



METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH OF ST HELENS
50TH ANNIVERSARY

Town Hall, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1HP

Telephone: 01744 676276 (Karl Allender)

Agenda

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 15 April 2024

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Room 10

Membership

Lab 6 Councillors	Dickinson, Hattersley (Chair), Hodkinson, Laird, McCormack and O'Connor
Grn 1 Councillor	Richards
LD 1 Councillor	Pearl
Inds 1 Councillor	Stevenson
Con 1 Councillor	Case
Co-opted (Non -Voting)	Superintendent S Brizell - Merseyside Police Mr J Cunliffe - Merseyside Fire & Rescue

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>	
2.	<u>Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2024</u>	3
3.	<u>Declarations of Interests from Members</u>	
4.	<u>Declarations of Party Whip</u>	
5.	<u>Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24</u>	9

Tanya Wilcock – Director of Communities,
Sean Traynor – Director of Strategic Growth, and
Trevor Nicoll – Assistant Director of Environment and Operations, have been invited

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
6.	<u>Climate Commission Presentaion</u> Trevor Nicoll – Assistant Director of Environment and Operations. Has been invited.	
7.	<u>Housing Voids Spotlight Review</u> Tanya Wilcock -Director of Communities, and Samantha Murray – Assistant Director of Housing and Communities have been invited.	51
8.	<u>Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations - Update</u> Samanatha Murray – Assistant Director of Housing and Communities has been invited.	69
9.	<u>Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24</u>	81

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
8 January 2024

(Present) **Councillor Hattersley (Chair)**
Councillors Dickinson, Hodkinson, Laird, McCormack,
O'Connor and Pearl and Superintendent S Brizell,
Merseyside Police

(Not Present) **Councillors Case, Richards and Stevenson**

17 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Case.

18 MINUTES

* **Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2023 be approved and signed.**

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

20 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

No Declarations of Party Whip were made.

21 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2023-24

The Director of Communities provided an overview of the Quarter 2 Performance Report with focus on Priorities 3, 4 and 5 as set out in the agenda. Overall, for the three priorities, there were nice targets that had not been met during the second quarter of 2023/24. The Chair invited the Committee to ask questions in priority order.

In relation to Priority 3, the following points arose from questioning:

- In relation to HS-002A, quarter 2 covers the period from July to September so the figures did not relate to those who were currently rough sleeping during the cold weather in January. During cold weather the Council had a severe weather protocol to provide additional support to rough sleepers through service providers such as TearDrops.
- Although the net increase in dwelling stock target (G&P-011) was not being met the number of affordable homes was growing and above target (G&P-012). There were a number of new housing developments due to be built during 2024 which was expected to improve performance against the target. It was expected that 30% of new homes built on green belt land as identified in the Local Plan should be affordable.
- The Empty Home Officer post was currently unoccupied and the decision had been taken not to cover the post due to the recruitment freeze the Council had put

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

in place. As such the target for performance indicator HS-003 had been revised down for the year from 70 dwellings to 15 to reflect the capacity of the service at the time; the revised down target was expected to be met by the end of the year based on progress to the end of quarter 2.

In relation to Priority 4, the following points arose from questioning:

- Action to improve performance in relation to performance indicator G&P-007 required a holistic approach involving both Place Services, Health Services (including Public Health) and Adult Social Care due to the health-related nature of the issue. The Ways to Work Service was set up to support people into work and had centres in St Helens and Earlestown for the public to access. The focus of the service was being moved more towards those who are economically inactive due to long term sickness to try to improve performance in this area.
- The numbers of residents affected by long-term sickness had increased following the covid-19 pandemic and was a national issue that could not be fully solved locally. Physical and mental health issues both contributed towards reasons why residents were economically inactive due to long-term sickness.
- Whilst the Ways to Work Service was not able to support residents with their mental and physical health issues to help them back into work directly, they were able to signpost residents to relevant health professionals.

In relation to Priority 5, the following points arose from questioning:

- It was hoped that following the roll out of new recycling receptacles in Autumn 2023 figures in relation to performance indicator ENV-004A, ENV-004B and ENV-005 would show improvement in Quarter 3.
- It was suggested that the roll out of new recycling receptacles had been a success as the Council had received very few complaints from the public. Residents now had twice the capacity for recycling than what would be provided by the comingle bins that were provided by some other local authorities. It was also reiterated that recycling sorted into separate containers was easier to process and had a lower contamination rate than comingle recycling.
- It was suggested that communication by the recycling and waste collection service with residents was good and that messages regarding the importance of recycling and minimising waste were getting through. Members had been encouraged by seeing residents sharing the Council's messaging with their neighbours and supporting the Council's approach.
- The Government had made some minor changes to rules relating to recycling and waste, notably that from April 2026 all local authorities will be required to collect food waste in the way that St Helens already does. It was unknown at this stage what other changes may be forthcoming that would impact the Council's operations.
- It was suggested that there were some issues with the collection of recycling and waste from some flats in the Borough. This linked to changes to the way these buildings were managed meaning the initial design of waste management was no longer working. The Council made weekly, rather than fortnightly, collections at locations where large amounts of waste were an issue.

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- In relation to performance indicator CC-002 the Committee was due to commence a spotlight review as part of its work programme.

It was agreed that officers would provide additional information in relation to questions about performance measures HS-002A, HS-002B, HS-003 and G&P-012 via email following the meeting.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the performance position at Quarter 2 be noted;**
- (2) **the actions planned by the Place Services Directorate and services to address specific areas of performance improvement in relation to Priority 3, 4 & 5 be noted; and**
- (3) **officers be requested to provide additional information in response to questions from the Committee via email as agreed.**

22 REVIEW OF BUSINESS SUPPORT PROVISION

The Head of Economy provided an overview of the report. The report provided detail on ways in which businesses were supported, how this was funded and changes to funding over time including into the future. It was explained that whilst this report focused on services with a specific business support role funded publicly, there were a number of forms of business support which meant there were a large number of services and other businesses that provided both direct and indirect support to businesses (e.g. planning, recycling and waste collection, accounting and legal services, supplies etc).

The Council was one of several organisations that provided direct business support with public funding with St Helens Chamber and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority being two major providers. The chamber of commerce in St Helens was one of the largest in the country with 25% of business in the Borough being members. The Liverpool City Region Growth Platform was the main conduit into the region for Government grants related to business support the Council supports local businesses to access. Due to budget reductions during austerity, there wasn't currently a specific business support post within the Council and any work undertaken was currently being done by officers in addition to other roles. The Council used to access the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) however, following the UK's exit from the European Union the fund was no longer available in the UK. In April 2022 the UK Government released the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to replace ERDF for UK organisations however the level of funding was much reduced from what was available through ERDF. The Council had won funding via UKSPF that would fund business support provision from the Council until March 2025 however there was uncertainty about how business support would be funded beyond this.

Members of the Committee asked questions and the following points were raised:

- Work hadn't yet commenced on the low carbon target because the Economy Team did not currently have the resources to support this work. Whilst the Council was committed to this target, due to the Council's current financial situation, there were insufficient resources to commit to this initiative.

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- It was hoped that the Parkside development would help to bring jobs for local residents and boost the economy in St Helens therefore helping local businesses. There were a number of other economic developments planned or in development that would support local businesses to grow.
- The Council worked with local partners, in particular the Liverpool City Region, to lobby Government on the provision or additional funding to provide more support to local businesses over a longer period of time.
- UK Shared Prosperity Funding was to be used to procure a temporary business support service until March 2025, with options for provision after that point dependent on available funding. It was expected that it would take two to three months to complete the process of setting up the service.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted;**
- (2) **the review of the current business support provision in the Borough be endorsed;**
- (3) **the potential gap in business support provision be acknowledged by the Committee; and**
- (4) **a report on the current state and future of business support provision be submitted to the Committee when funding from the UKSPF had ceased in March 2025.**

Councillor Hodkinson here left the meeting.

