemblies X 2 Stepping Out Pedestrian Training x 13 Rec Yr 1 YR 2 Assemblies x 8 YR 5 6 Speed awareness sessions x 4
Safety cameras and speed indication devices		Asked CRSG for definitive answer on number of functioning fixed cameras and mobile camera sites in the Borough. Yet to get a response. Two new mobile camera sites are being commissioned at identified collision hotspots. Civils works are complete, just awaiting signage. In Halton there are currently 16 SiDs and 24 speed activated signs. Some SAS are coming to the end of their lifespan and will require replacing in near future.
Analysis of collision sites		Analysis is ongoing and a couple of sites already identified and accident remedial measures undertaken (see above – mobile camera sites).
Road safety audits for new schemes		N/A, none completed, none required.
Number of school crossing patrols		Number of school crossing patrols :- 21 patrols 1 mobile & 1 casual


Number of bike-ability training sessions delivered		754 pupils attended Bikeability sessions in Halton in Q1
Number of safety cameras		Asked CRSG for definitive answer on number of functioning fixed cameras and mobile camera sites in the Borough. Yet to get a response.

Waste, Open Spaces, Cemeteries & Crematoriums


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 30	Provide a clean, safe, and attractive environment

<p>Milestone: Training to be delivered to all managers by June 2024 to ensure that they are able to carry out and record quality and inspections to the required standard.</p> <p>Ensure that, as a minimum, inspections are carried out bi-monthly throughout the year with results uploaded to the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) for benchmarking purposes.</p>	<p>Progress Q1</p>	<p>Supporting Commentary</p>
<p>Quality Standard Scores - reported Annually to the relevant PPB.</p>		<p>Training delivered to HBC Environment Services Managers on 2nd May 2024 by APSE Associate. HBC data imported into LAMS system in June 2024 and User Acceptance Testing carried out June and July by Environment Services Compliance Officer.</p> <p>42 individual site inspections have been issued to inspectors in August for completion and submission to APSE before 30th September (Q2).</p>



Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 31	Safety within Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: Carry out planned equipment and safety inspections at playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in the Council's parks and public open spaces.	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
% of playgrounds, play equipment and MUGAs inspected in accordance with planned safety inspection schedules		<p>The Division's playground maintenance team maintain, repair, inspect and cleanse 42 Playgrounds, 37 MUGAs and 5 climbing boulders.</p> <p>In Q1, a total of 1,020 inspections were carried out. This is against a scheduled target of 960. The completion rate is over 100% and is due to carrying out further inspections when revisiting sites to complete repairs on equipment.</p>


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 32	Increase the Council's recycling rate and reduce the amount of waste produced per household

Milestone: Quarterly updates on progress and annual performance data statistics to be reported to the relevant PPB by 31st March 2025.	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Kgs of waste produced per household and % of waste recycled - reported Annually to the relevant PPB.		<p>Waste production is subject to season variation. This is an estimated figure, but it does show that household waste levels per household in Q1 (158.06kgs) are slightly higher than those in Q1 in the previous year (153.08kgs).</p> <p>This is an estimated figure, but it does show that recycling levels in Q1 (40.4%) are slightly higher than in Q1 in the previous year (39.8%).</p>


Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 33	Development plans for council’s Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: To develop plans for the future provision of the Council’s Cemeteries and Crematoria	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Developing a plan for replacing the current crematorium with an improved new facility, in a new location, to meet future regulations and service demands. As well as providing a facility which can be adapted for additional offers to produce a financially sustainable business.		Project is underway to secure a suitable site and begin a feasibility study to define project parameters. An outline project programme will be developed for Q2.
Identify a future cemetery site for Runcorn. The existing Runcorn Cemetery extension has capacity for possibly up to 10 further years and, as such, a new suitable cemetery site is required.		A working group will be set up to lead on identifying possible sites for Q2 onwards.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 34	Safety within Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: Ensure memorial safety across the Council’s 4 cemetery sites is carried out and properly recorded	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Memorials affected by adjacent burial excavations to be inspected and actions recorded on burial forms/cemeteries database system. Progress integration of ALLOY asset management system to record memorial safety testing (5 year rolling programme to fully survey).		Method of recording and checking to be established by Q2

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future Environment Services
EEP 34	Increase standards of service within Cemeteries & Crematoria

Milestone: Ensure high standard of service is maintained throughout the cemeteries; ensuring good upkeep.	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The general quality of cemetery grounds will be assessed and scored for quality, for grass cutting, weed control and overall management using the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Land Audit Management System (LAMS) system scoring.		Staff currently being trained on using the LAMS system and system testing is underway.

