

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 February 2026 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Thompson, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke, R. Rout, S. Foy and H. Hamlett

Also in attendance: Councillor Ratcliffe

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		Action	
EXB91	MINUTES		
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.		
	LEADER'S PORTFOLIO		
EXB92	CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026/27		
	The Board received a report of the Chief Executive, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.		
	RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.	Interim Executive	Chief
	CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO		
EXB93	BUDGET 2026/27 - KEY DECISION		
	The Board considered a report from the Director - Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax		

for 2026/27.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at the Executive Board meeting on 11 September 2025, had identified funding gaps of around £44.937m in 2026/27, £58.964m in 2027/28, £74.656m in 2028/29, £94.107m in 2029/30 and £118.613m in 2030/31.

In terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public, and Members own experiences through their Ward work was an important part of that process. Individual consultations took place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

The Board received regular reports detailing spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicated that spending was forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £1.281m against a net budget of £183.052m.

The proposed revenue budget for 2026/27 totalled £224.237m; the departmental analysis of this was shown in Appendix B. A total of £5.158m of savings were proposed and were detailed in Appendix E.

Table B in the report demonstrated the Council position where it would be unable to present a balanced 2026/27 budget without seeking Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from Government. Receipts from Council Tax and Business Rates were insufficient to fund the forecast net spend for 2026/27. Table B forecast that Council would have to borrow £34.966m in 2026/27 to provide a balanced budget. On 18 December 2025, an application for EFS for the 2026/27 financial year was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. Several updates had been made to Halton's Core Spending Power (CSP) at the Final Local Government Final Settlement. Income received from the Mid-Mersey Business Rates Pool were included within Halton's 2025/26 baseline funding position, which had increased the funding to be received in 2026/27 and 2027/28 from transitional arrangements. A small uplift to the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant had been made to reflect new burdens arising from the Renters' Rights Act. Government had also announced a

new Recovery Grant Uplift for authorities in receipt of Recovery Grant Funding that were due to see their CSP rise by less than the 17% national average over the three years covered by the Settlement. These changes were worth an additional £3.5m, £3.7m, and £4.7m to Halton in 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29 respectively. The report outlined the Government consultation on the Fair Funding Review and the impact of the review on Halton's CSP.

Further information was also provided on Halton's Council Tax, Parish precepts, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayor precepts, Business Rates, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code, School Budgets, Dedicated Schools Grant position, adequacy of reserves and exceptional financial support.

The Board acknowledged the support of the Member of Parliament for Halton and Halewood, Derek Twigg who had lobbied the Government on behalf of the Council in respect of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On behalf of the Board, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services thanked the Council Finance team for their work in preparing the Budget document.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2026/27.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

A number of alternative budget proposals have been considered by the Budget Working Group.

Implementation Date

12 February 2026.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended

- 1) to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £224.237m, the Council Tax requirement of £71.959m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,938.81;
- 2) to approve the capital programme set out in Appendix D; and

Director
Finance

of

3) to approve the budget savings set out in Appendix E.

EXB94 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Board considered a report of the Director – Finance, on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2026/27.

It was reported that all councils were required to produce a Capital Strategy annually, the aim of which was to ensure that the Council understood the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

Members were advised that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, included on the same agenda. This detailed the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2026/27. It was noted that the successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the 2026/27 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix.

Director
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EXB95 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2026/27

The Board received the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2026/27.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2026/27). Its production and submission to the Council was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years, to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act therefore required the Council to set out its

treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (AIS), which set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. Government guidance noted that authorities could combine the TMSS and the AIS into one report, which the Council had done and was included in Section 4.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report at paragraph 2.3, with the full policy shown in Appendix A.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statements, prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Director
Finance

of

EXB96 REVIEW OF COUNCILWIDE FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report of the Director - Finance, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2026/27 for services provided by the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2026/27, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service. However this was more difficult given the impact of inflation uncertainty, wage increases and the unpredictable nature of utility costs. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, competition and statutory elements.

Attached as Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2026/27 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A and for 2027/28, as set out in Appendices B and C, be approved.

Director
Finance

of

EXB97 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which advised that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business

ratepayer. An application for discretionary rate relief had been received from Power In Partnership Ltd and details of the application were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the application for 75% discretionary rate relief from Power In Partnership Ltd in respect of Unit 10, Expressway Industrial Estate, Pimlico Road, Runcorn, be approved for the period 1 April 2023 to 23 June 2025.