23 SCHOOLS CATERING SERVICE

The Committee received a presentation about the Council's Schools Catering Service. The Head of Traded Services for Schools informed the Committee that the Schools Catering Service provided 97% of Primary Schools, five Secondary School and five Special Schools in the Borough with their catering service which was a significantly higher proportion of schools than other local authorities. As well as providing school lunches the Catering Service supported school breakfast clubs, ad hoc events and parents evening as well as operating some commercial ventures such as Willowbees, Taylor Park Café and events at the Town Hall. The Catering Service employed over 300 people, which equated to 15% of the Council's workforce, and most were local residents. The Catering Service's Menu was National School Food Standards Compliant and used regional supplies providing 100% UK produce. The special diets procedure enabled the Catering Service to tailor special diet menus to individual pupils when required. The Catering Service did require some modernisation, particularly through the introduction of digital administration to replace the paper-based approach currently used; efforts were underway with a trail of "SchoolGrid" currently being undertaken. Recent food inflation issues nationally had impacted on the service and were causing cost pressures within budgets for both schools and the Council. A full service review was planned that would look at ways to improve cost recovery, introduce digital systems and increase customer engagement and commercial development.

Members of the Committee asked questions and the following points were raised:

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- Free School Meals uptake based on eligibility was currently below the national average. Detailed figures weren't available during the meeting, but it was suggested that uptake might be lower than the national average due to historical perceptions of school meals and reluctance on the part of some families to apply. During the whole service review the Catering Service would work with each school individually to develop different strategies in each school for increasing uptake of school meals and applications for Free School Meals.
- To date there had not been a dietary requirement of any pupil that the Catering Service could not meet. The Service engaged directly with parents and pupils where an need for a specific menu was identified.
- There was a concern about whether budget pressures would impact on the quality of the service and the food provided. It was a difficult balancing act to try to maintain quality standards whilst dealing with budget pressures such as rising food prices and the need for the Council to reduce spending overall. The Government contributions towards Free School Meals had not increased while food prices had been rising. Catering Service Employees had received a pay rise however they were still among the lowest paid in the Council.
- It was hoped that further success in commercial ventures would help the Catering Service to reduce budget pressures.
- The Catering Service employed 'Planet Friendly Terminology' to promote efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of menus and encourage pupils to engage with different types of meals (e.g. not mentioning that meals were meat free or calling them vegan/vegetarian).
- Members were interested in how the Committee could contribute towards the Catering Service review; the Chair agreed to discuss the idea during the next meeting with Scrutiny Link Officers.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the presentation be noted;**
- (2) **officers be requested to provide the additional information regarding Free School Meals via email; and**
- (3) **the Chair be requested to discuss the potential involvement of the Committee in the whole service review during the next Chair and Scrutiny Link Officer meeting.**

24 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The place services scrutiny work programme was provided to the committee for consideration.

Members were informed that the Housing Voids – Registered Providers Spotlight Review that had been due to report to this Committee meeting had held additional meeting as part of the review which meant the report could not be provided in time. The Chair informed the Committee that the review had been concluded and the report would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

PLACE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Support Officer explained that a meeting would be arranged between Scrutiny Chairs and Link Officers to discuss the next Scrutiny cycle of work.

- * **Resolved that the report be noted and the Work Programme agreed.**

-oOo-

 ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL	<h2>Place Services Scrutiny Committee</h2> <h3>15 April 2024</h3>
--	---

Report Title	Quarter 3 Performance Report – 2023-24
Cabinet Portfolio	Corporate Services
Cabinet Member	Councillor Martin Bond
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Vicky Willett Director Policy and Transformation vickiwillett@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Chris Collinge Performance, Strategy & Information Manager chriscollinge@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	X
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-24 (Annex A) provides an analysis of progress and performance over the period from the 1st of October to the 31st of December 2023-24 against each of the Place Services Scrutiny priorities - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all, support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy, and create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.
- 1.2 The report reflects the new performance framework and targets aligned to the priorities and outcomes of the Borough Strategy as agreed by Cabinet on the 26th of April 2023. This framework provides the basis for quarterly performance reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny over the course of 2023-24.
- 1.3 The Council acknowledges that effective performance management arrangements are critical to supporting decision making and work continues to ensure the development of the performance framework and performance management processes across the Council.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Place Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) **Note the performance position at Quarter 3 2023-24.**
- 2) **Note the actions planned by the Place Services Directorate, and services to address specific areas for performance improvement in relation to Priority 3, 4, and 5.**
- 3) **Consider whether there are any potential items for further scrutiny as part of the Committee's work programme based on performance information received.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 The Council remains committed to the regular monitoring and reporting of performance information to ensure the delivery of efficient, effective and value for money services that meet the needs and expectations of the customers and communities it serves. The purpose of the report is to present a summary of progress against the priorities and outcomes of the Borough Strategy 2021-2030 through an overview of performance in relation to key indicators.
- 3.2 The format of the report is split into 2 distinct parts:
 - Part 1 of the report is a statistical analysis of the performance position at Quarter 3 2023-24.
 - Part 2 of the report is a commentary on performance against delivery of the three, Place Services Borough Strategy priorities and their respective outcomes, summarising performance and action being taken to improve performance where required. Scorecards for each priority area are included to provide further information on individual performance measures. Part 2 of the version of the report presented to the Place Services Scrutiny Committee only includes performance information relating to Priority 3,4, and 5 of the Borough Strategy.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 The Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-24 reflects performance over the period October to December 2023 and the legacy impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, rising demand for services and a requirement to deliver significant budget savings. As a result, it is more critical than ever that the Council has a clear understanding of what it needs to measure and how it is performing to inform effective decision making. The indicators reported are split between Tier 1 and Tier 2:
- **Tier 1** – A set of high-level strategic indicators and targets that constitute the Outcomes Framework of the Borough Strategy 2021-2030.
 - **Tier 2** – A set of performance indicators and targets to address key priority areas of performance within Directorates / Departments linked to the business planning process and the Borough Strategy 2021-2030.
- 4.2 Annual targets were set where possible within the context of national, Northwest, and local authority comparator group data. Targets equally aspire to be challenging but achievable within the context of the available resources. The targets also took account of performance during 2022-23 and the legacy impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, rising service demand and a challenging financial position for local government.
- 4.3 There are 86 performance indicators, where Quarter 3 performance against target is available to be reported. Of these:
- **72%** of indicator targets have been either exceeded, met fully, or met within 95% of target. This compares to 73% of indicators in Quarter 3 2022-23.
 - **28%** of indicator targets were not met, compared to 27% in Quarter 3 2022-23.
 - The trend measure indicates over the course of the last 12 months **51%** of indicators showed improvement, **10%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **39%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory. The position in Quarter 3 2022-23 was that **52%** of indicators showed improvement, **7%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **41%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory.
 - **21%** of all indicators where comparison is possible are in the top quartile, compared to 24% at Quarter 3 2021-22, whilst **33%** are in the bottom quartile, compared to 27% at Quarter 3 2022-23. 14% and 33% of indicators are in the 2nd and 3rd quartile respectively, compared to 20% and 29% in Quarter 3 2022-23 (NB percentages rounded to nearest whole number).
- 4.4 Performance should continue to be viewed within the context of what has continued to be a challenging operational period for the Council. The legacy impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, rising demand for services and the requirement to deliver significant budget savings which has resulted in a recruitment freeze and reductions to the workforce, impacted the Council's ability to meet targets and demonstrate improvements in performance trends. Equally in many areas the impact of the pandemic on performance is yet to be fully realised and understood. However, given the effect of the pandemic on St Helens to date there is the strong likelihood that existing inequalities may be widened. This presents risks for future performance, but particularly in areas such as public health, education and schools and children's services where comparative performance is already challenging.
- 4.5 The report takes the format of an executive summary of performance, followed by a more detailed breakdown for each priority and their respective outcomes. Tables have

been included to highlight performance against outcome areas, along with a summary of actions that are being taken to improve performance.