4.0 Financial Statements

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,342	1,812	1,709	103	308
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	102	(102)	(305)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Repairs & Maintenance	1,689	700	741	(41)	(117)
Premises	146	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,221	281	267	14	62
NNDR	659	633	623	10	10
Rents	163	0	0	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	173	172	1	4
Supplies & Services	482	119	106	13	40
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,074	169	169	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	44	44	0	0
Capital Finance	0		0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	165	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	10,573	4,050	4,052	(2)	2
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-721	-346	-361	15	46
Rent - Commercial Properties	-871	-196	-196	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-14	-14	0	0
Government Grant	-1,531	-753	-753	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-306	-172	-170	(2)	(6)
Schools SLA Income	-234	-209	-192	(17)	(17)
Recharges to Capital	-348	-163	-163	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-393	-384	-384	0	0
Total Income	-4,442	-2,237	-2,233	(4)	23
Net Operational Expenditure	6,131	1,813	1,819	(6)	25
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	691	691	0	0
Transport	30	10	10	0	0
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,927	-2,642	-2,642	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-1,292	-1,292	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,259	521	527	(6)	25

Comments on the above figures

Finance communicates with the department on a regular basis to manage and analyse spending, identifying potential savings that could support current and future priorities. In an era of constrained budgets, achieving these goals is essential. The above report forecasts that the department will be under budget by £0.025m at year-end.

Supporting Information

The department consists of 139fte, of which 69fte are externally funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.126m. The employee figures in this report incorporate the projected pay award for 24/25.

Through diligent account monitoring, the success of utilising grant and external funding to alleviate pressure on the core budget is evident in employee expenses. Specific projects have been identified, and staff time has been allocated accordingly. Ensuring at all times that we are compliance with the grant conditions. This approach will continue throughout the year.

To fulfil statutory and contractual obligations and support the borough's regeneration, maintaining a complete staff establishment is essential. However, the challenge of filling surveyor and project manager roles, even with a market supplement, has resulted in a lack of suitable candidates. Consequently, the engagement of agency personnel has been necessary, anticipated to cost £300,000 this financial year. Without these personnel, the borough's regeneration efforts would be hindered, potentially leading to a loss of business rates and council tax.

The recruitment of the agency staff has led to an increase in commercial rental income, as it has enabled the completion of pending rent reviews.

Mangers have asked to identify and implement measures to reduce unnecessary spending, whilst also ensuring the needs of the service are met leading to the department's projecting a positive variance amounting to £0.040m within supplies and services.

A recent exercise was conducted to determine the costs associated with empty properties within the Borough. Consequently a new cost centre was established to monitor these expenses. In addition to the loss of rental income whilst the properties remain vacant, the Council incur additional costs for utilities, repairs, and maintenance. As of the end of July, the total costs related to these properties amount to £0.143m. To reduce the expenses actions need to be taken to accelerate the leasing or explore temporary uses for properties, such as short-term rentals or community projects, which will generate some income and reduce costs.

The Department highlighted the necessity of expert advice to advance regeneration projects. Additionally, the change in Government highlighted the need for an up-to-date Housing Strategy for the Borough. Following a meeting with the Director of Economy, Enterprise, and Property, it was decided to use the Department's reserves to cover these one-off costs. Seeking external advice will assist with future grant funding requests from the LCR and Government, and enable the department to fulfil its obligations regarding the borough's regeneration strategy.

Although the Council have seen a significant increase in energy costs over the last few years, it is anticipated that costs this financial year will be £0.163m lower than in 2023/24, representing a decrease of over 13%.



The department is forecasting that it will be £0.062m under budget by year-end. Since contract prices are fixed until March 2025, projections are based on the 2023/24 usage using the unit price quoted by the supplier. However, if usage increases as more staff return to the office, these prices might rise.

The Repairs and Maintenance program is continually being reviewed to ensure it remains in budget. This financial year presents a challenge as no inflation adjustment was factored into the 2024/25 approved budget, and it was further reduced by 10%. It is projected that the expenditure will exceed the budget by £0.117m at the end of the year.

This projection is based on the 2023/24 expenses and does not take into account the 6% inflation in general building materials over the past year, as reported by BCIS. Additionally, the department has conducted an exercise to determine which expenditures are capital in nature, and these have now been reclassified within the capital program. Similar to previous years, the school cleaning service's level agreement (SLA) is not meeting its financial targets due to the employment of agency for covering absences and leave, as well as the anticipated pay award. A reassessment of the SLA charges is in progress in preparation for the forthcoming budget year. Additionally, the demand for the service is declining as more schools transition to Academies.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	100	0		A review of the cleaning service is underway with some positions removed from the structure. The full savings will not be achieved until the accommodation is complete.
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	52	0		Following advice from HR the restructure will not take place until the final quarter of the year.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				152	0		