Director of
Finance

EXB98 INTEGRATION OF HR AND PAYROLL MODULE INTO THE UNIT4 FINANCE SYSTEM

The Board received a report which sought approval to integrate a HR and Payroll module into the Unit4 ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Finance System and the inclusion of the project within the Capital Programme. Following final approval, the HR and Payroll implementation would be scheduled for September 2026, with planned activities covering system build, testing, staff training, cutover planning and go-live.

The integration and single system solution would:

- enable the removal of current inter-application administrative procedures for transferring data from one system to another;
- allow for the decommissioning of some internal systems and eradicate the need for ongoing development and maintenance of these systems;
- provide a reduction in day to day management time across the Council;
- rationalise resources, justifying the principles of Invest to Save and Best Value, with financial payback.

The annual capital financing cost of funding the implementation over 10 years would be approximately £60,225 per annum.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the integration of the HR and Payroll Module into the Unit4 ERP Finance System, be approved; and
- 2) Council be requested to include the project within the Capital Programme at an estimated cost of £456,459 as outlined in paragraph 5.1.

Director of HR
and Corporate
Affairs (Interim)
/Director of
Transformation
(Interim)

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB99 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT FOLLOWING THE ADULTS DIRECTORATE'S CQC ASSURANCE RATING OF GOOD

The Board considered a report of the Interim Director – Commissioning and Provision, that provided an update on the progress the Adults Directorate had made against the CQC Local Authority Framework following their assessment and rating as 'Good' in July 2025. From the CQC report the Directorate had further scrutinised the analysis of Halton's Services and performance to consider areas where its continuous improvement needed to be focussed. An Improvement Action Plan had been drawn up as a result and a working group met monthly to look at progress against these action and developments were moving forward. Progress to date against the Improvement Plan was set out in Appendix Two.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB100 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION: CONFIRMATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on outcome of the public consultation on the immediate Article 4 Direction made on 24 September 2025, removing permitted development rights for the change of use of a building from that of a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling house) to that falling within C4 (small HMOs) for parts of the borough.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, it was noted that no matters had arisen that were material to the decision and it was not proposed to recommend any changes to the immediate Article 4 Direction that had been previously approved by the Board on 11 September 2025.

RESOLVED: That the immediate Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights for the material change of use of a building from a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to that falling within Class C4 (HMOs) made on 24 September 2025 is confirmed.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

EXB101 ALBERT ROAD (NORTH) PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME

The Board considered a report that sought approval to commence the pedestrianisation scheme along a section of Albert Road (north) between Deacon Road/Bradley Way and Robert Street, Widnes. The report set out the improvements that the scheme would bring, consultations which had taken place with Local Councillors, transport providers, businesses, residents and the positive public support for the scheme.

Arising from the discussion, Councillor Wall, asked if local businesses were in support of the scheme and officers advised that no objections had been received.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the Albert Road (north) pedestrianisation scheme for delivery, as set out in the report and shown on the Plan in Appendix A; and
- 2) the Director Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the delivery of this scheme.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO

EXB102 PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION FUND - PICOW FARM ROAD DEPOT

The Board considered a report which set out details of grant funding awarded to the Council via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF) and sought approval to implement energy efficiency measures at Picow Farm Road, Runcorn. In 2025, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) had submitted a bid to Phase 4 of the PSDF in respect of the following buildings in Halton:

- Picow Farm,
- Kingsway Learning Centre,
- Runcorn Town Hall.

In respect of Halton, a total of £2,816,409.20 had been awarded. The initial focus of the work would be at Picow Farm Road and the LCRCA had conducted a tender process; and Optimus were appointed as the approved contractor. The cost of the works were within the overall

projected cost of £1,161,300 and the Council would need to make a contribution of between £162,000 and £200,000.

RESOLVED: That Council be requested to include £1,161,300 total estimated cost of the energy efficiency works at Picow Farm Road within the Capital Programme, to be funded by grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund and including a Council contribution of between £162,000 - £200,000.

Interim
Executive

Chief

MINUTES ISSUED: 18 February 2026.

CALL-IN: 25 February 2026 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 18 February 2026.

Meeting ended at 2.16 p.m.