- 4.6 In summary, at Quarter 3 2023-24 there are a number of outcome areas which demonstrate strong and / or improving performance. Equally there are areas where performance against outcomes is either some distance from target or an outlier in terms of St Helens' performance relative to the England average or our statistical neighbours. Areas of challenge include:

- **Priority 3**

- **The housing and homes outcome:**

This includes homelessness prevention or relief, rough sleeping, and households in temporary accommodation including households with children where performance is some way from target at Quarter 3.

The indicator relating to the completion of new homes also remains below target at Quarter 3.

- **Priority 4**

- **The economy outcome:**

Specifically, the rate of economic inactivity due to long-term sickness and the 18-24 year old claimant rate, which have remained high over the course of Quarter 3.

The percentage of planning appeals granted as a percentage of all appeals also failed to meet target at the end of Quarter 3.

- **Priority 5**

- **The Environment outcome:**

The 3 waste and recycling indicators all failed to meet target

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 None

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-24 at Annex A provides an assessment of the Council's performance over the period October to December. The legacy of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and sustained financial pressure on local government continue to pose significant challenges for the Council and St Helens Borough. Robust and appropriate performance management arrangements continue to be critical to support effective decision making and enable the delivery of the Council's desired outcomes across the borough and its communities.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 Performance data and effective performance management contribute to the Council's governance position.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The Council's performance management framework and processes are critical to ensuring the organisation provides value for money.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 The performance framework supports the community in understanding the progress the Council makes to achieve its priorities. Consideration will be given to presenting this information in a format that is easily understandable and accessible.

10. Social Value

10.1 The indicators include measures relating to the voluntary / community sector, employment, and the local economy.

11. Net Zero and Environment

11.1 The indicators include measures relating to Net Zero and the environment.

12. Health and Wellbeing

12.1 The indicators include measures relating to the health and wellbeing of the local population.

13. Customer and Resident

13.1 The indicators include measures relating to customers.

14. Asset and Property

14.1 None

15. Staffing and Human Resources

15.1 None

16. Risks

16.1 There is a risk that performance may decline in some areas. Where this occurs action will be taken to address performance issues, these will be outlined in action plans the impact of which will be reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 The recommendations within this report are in line with existing council policies. The performance framework links to the priorities and outcomes of the Borough Strategy and related key council strategies.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

5

18.1 There is the opportunity to link aspects of the performance framework to the Localities agenda and report elements of performance at a locality level.

19. Background Documents

19.1 N/A.

20. Appendices

20.1 **Annex A** – Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-23.

**PLACE SERVICES
PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 3 2023-24**



Contents

1. Our Borough Strategy 2021-30 Priorities	3
2. Borough Strategy Priorities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals	4
3. Purpose of the Report	5
3. Executive Summary	6
4. Part 1 - Statistical analysis	7
4.1 Performance Against Target	8
4.2 The Performance Trend	8
4.3 Inter Authority Comparison	9
4.4 Summary and conclusion of statistical analysis	10
5. Part 2 - Commentary on performance against priority and outcome	12
Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	12
Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive, and well-connected local economy	21
Priority 5 - Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	28

1. Our Borough Strategy 2021-30 Priorities

Performance Management in St Helens Borough Council is focused around achieving the 6 strategic priorities outlined in Our Borough Strategy 2021-30.



Priority 1 - Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life

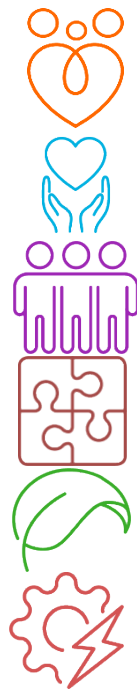
Priority 2 - Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities

Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all

Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive, and well-connected local economy

Priority 5 - Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture

Priority 6 - Be a responsible council



2. Borough Strategy Priorities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. Making progress towards the global goals by 2030 depends on local action. SDGs fit with Our Borough Strategy Vision and the Council's approach to Reset and Recovery. All 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been mapped against the 'Our Borough Strategy' priorities and outcomes.

18

 <p>ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POSITIVE START IN LIFE</p>	     	 <p>SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING, INCLUSIVE AND WELL-CONNECTED LOCAL ECONOMY</p>	          
 <p>PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH, INDEPENDENCE AND CARE ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES</p>	   	 <p>CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT PLACES THAT REFLECT OUR HERITAGE AND CULTURE</p>	      
 <p>CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL</p>	  	 <p>BE A RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL</p>	       

3. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to inform and update Elected Members on performance against the 6 priorities of the Our Borough Strategy 2021-30 and respective outcomes as set out above. The report covers the period Quarter 3 2023-24 providing the performance position reported over the course of the period. The reporting format splits the report into 2 distinct parts:

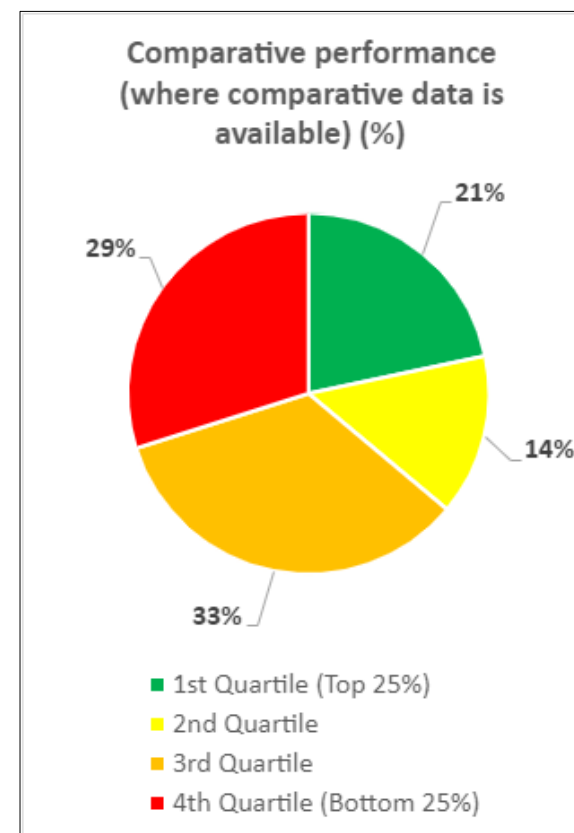
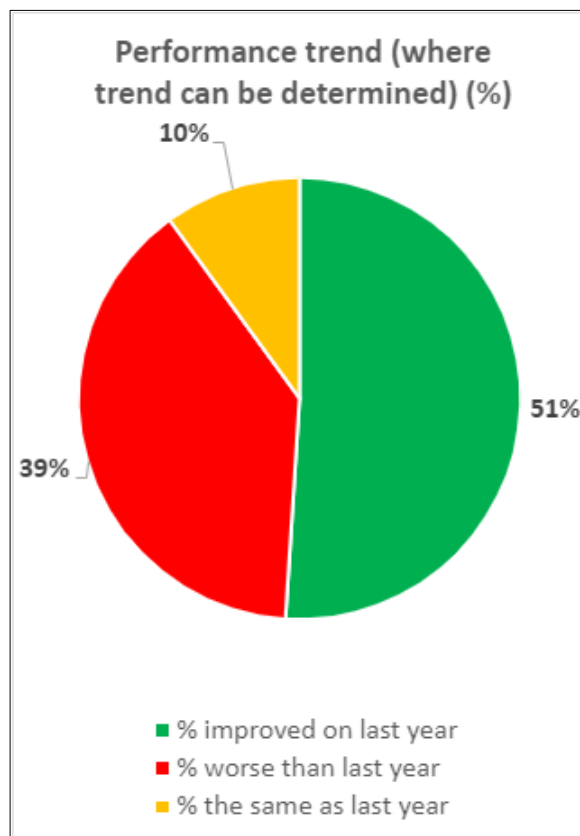
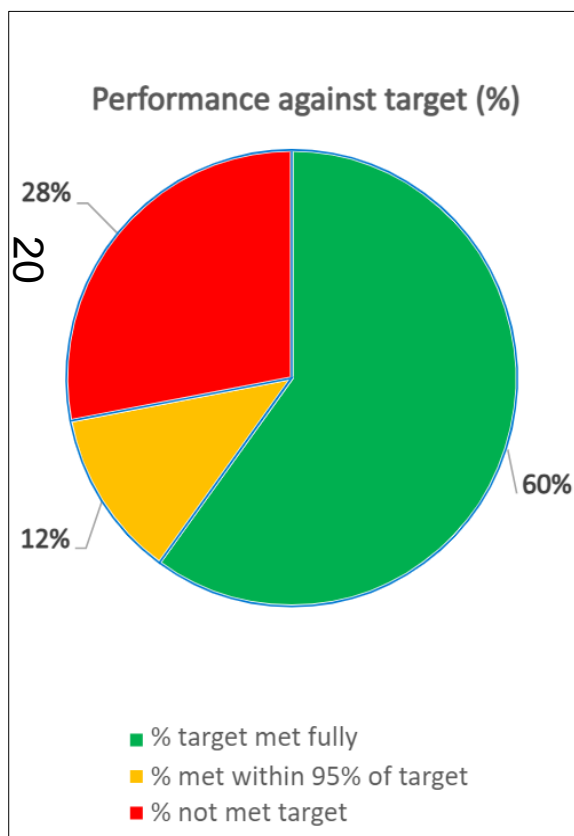
Part 1 of the report is a statistical analysis of the performance position at Quarter 3 2023-24.