Planning, Provision and Transportation Department

Revenue Budget as at 31st July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,409	1,621	1,571	50	151
Agency - covering vacancies	110	37	55	(18)	(54)
Agency - in addition to establishment	24	7	23	(16)	(48)
Efficiency Savings	-250	0	0	0	(150)
Premises	193	89	73	16	47
Hired & Contracted Services	59	0	37	(37)	(158)
Supplies & Services	144	155	197	(42)	(126)
Street Lighting	1,617	92	92	0	0
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,772	269	294	(25)	(74)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	989	155	89	66	199
Fleet Transport	1,455	449	424	25	75
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	23	17	14	3	9
Bus Support	498	252	252	0	0
Capital Financing	0	0	0	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	74	0	0	0	2
LCR Levy	1,059	265	265	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,566	3,439	3,417	22	(127)
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-96	-60	-59	(1)	(2)
Planning Fees	-826	-310	-216	(94)	(282)
Building Control Fees	-246	-83	-68	(15)	(44)
Other Fees & Charges	-908	-351	-414	63	189
Grants & Reimbursements	-153	-52	-52	0	0
Government Grant Income	-111	-111	-111	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-24	-4	-1	(3)	(9)
Recharge to Capital	-129	-36	-36	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,059	-265	-265	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-174	-174	-174	0	0
Total Income	-3,726	-1,446	-1,396	(50)	(148)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,840	1,993	2,021	(28)	(275)
Recharges					
Premises Support	560	187	187	0	0
Transport	749	272	289	(17)	(52)
Central Support	1,534	511	511	0	0
Asset Rental Support	851	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,129	-1,713	-1,804	91	274
Net Total Recharges	-1,435	-743	-817	74	222
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,405	1,250	1,204	46	(53)

Comments on the above figures

Financial Position

The current position for the PPT department is £0.046m under budget with a projected full financial year outturn of £0.053m over the approved budget.

Supporting Information

As in previous years budget holders are working closing with the Finance Officers to ensure a balanced budget is achieved. Capital funding is being prioritised where possible in order to relieve pressure on the revenue budgets.

Employee expenditure is predicted to be under budget at the end of the financial year due to a more accurate projection regarding current vacant posts and when they are likely to be filled. There is also expected to be a small saving on staffing costs due to Logistics reducing the number of casual drivers and moving to contracted staff instead. There are 3 members of agency staff which are now shown separately from employee costs.

Efficiency savings for PPT are not expected to be met and more information is provided about this further down the report.

Supplies and services and contracted services are projected to be over budget as in previous years due to survey costs and plans that will be required in the Planning division. Halton also has a contract with MEAS (Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service) which is hosted by Sefton LA. This is used to provide Halton with advice in relation to ecology, waste, environmental impact assessments and local plans. Although the expenditure on the contract is over the allocated budget, it would cost Halton considerably more to provide this advice in house. Legal fees are also projected to be over budget due to external legal advice being required in the Planning section. £0.109m of the overspend against supplies and services is in relation to software licences and maintenance of systems required but there is no budget available.

Street lighting forecast expenditure is projected to come in on budget over the course of the financial year. Various actions have been taken to decrease the amount of power being used such as lights being turned off 12am – 6am on some routes and over 80% of HBC owned street lighting stock of around 20,500 columns have been upgraded to LED. This is a volatile budget and could change as we draw into the dark and wintry months. For the purpose of this report the projected figure is based on the previous financial years outturn.

Highways maintenance budgets are projected to be slightly under budget. Capital is again being utilised where appropriate. The report is again broken down into routine and reactive schemes and programmed works so the various areas can be looked at in more detail. Forecast costs for routine maintenance being based on the programme of works for the year whilst reactive maintenance is an average of costs over the last three years.

Fleet transport has seen an increase in costs across fuel and parts which reflects the projected outturn and was also evidenced in the 23/24 financial year. This then has a knock-on effect to the costs being recharged out to the other areas of the authority. Every effort is being made to prolong fleet replacements but this also has a negative impact on the cost of repairs as they then increase.

Planning income is again projected to be under achieved. Following on from the 23/24 financial year there is a downturn in the number of applications being received. Although, Government increased planning fees rates towards the end of last year this has not offset the lack of large development agreements the Council has had in previous years. For the purpose of this forecast it was decided to use the income achieved from last year but with a slight increase for inflation.

As in previous years Building Control income is currently under its income target and this is being monitored closely.

Fees and charges income is projected to exceed it's income target based on the last few financial years. This is an ever changing area as it is fully dependent on the amount of permit applications etc that is received, however at the moment it is in line with the previous report projections.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Savings that were put forward for 2024/25 can be seen in Appendix A at the end of this report

Risks/Opportunities

Across the whole department inflation has significantly driven costs up and every division is bearing the cost of this. Budgets have also been top sliced in order to help balance the overall council budgets. The Highways / Traffic and Logistics divisions are seeing the largest impact of this when purchasing materials / fuel / parts for vehicles etc.