Part 2 of the report is a commentary on performance against delivery of the 6 strategic priorities and their respective outcomes summarising current performance within the quarter and action being taken to improve performance where required.

3. Executive Summary

The charts below provide an overview position of all performance measures across all 6 Borough Strategy priorities as at Quarter 3 2023-24, examining:

- Performance against target.
- Trend - whether performance has improved / worsened since the position 12 months ago.
- Inter Authority performance - how St Helens' performance compares to that of a family group of authorities similar to St Helens.



4. Part 1 - Statistical analysis

To measure performance at Quarter 3 2023-24, the Council is reporting against a total of 86 performance indicators, where targets were set. The indicators reported are split between Tier 1 and Tier 2:

Tier 1 – A set of high-level strategic indicators and targets that constitute the Outcomes Framework of the Borough Strategy 2021-2030.

Tier 2 – A further set of performance indicators and targets to address key priority areas of performance within Directorates / Departments.

In the supporting scorecards for each priority area, this distinction is maintained and both tiers are shown as they are all relevant to an understanding of overall performance.

The Quarter 3 report statistical analysis looks at performance under 3 areas:

1. Performance against targets
2. Trend over 12-months
3. Inter-authority comparison

4.1 Performance Against Target

This measure sets out:

- The percentage of indicators by priority where targets have been fully met or exceeded.
- The percentage of indicators by priority that have not fully met target but are within 95% of target.
- The percentage of indicators by priority that have failed to meet the target by more than 5%.

In the supporting scorecards for each priority area, green, amber, and red colours are used to depict indicators in each of the above three bullet point situations.

Priority	Number of Indicators with data	% target fully met	% target met within 95%	% target not met
1. Ensure children and young people have a positive start	21	52% (11)	24% (5)	24% (5)
2. Health, independence, and care	21	57% (12)	14% (3)	29% (6)
3. Safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods	14	64% (9)	0% (0)	36% (5)
4. Strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy	8	63% (5)	0% (0)	37% (3)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	9	67% (6)	0% (0)	33% (3)
6. Responsible Council	13	70% (9)	15% (2)	15% (2)
Total	86**	60% (52)	12% (10)	28% (24)

** Some new indicators do not have targets set for the year as baseline data is being collected in 2023-24. See individual priorities for details.

A listing of indicators, which have met or exceeded target, have met within 95% of target, or have failed to meet target by more than 5% are shown within each of the 6 priority scorecards.

4.2 The Performance Trend

This measure compares performance at Quarter 3 2023-24 with performance at Quarter 3 2022-23 by setting out:

- The percentage of indicators where performance compared to last year has improved.
- The percentage of indicators where performance compared to last year has declined.
- The percentage of indicators where performance compared to last year is the same.

St Helens Borough Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24

In the supporting scorecards for each priority a black arrow pointing up, downwards or sideways is used to depict indicators in each of the above 3 scenarios.

NB. There are a small number of indicators for 2023-24, where performance data in 2022-23 is not available and therefore it is not possible to show a performance trend. Where this is the case N/A appears.

Priority	Number of Indicators with data	% improved on last year	% worse than last year	% the same as last year
1. Ensure children and young people have a positive start	22	45% (10)	41% (9)	14% (3)
2. Health, independence, and care	19	42% (8)	42% (8)	16% (3)
3. Safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods	11	45% (5)	55% (6)	0% (0)
4. Strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy	5	60% (3)	40% (2)	0% (0)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	8	63% (5)	37% (3)	0% (0)
6. Responsible Council	13	70% (9)	15% (2)	15% (2)
Total	78	51% (40)	39% (30)	10% (8)

4.3 Inter Authority Comparison

This measure shows how performance in St Helens compares to the performance of a family group of authorities similar to St Helens. It does this by ranking each authority's performance by quartile. The top performing 25 % are in the first quartile and the bottom 25% in the fourth quartile. Authorities in between are placed in either the 2nd or 3rd quartiles. Comparative national data is only available to be used for **43** indicators.

In the supporting scorecards for each priority, where this measure is used, green indicates that St Helens is in the top best performing quartile, red that it is in the bottom quartile or yellow/amber that St Helens is in either the 2nd or 3rd quartile). The England average figure (Eng, Av) is also now presented, as is the statistical neighbour group average (LA Av.) to provide additional context to comparative performance.

Priority	Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
1. Ensure children and young people have a positive start	22	23% (5)	14% (3)	23% (5)	40% (9)

Priority	Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
2. Health, independence, and care	11	18% (2)	9% (1)	46% (5)	27% (3)
3. Safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods	0	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
4. Strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy	6	33% (2)	17% (1)	50% (3)	0% (0)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	2	0% (0)	50% (1)	0% (0)	50% (1)
6. Responsible Council	2	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (1)	50% (1)
Total	43	21%* (9)	14% (6)	33%* (14)	33%* (14)

NB – Percentages rounded to nearest whole number

The latest available picture of inter authority performance largely relates to the 2021-22 financial year. Therefore, St Helens position vis-a-vis its quartile position is based on St Helens performance in that particular year relative to its statistical neighbours. Future reports will be updated to reflect the 2022-23 comparative performance position as and when verified data is published.

4.4 Summary and conclusion of statistical analysis

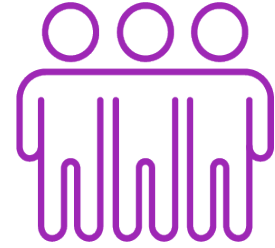
- **72%** of indicator targets have been either exceeded, met fully, or met within 95% of target. This compares to 73% of indicators in Quarter 3 2022-23.
- **28%** of indicator targets were not met, compared to 27% in Quarter 3 2022-23.
- The trend measure indicates over the course of the last 12 months **51%** of indicators showed improvement, **10%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **39%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory. The position in Quarter 3 2022-23 was that **52%** of indicators showed improvement, **7%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **41%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory.
- **21%** of all indicators where comparison is possible are in the top quartile, compared to 24% at Quarter 3 2021-22, whilst **33%** are in the bottom quartile, compared to 27% at Quarter 3 2022-23. 14% and 33% of indicators are in the 2nd and 3rd quartile respectively, compared to 20% and 29% in Quarter 3 2022-23 (NB percentages rounded to nearest whole number).
- Annual targets were set where possible within the context of national, Northwest, and local authority comparator group data. Equally targets aspire to be challenging but achievable within the context of the available resources. The targets also take account of performance during the last 3 years which has been an unprecedented period due to the onset and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, increasing demand for services and severe financial constraints.
- Performance should therefore be viewed within the context of what has continued to be a challenging operational period for the Council. The legacy impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, rising demand for services and the requirement to deliver significant budget savings has impacted the Council's ability to meet targets and demonstrate improvements in performance trends. Equally in many areas the impact of the pandemic on performance is yet to be fully realised and understood. However, given the effect of the pandemic on St Helens to date there is the strong likelihood that

St Helens Borough Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24

existing inequalities may be widened. This presents risks for future performance, but particularly in areas such as public health, education and schools and children's services where comparative performance is already challenging.

5. Part 2 - Commentary on performance against priority and outcome

Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all



Outcomes

- Our communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong, and caring.
- Our voluntary and community groups are better supported to make a difference.
- Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all.

Overview of priority performance

The tables below show provide an overview of performance at Quarter 3 2023-24 for the indicators reported.

Performance Against Target

Number of Indicators with data	% target fully met	% target met within 95%	% target not met
14	64% (9)	0% (0)	36% (5)

The Performance Trend

Number of Indicators with data	% improved on last year	% worse than last year	% the same as last year
11	45% (5)	55% (6)	0% (0)

Inter Authority Comparison

Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
0	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Priority 3 - Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all

Tier 1

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
Our communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong, and caring	SC-001	Number of serious violence offences per 1,000 population	Quarterly	Lower	1.32	1.24	0.3	0.59	0.84	9.68%	↑	N/A
	SC-002	Percentage rate in repeat victimisation for those domestic violence cases being managed by a MARAC	Quarterly	Lower	38.1	39	26.9	28.3	29.3	24.87%	↑	N/A
	SC-005	The number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) related complaints received and resolved by the council as a percentage of all ASB complaints	Quarterly	Higher	N/A	75%	95.5	97.4	97.9	30.53%	N/A	N/A
Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all	HS-001	Number of households who are being assessed as being owed the full housing duty (where homelessness has not been prevented or relieved).	Quarterly	Lower	63	70	37	73	100	-100%	↓	N/A

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
29	HS-002A	Total number of unique individuals verified as rough sleeping	Quarterly	Lower	84	100	60	111	150	-87.5%	N/A	N/A
	HS-002B	Number of unique individuals verified as new to rough sleeping	Quarterly	Lower	35	45	26	68	99	-182.86%	N/A	N/A
	G&P-011	Number of net increases in dwelling stock	Quarterly	Higher	427	486	64	158	207	-43.21%	↓	N/A
	G&P-012	New affordable homes as a percentage of all new homes (gross)	Quarterly	Higher	29%	24%	33	24	26	8.33%	↓	N/A

Tier 2

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
30 Our communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong, and caring	SC-003	Number of domestic abuse recorded incidents per 1,000 population	Quarterly	Lower	26.83	26.5	5.5	10.83	15.71	20.94%	↑	N/A
	SC-004	Number of hate crimes incidents per 1,000 population	Quarterly	Lower	2.6	2.53	0.55	1.22	1.71	8.06%	↑	N/A
Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all	HS-003	Number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	Quarterly	Higher	70	15	5	8	20	100%	↓	N/A
	HS-005	Number of households that are families with children living in temporary accommodation.	Quarterly	Lower	112	120	31	59	87	3.33%	↓	N/A

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
	HS-006	Total number of weeks households spent in temporary accommodation provided by the local authority (not B&B/refuge).	Quarterly	Lower	10.9	10.5	13.6	12.2	11.7	-11.43%	↓	N/A
	HS-007	Number of households assisted to reduce fuel poverty.	Quarterly	Higher	1213	1100	287	497	853	21.86%	↑	N/A

31

Summary of Performance against outcome and action for improvement

Outcome - Our communities and neighbourhoods are safe, strong, and caring

Current Performance

- Performance against the outcome remains strong at Quarter 3 with all indicators meeting target and showing reductions across all reported crime categories compared to the same period in the previous year.
- **SC-001** - From 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 there have been a total of 155 reports of serious violence recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens, giving a cumulative rate of 0.84 per 1000 population which has met the target set at 0.93. For the same period last year, there was a total of 188 reports of serious violence recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens. During quarter 3 of 2023-24 there was a total of 48 reports of serious violence recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens, giving a rate of 0.26 per 1000 population.
- **SC-002** – From 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 there have been a total of total of 19 MARAC meetings where 550 cases were discussed with 161 of these being repeat cases, giving a cumulative repeat rate of 29.3%. This has met the target which has been set at 39%. In the same period last year there was a total of 545 cases discussed at MARAC with 206 of those being repeat cases, giving a cumulative repeat rate of 37.8%. During Quarter 3 there was a total of 6 meetings where 190 cases were discussed at MARAC with 59 of these being repeat cases, giving a repeat rate of 31.1%. During Quarter 3, 55.7% (106) of referrals were from Merseyside Police, the remaining 44.3% (84) of referrals were received from other agencies such as IDVA.
- **SC-003** - From 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 there have been a total of 2,881 reports of domestic abuse recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens, giving a cumulative rate of 15.71 per 1000 population which has met the target set at 19.87. In the same period last year there was a total of 3,710 reports of domestic abuse recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens. During Quarter three of 2023-24 there was a total of 896 reports of domestic abuse recorded by Merseyside Police, giving a rate of 4.89 per 1000 population for this period.
- **SC-004** - From 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 there have been a total of 314 reports of hate crime recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens, giving a cumulative rate of 1.71 per 1000 population which has met the target set at 1.86. For the same period last year, there was a total of 357 reports of hate crime recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens. During quarter 3 of 2023-24 there was a total of 101 reports of hate crime recorded by Merseyside Police in St. Helens, giving a rate of 0.55 per 1000 population. Racial hate crime was the most reported hate crime accounting for 64.4% (65) of hate crimes, sexual orientation related hate crime was the second most reported crime accounting for 19.8% (20) of hate crimes. Disability related hate crime accounted for 11.9% (12) of hate crimes and religion related hate crimes accounted for 4% (4) of hate crimes during this period. There were no reports of transgender related hate crimes during this quarter.
- **SC-005** - In the period October to December 2023 there have been a total of 149 anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaints reported to the contact centre. There are 3 outstanding complaints from December which are yet to be resolved giving a resolve rate of 97.9%. For the same period last year, there

were a total of 142 complaints reported to the contact centre. Over the course of the first 3 quarters there has been a total of 615 complaints reported, compared to 622 over the same period in the previous year.

Action for Improvement

- Positive performance is recorded for the Community Safety indicators, including a continued reduction in the number of reported cases of anti-social behaviour.

Outcome - Our neighbourhoods provide the right homes for all

Current Performance

- Performance against the outcome and targets set remains challenging at the end of Quarter 3.
- **HS-001** - The number of households owed the full housing duty where homelessness was not prevented was 27 for this quarter, greater than the 14 cases for Quarter 3 2023-24. This brings the cumulative total to 100, which has exceeded the annual target of 70. With effect from 3rd April 2018 the legislation has changed and accepting for full housing duty only occurs once homeless prevention and relief periods of up to 112 days have expired. Trying to resolve cases at prevention and relief stage remains the primary focus for the team. The team continue to explore all potential move on options including private rented sector and supported housing where appropriate. More cases have proceeded into main duty this quarter as no suitable properties became available within the relief period, the demand is exceeding the supply available, some clients have specific property needs, such as large or adapted properties or specific areas due to support needs. Similarly private rented sector housing has become less accessible due to rising rent levels and more landlords selling properties to take advantage of the increased market prices at the present time. the cumulative figure to date is 100 which far exceeds the target and reflects the difficulties in accessing alternative accommodation in a certain timeframe.
- **HS-002A / HS-002B** – Over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24 a total of 39 unique individuals were found rough sleeping across St Helens. Of the 39 individuals, 31 of the total found rough sleeping were classed as new to rough sleeping. New to Rough Sleeping is defined as not found rough sleeping in the previous 5 years. This brings the cumulative position over the first 3 quarters to 150 unique individuals found rough sleeping and 99 classed as new to rough sleeping within St Helens. Annual targets for both indicators have been exceeded at the end of Quarter 3.
- **HS-003** - A total of 12 private sector dwellings were returned to occupation or demolished in Quarter 3 2023-24. The brings the cumulative total for the year to date to 20, therefore meeting target, but showing a decrease in performance compared to the same period last year when 45 private sector dwellings were returned to occupation or demolished. Work is ongoing to liaise with the owners of vacant properties and encourage reoccupation.
- **HS-005** - The number of families with children in temporary accommodation was 27 over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24, bringing the cumulative total for the year to date to 86. The indicator met target this quarter, but performance was worse than the same period last year. Some of the cases in

33

temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter have offers of accommodation via local RSLs but there continues to be significant delays with void works and a reduced number of family properties being advertised via 'Under One Roof'.