Capital Programme 2024/25

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation	2024/25 Revised Allocation	Q1 Spend	Q2 Spend	Q3 Spend	Q4 Spend	Total Spend	Allocation remaining
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate								
Policy, Planning & Transportation Dept								
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	0.0	2,265.6	280.8				280.8	1,984.8
Runcorn Busway	0.0	0.0	227.4				227.4	-227.4
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	0.0	3,000.0	175.3				175.3	2,824.7
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	0.0	114.5	0.0				0.0	114.5
A56 Reconstruction (Delph Lane)	0.0	943.7	351.1				351.1	592.6
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0.0	0.0	1.1				1.1	-1.1
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	0.0	3,861.7	629.3				629.3	3,232.4
Additional Pothole Funding	0.0	429.1	0.0				0.0	429.1
CRSTS	5,288.6	5,288.6	1,656.0				1,656.0	3,632.6
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.6	1,025.6	0.0				0.0	1,025.6
Street Lighting - Upgrades	969.4	969.4	0.0				0.0	969.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	452.5				452.5	5,399.1
Risk Management	597.8	597.8	4.9				4.9	592.9
Fleet Replacements	4,927.4	4,927.4	1,081.8				1,081.8	3,845.6
Total PPT	18,660.4	29,275.0	4,860.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	4,860.2	24,414.8

COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

Revenue Budget as at 31st July 2024

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,358	3,700	3,457	243	1,146
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	66	(66)	(262)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	50	(50)	(101)
Premises	3,521	1,070	1,089	(19)	(71)
Supplies & Services	1,585	380	401	(21)	(80)
Hired & Contracted Services	510	83	83	0	0
Book Fund	128	53	53	0	0
Food Provision	388	115	108	7	36
School Meals Food	2,083	320	332	(12)	(42)
Transport	117	10	11	(1)	(9)
Agency Costs	441	100	148	(48)	(94)
Other Expenditure	0	0	41	(41)	(50)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	0	0	0	255
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	16	12	4	35
Grant to Norton Priory	172	29	87	(58)	0
Total Expenditure	33,369	5,876	5,938	(62)	763
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-422	-422	0	(118)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,470	-1,952	-1,942	(10)	(50)
Rental Income	-235	-39	-71	32	26
Markets Income	-910	-152	-208	56	(79)
Government Grant Income	-643	-482	-482	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-467	-467	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-219	-250	31	(10)
School Meals Income	-3,598	-600	-562	(38)	(213)
Internal Fees Income	-286	-48	-15	(33)	61
Capital Salaries	-173	-29	-14	(15)	(5)
Transfers from Reserves	-14	-14	-14	0	0
Total Income	-14,718	-4,424	-4,447	23	(388)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,651	1,452	1,491	(39)	375
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	279	279	0	0
Transport	2,257	376	214	162	(51)
Central Support	3,592	599	599	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	33	33	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-843	-141	-141	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	1,146	984	162	(51)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,531	2,598	2,475	123	324

Comments on the above figures

The net Departmental Expenditure is forecast to be £0.324m under budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Spend on employees is forecasted to be £1.146m under the annual budget. A restructure is taking place within the Community Safety, Leisure and within the Stadium and Catering Division, in order to facilitate these restructures, posts have been held vacant on a temporary basis, leading to a reduction in costs. There have also been difficulties recruiting to certain roles due to a lack of qualified applicants, which has led to some posts being vacant for longer than planned. The figure is offset from an expected agency spend of £0.363m.

Spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.071m over the approved budget in 2024/25, the new leisure centre is now expected to hand over within this financial year and will begin to incur costs within 24/25. The original plans were for the leisure centre to utilise the solar farm however the extension required to provide energy to the leisure centre has only recently been submitted for planning, so there is a potential budget pressure next year as the energy will have to be provided elsewhere until the solar farm extension is functioning.

Supplies and Services is showing a forecast overspend of £0.080m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years



Waste Disposal Contract costs are forecasted to achieve £0.255m under the approved budget during 2024/25. Costs are likely to increase slightly from 2023/24, however invoices are not received until later in the financial year so it is difficult to fully indicate what the outturn position will be at this stage.

Sales, Fees & Charges, and Markets Income are expected to be below the income target within 2024/25, these are offset against reductions in forecasted expenditure for the year in particular the staffing costs, as the staff are not in place to generate the income, however the full impact of changes of this nature will be realised following the cessation of the School Meals service as this budget pressure absorbs any underspend generated.

Budget Savings

COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT




Capital Programme 2024/25

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		Restructure is currently underway
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Environment Department				36	12		





5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target is on course to be achieved.</i>
Amber 	Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved</i>
Red 	Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</u></i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green 	Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber 	Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red 	Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A 	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.