- **HS-006** - There were 18 households who had spent time in temporary accommodation over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24. The cumulative total to date is 62 households who have spent 11.7 weeks in temporary accommodation to date. This is higher than the average of 10.4 weeks spent in such accommodation in the same period of the previous year and is off target for the quarter. There have been some significant delays with allocations via the RSLs which has impacted on time spent in temporary accommodation. Clients are positively encouraged to move on from temporary accommodation as soon as practicable. This figure only includes clients where there was a statutory duty to accommodate, it does not include those households who have been accommodated under discretionary powers.
- **HS-007** – A total of 853 households have been assisted to reduce fuel poverty over the course of the first 3 quarters 2023-24, above the target of 700, which may be due to an increase in referrals/requests for support due to the impact of energy price increases. The Affordable Warmth and Welfare team continue to provide services to support highly vulnerable residents contributing to a reduction in fuel poverty within the borough. The services include assisting clients to access emergency heating repairs/boiler replacements via housing financial assistance (accessing Energy Company Funding where possible), the housing emergency fund and other externally funded schemes. The Affordable Warmth & Welfare team have also been assisting clients with welfare benefit advice to maximise income and providing general energy efficiency/affordable warmth advice. Up to the end of Quarter 3 the welfare staff dealt with 622 enquiries for advice and have secured over £1.8 million worth of annual benefit gains and arrears for vulnerable residents.
- **G&P-011** – At the end of Quarter 3 2023-24 the indicator for the net increase of housing stock did not meet target and performance is lower than the same period last year. A total of 50 net dwellings were completed in Quarter 3 2023-24, bringing the total for the year to date to 207.
- **G&P-012** - There were 16 gross affordable dwelling completions during the third quarter of 2023-4, bringing the total in the year to date to 54. This equates to 26% of the 207 gross housing completions, which is better than the annual target of 24%.

34

Action for Improvement

- HS001 – The number of cases in which homelessness has not been prevented continues to rise. This is reflective of the wider challenges experienced in the private rented sector, the availability of alternative properties and the wider impact of cost of living factors on the service. These wider factors, alongside high demand for the service continues to impact on performance. However, the service continues to provide a number of early intervention services and will work to increase awareness of the importance of early engagement with the service.
- HS002A/B - The performance on these indicators reflects a significant growth in rough sleeping. During this quarter, the service has focused on the development and implementation of the Severe Weather Protocol, in order to ensure that there is a place of safety for people experiencing rough sleeping during periods of severe weather. This service has recorded consistent demand for provision and people using this service are supported into hostel and other forms of temporary accommodation when there is capacity to do so. This is a challenging context at present as hostels are

consistently at capacity. The service continues to secure additional units of accommodation as 'move on', recently working with a new provider to secure 13 further units of accommodation for people leaving hostel. Outreach services continue to work with our wider partners to engage people who are rough sleeping to provide emergency support also.

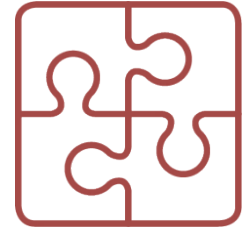
- HS006 – Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of families in temporary accommodation during Quarter 3 from the previous quarter, the indicator which records the time spent in temporary accommodation, remains worse than target. The service continues to prioritise move on from temporary accommodation, working with the Registered Provider to prioritise repairs to properties to enable a reduction in the time taken to re-let properties. However, challenges remain in the time taken for providers to re-let homes due to external factors and a reduction in the number of available affordable homes in the borough.
- G&P011 – Despite the completion of a further 50 net dwellings were completed in Quarter 3 2023-24, bringing the total for the year to date to 207, the indicator remains below target. However, a further 247 units are under construction across the borough.

For more information about individual performance indicators that support the achievement of these outcomes please see the scorecard.

Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive, and well-connected local economy

Outcomes

- Our local economy recovers and grows and people's skills and access to jobs improves
- Our town and neighbourhood centres are vibrant places for all to use, value and enjoy
- Our places are well-connected with accessible transport and digital networks



Overview of priority performance

The tables below show provide an overview of performance at Quarter 3 2023-24 for the indicators reported.

Performance Against Target

Number of Indicators with data	% target fully met	% target met within 95%	% target not met
8	63%* (5)	0% (0)	37% (3)

NB – *percentages rounded to nearest whole number

The Performance Trend

Number of Indicators with data	% improved on last year	% worse than last year	% the same as last year
5	60% (3)	40% (2)	0% (0)

Inter Authority Comparison

Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
6	33% (2)	17% (1)	50% (3)	0% (0)

Priority 4 - Support a strong, thriving, inclusive, and well-connected local economy

Tier 1

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
37 Our local economy recovers and grows and people's skills and access to jobs improves	G&P-003	Number of people supported into Employment, Education and Training through employment support schemes	Quarterly	Higher	406	N/A	28	100	115	N/A	N/A	N/A
	G&P-005A	Rate of employment (working age)	Quarterly	Higher	73.6%	75%	73.6	76.1	76.8	2.95%	↑	3rd Quartile Eng Av. 76.3 LA Av. 74.5 (Jan - Dec 2022)
	G&P-005B	Number of claimants 18-24 as a proportion of all residents of the same age	Quarterly	Lower	7.5%	7.3%	7.8	8	8.2	-7.89%	↓	3rd Quartile Eng Av. 4.7 LA Av. 7.4 (Jan 2023)
	G&P-007	Percentage of residents economically inactive due to long-term sickness	Quarterly	Lower	32.7%	32%	41.7	47.3	46.7	-45.48%	↓	3rd Quartile Eng Av. 24.2 LA Av. 31.7 (Sept 2022)

Tier 2

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
Our town and neighbourhood centres are vibrant places for all to use, value and enjoy	G&P-013	Percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks or within an agreed extension in time.	Quarterly	Higher	100%	100%	80	93	100	0%	↑	1st Quartile Eng Av. 86.0 LA Av. 95.9 (Q1, 2023/24)
	G&P-014	Percentage of minor and other applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed extension time	Quarterly	Higher	97%	95%	97.8	98.8	97.5	2.63%	↑	2nd Quartile Eng Av. 80.0 LA Av. 89.4 (Q1, 2023/24)
	G&P-015	The percentage of planning appeals granted as a percentage of all appeals	Quarterly	Lower	27%	25%	0	25	50	-100%	N/A	1st Quartile Eng Av. 28.7 LA Av. 28.5 (2022/23)
Our places are well-connected with accessible transport and digital networks	ENV-014	Percentage of Highway Inspections for footway and carriageway planned inspections completed in accordance with the Highway Code of Practice	Quarterly	Higher	N/A	90%	97	98	94	4.44%	N/A	N/A

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
	ENV-015	The percentage of Call Out for Priority (1,2 & 3) Highway defects (Footway and Carriageway) repaired or made safe within the specified period in accordance with the Highway Code of Practice.	Quarterly	Higher	N/A	90%	87	99	98	8.89%	N/A	N/A

Summary of Performance against outcome and action for improvement

Outcome – Our local economy recovers and grows and people’s skills and access to jobs improves

Current Performance

- G&P-003** - The number of people supported into Employment, Education and Training through the Community Renewal Fund, Ways to Work and Positive Inclusion schemes over the course of Quarter 3 was 15, cumulatively 115 for the year. This shows a decrease over the previous quarter (72), as Ways To Work has now moved into a different funding programme. LCR SIF funding is focused more on delivering support to economically inactive clients. The funding came with an emphasis on eligible participants for the project being Inactive at the time of registration, meaning they are further removed from the labour market and not job ready. The targets and value of this project are therefore significantly lower than those on the previous ESF-funded programme over the past 7 years. Most economically inactive participants will require longer and more intensive support to get them job ready and successful in their job search and resulting in job outcomes for this indicator. The newly adopted Inclusive Growth Strategy contains workstreams to support getting more people into employment, education, and training.
- G&P-005A** – The rate of employment sits at 76.8% (NOMIS, data period is July to June 2023), above the target of 75%. St Helens’ employment rate is still above the NW average of 73.8% and also now the England average of 75.8%. The newly adopted Inclusive Growth Strategy will support workstreams to increase access to employment opportunities across the Borough.
- G&P-005B** – The number of claimants 18-24 as a proportion of all residents of the same age has not met target for the quarter. The latest data is for November 2023 where 8.2% of 18–24-year-olds were claiming benefits, which represents a slight increase of 0.2% from the last reported data in August 2023, although levels have been largely static for some time. This indicator remains a concern as levels are significantly above NW (5.9%) and national (5.1%) levels, There are many factors including macro-economic and local labour market issues influencing this data.
- G&P-007** – St Helens’ economic inactivity rate due to long-term sickness stands at 46.7% Quarter 3, based on ONS July 2022-June 2023 data. This is significantly higher than the NW average of 31.2 and the England average of 25.6. Although economic inactivity due to long-term sickness has reduced slightly in the last quarter, it is still up by around 2,300 from the same time a year earlier, which is a steeper rise than in the NW or nationally. Caveats must be made around this survey-based data especially when unusually large spikes occur. However, there will also be some negative effects from Covid, e.g., Long Covid forcing withdrawals from the labour market and in particular mental health issues spiking across the country. Economic inactivity due to long term ill health is also a longer term multi-factored socio-economic issue. The next data points will be monitored before any early conclusions are drawn.

40

Action for Improvement

- The Ways To Work service has secured extensions to its funding from October 2023 to March 2025 due to a mix of Liverpool City Region Strategic Investment Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding. This will ensure continuation of delivery to those looking for work and continued engagement with employers.
- In addition, the funding will dictate that there will be an increased focus on economically inactive residents. This will necessitate more outreach and wider engagement tools. New targets will be created once the funding contracts are agreed.
- There will be increased provision for responding to the threat of mass redundancies and mass recruitment opportunities.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund offers St Helens other opportunities to address performance in 2023-24, particularly with local programmes under development for:
 - Supporting town centre markets and surrounding businesses.
 - Business support, including start-up support, which will address business registrations and business density.
 - Wider LCR programmes around specialist business support and employment and skills.

41

Outcome – Our town and neighbourhood centres are vibrant places for all to use, value and enjoy

Current Performance

- **G&P-013** – Over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24 100% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks or within an agreed extension in time, which met the target of 100%. There were 6 major applications determined in this quarter.
- **G&P-014** – The indicator for the percentage of minor and other applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed extension time exceeded target in Quarter 3 2023-24, with performance standing at 100%. In Quarter 3 there were 154 decisions, all but 4 made within 8 weeks or an agreed extended time period.
- **G&P-015** – 3 planning appeal were granted out of the 6 appeal decisions made in Quarter 3 2023-24. The annual target is set at 25% of appeals granted as a percentage of all appeals made. This statistic is subject to some large fluctuations as often there are only a small number of appeals determined in St Helens by the Planning Inspectorate each quarter. In the previous quarter 4 appeal decisions were received, with only one of the four allowed.

Action for Improvement

- **G&P-013** – In regard to the percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks or within an agreed extension of time - Officers will continue to work with applicants and agents on major applications to build strong working relationships to enable applications to be determined in within the statutory 13-week deadline or agree extensions of time where these are necessary.

Outcome – Our places are well-connected with accessible transport and digital networks

Current Performance

- **ENV-014** – Over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24, 94% of Highway Inspections for footway and carriageway planned inspections were completed in accordance with the Highway Code of Practice. The indicator is exceeding the annual target of 90%. This is a new indicator without historic data to benchmark against.
- **ENV-015** – Over the course of Quarter 2 2023/24, 98% of Call Outs for Priority (1,2 & 3) Highway defects (Footway and Carriageway) were repaired or made safe within the specified period in accordance with the Highway Code of Practice. Performance is comfortably above the 90% target for the year. This is a new indicator without historic data to benchmark against.

Action for Improvement

- **ENV-014 / ENV-015** - Monthly performance management monitoring will continue to take place to assess performance and take appropriate action if required.

For more information about individual performance indicators that support the achievement of these outcomes please see the scorecard.

Priority 5 - Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture



Outcomes

- Our environment is protected for the future
- Our green and open spaces are enjoyed and looked after by us all
- Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts, and culture

Overview of priority performance

The tables below show provide an overview of performance at Quarter 3 2023-24 for the indicators reported. The figures include performance of the 3 recycling and waste indicators for Quarter 2 where reporting is time lagged.

Performance Against Target

Number of Indicators with data	% target fully met	% target met within 95%	% target not met
9	67% (6)	0% (0)	33% (3)

The Performance Trend

Number of Indicators with data	% improved on last year	% worse than last year	% the same as last year
8	63% (5)	37% (3)	0% (0)

Inter Authority Comparison

Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
2	0% (0)	50% (1)	0% (0)	50% (1)

Priority 5 - Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture

Tier 1

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
44 Our environment is protected for the future	ENV-001	The amount of direct greenhouse gas emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities (tonnes of CO2)	Quarterly (lagged)	Lower	9,054	8,551	9363	Data not yet available	To be reported in Q4	-%		N/A
	ENV-004A	Percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent for recycling	Quarterly	Higher	36%	40%	34.8	34	To be reported in Q4	-15%	↓	4th Quartile Eng Av. 42.1 LA Av. 45.0 (2021/22)
	ENV-004B	Kilograms of recycling per household	Quarterly	Higher	300.0	325	71.57	138.98	To be reported in Q4	-14.47%	N/A	N/A
	ENV-005	Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household.	Quarterly	Lower	445.2	477	130.2	261.75	To be reported in Q4	-9.75%	↓	2nd Quartile Eng Av. 553.9 LA Av. 529.7 (2021/22)

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
							June	Sept	Dec			
	ENV-006	Number of engagements within the waste and recycling service	Quarterly	Higher	N/A	TBC	1040	2468	2825	N/A	N/A	N/A
Our green and open spaces are enjoyed and looked after by us all	ENV-007	Average number of days taken to remove fly tipping from the public land	Quarterly	Lower	N/A	TBC	6	6	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
	ENV-008	Percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter at an acceptable level	Quarterly	Higher	97.43%	92%	96.64	96.94	97.96	6.48%	↑	N/A
Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts, and culture	CC-001	Total number of physical and virtual visits to Library Services	Quarterly	Higher	402,222	270,000	91,140	208,717	311,060	53.61%	↑	N/A
	CC-002	Number of visits to council managed sports and leisure centres	Quarterly	Higher	1,397,209	1,350,000	332,871	665,006	1,020,372	0.78%	↑	N/A

Tier 2

Outcome	Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	22/23 Outturn	23/24 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	Q3 Dec	% Variance from Target (DEC)	Trend	Comparative Performance
Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts, and culture 46	CC-003	Total number of attendances at library, arts and cultural events supported by St Helens Library and Arts Services	Quarterly	Higher	37,114	40,000	9,788	25,682	36,357	21.19%	↑	N/A
	CC-005	Number of Physical Items Borrowed from St Helens Libraries	Quarterly	Higher	342,314	240,000	81,951	186,231	253,536	40.85%	↓	N/A
	CC-006	Number of Virtual Items Borrowed from St Helens Libraries	Quarterly	Higher	67,668	65,000	15896	39,146	64,839	33%	↑	N/A

Summary of Performance against outcome and action for improvement

Outcome – Our environment is protected for the future

Current Performance

- **ENV-001** – Quarterly data reporting on Greenhouse Gas emissions is time lagged by one quarter, however the Quarter 2 data is not yet available. The latest available data shows that within the 12- month period to the end of June 2023 that total emissions under the influence of local authority control were 9,363 tonnes of CO2. This represents an increase from the 12-month period to the end of March 2023 where CO2 emissions totalled 9,092 tonnes. The indicator has not met the quarterly target of 8,957 tonnes of CO2. Whilst electricity use in corporate buildings decreased, gas use over the 12-month period to June 2023 was substantially higher than it was in the 12-month period to the end of March 2023. Electricity use in schools also somewhat increased. The national government also published its annual update to CO2 conversion factors for different energy types, and grid

electricity has a slightly higher carbon intensity than in the previous year. Together, these factors mean that CO2 emissions have increased over the last 12-month period.

- **ENV-004A** – Data for the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent for recycling is time-lagged by one quarter. The recycling rate now stands at 34%, which means the indicator has not met the quarterly target. This is a deterioration on the reported Quarter 2 position in 2022-23 of 37.3% and lower than the 2022-23 outturn of 36%.
- **ENV-004B** – Data for kgs of recycling per household is time-lagged by one quarter. Over the course of the first 2 quarters 2023-24, there were 138.98 kg of recycling per household, which is below the quarterly target of 162.5 kg.
- **ENV-005** – The kilograms of residual household waste collected per household is time-lagged by one quarter. Performance now stands at 261.75 kilograms of residual household waste collected per household, which means the indicator has not met the quarterly target. This is a deterioration on the reported Quarter 2 position in 2022-23 of 240.64 kilograms.
- **ENV-006** - During the third quarter there was a total of 357 engagements with the waste and recycling service, bringing the cumulative total for the year to date to 2,825. This is a new indicator, and no target was set for 2023-24. The outturn data from 2023-24 will be used to inform future target setting.

Action for Improvement

- 47
- **ENV-001** - In partnership with the Combined Authority, funding via Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has been sought. The buildings that have been selected are from the sites with the highest energy cost and emissions. Proposed improvements include replacing existing heating systems to newer more efficient and low carbon systems, improved insulation, and the installation of solar PV at some sites. The sites selected are Chester Lane Centre, Queens Park Leisure Centre, St Helens Town Hall, Sutton Leisure, The Gamble Institute, Earlestown Town Hall, Hardshaw Brook Depot. We have now installed a network of 20 charging points at the depot, and we have taken receipt of the first 5 of 32 EV vehicles, with the remaining 27 to be delivered in Quarter 4. We service is currently without a Climate Officer however we are currently out for advert.
 - **ENV-004A / ENV0004B / ENV-005** - The Councils new recycling and waste service has now been rolled out across the borough including additional capacity with new bags being issued to all household. In addition, direct communication information will be distributed to every household, support by an extensive programme of social media and in-person events, which is hoped to raise the importance of residents using the recycling service. It is anticipated that we will start to see the benefits in quarter 4.
 - **ENV-006** - Significant recycling and waste engagement of the public is planned in from July to November 2023 linked to the re-launch of the domestic recycling and waste service. Details of all events are published on our website and on social media.

Outcome – Our green and open spaces are enjoyed and looked after by us all

Current Performance

- **ENV-007** – Over the course of the first 3 quarters, the average number of days taken to remove fly tipping from the public land was 6 days. This is a new indicator, and no target was set for 2023-24. The outturn data from 2023-24 will be used to inform future target setting.
- **ENV-008** – The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter at an acceptable level sits at 97.96% for the quarter, 6.48% ahead of target and roughly in line with performance from the same period in 2022-23.

Action for Improvement

Outcome – Our spirit and identity are celebrated through our heritage, arts, and culture

Current Performance

48

- **CC-001** – Library visits are up by 4.8% in comparison to the same period last year, keeping this KPI once again significantly above its target. St Helens Library is the most visited library in the borough so far this year (45,813 visits) and Eccleston Library has loaned the most items (38,209 loans). Active use of the digital library service has increased by 26% and digital loans are up 30.7%, demonstrating the dedication of library staff to promoting the digital service in line with the Library Strategy 2023- 2028, as well as the effectiveness of having eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, and newspapers accessible on a single platform.
- **CC-002** – Quarter 3 2023-24 attendance at leisure centres has been very strong across the service, particularly at Newton and Queens. Willowbees Adventure play at Newton has been extremely busy which has helped boost Newton's figures considerably on the previous year. The overall attendance for the year is now exceeding the target projection at this stage of the year. Go Active memberships numbers remain strong and attendances at all group exercise fitness classes have been excellent.
- **CC-003** - Over the course of Quarter 3 2023-24, there was a total of 10,675 attendances at library, arts and cultural events supported by St Helens Library and Arts Services, bringing the total in the year to date to 36,357. This is well above the Quarter 3 target of 30,000. Participation in events and activities this quarter has continued to be strong, exemplified by an extensive programme of events throughout the quarter, bringing our Borough of Culture year to a close. The Arts in Libraries programme continues to sell out shows, and class visits for subscribing members of the Schools Library Service have been taking place regularly at libraries across the service.
- **CC-005** – At the end of Quarter 3 2023-24, there was a total of 253,536 physical items borrowed from St Helens' libraries. Physical loans, though 3.3% lower than last year at the end of Quarter 3, are still exceeding the targets which have been set to reflect the impact of the proposed library strategy


on performance. Loans at Moss Bank Library are noticeably higher than last year (+18%), and the Schools Library Service have issued 10.9% more items to schools to support teaching, develop literacy, and inspire children from Nursery through to Secondary School age.

Action for Improvement

- **CC-001 / CC-003 / CC-005 / CC-006** – At the end of January 2024 the new service delivery model will commence operation and significant work will be undertaken in quarter 4 to support library users affected by the closures to continue to access the service be that at another library, on line or via the Home Delivery or Click and Collect offers. Events are being planned across the service to both promote the new offer and support customers to access the service in new locations or new ways.
- **CC-002** – Quarter 4 is historically the busiest period for the service. The focus for this period is the retention of the users who have joined the membership scheme to ensure they are retained. Work on the revised and simplified Terms and Conditions is nearing its conclusion and these will be ready for adoption and publication towards the end of the Quarter.

For more information about individual performance indicators that support the achievement of these outcomes please see the scorecard.

This page is intentionally left blank

 ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL	<h2>Place Services Scrutiny Committee</h2> <h3>15 April 2024</h3>
--	---

Report Title	Housing Voids Spotlight Review
Cabinet Portfolio	Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet Member	Councillor Richard McCauley
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Tanya Wilcock Director of Communities Tanyawilcock@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Karl Allender Scrutiny Support Officer karlallender@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life.	X
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities.	X
	Create safe and strong communities and neighborhoods for all.	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy.	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	
	Be a responsible Council.	X

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report is a summary of the evidence that was submitted to the 'Housing Voids' Place Services Scrutiny Committee Spotlight Review and concludes with a series of recommendations linking directly to, and in support of, several Council Priorities.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Place Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the Task Group Report and its recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2) Submit the recommendations to Cabinet for response.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1. This report presents the evidence submitted to and the findings of the 'Housing Voids' Place Services Scrutiny Committee Spotlight Review, held between 2 October 2023 and 20 November 2023. The principal purpose of the review was to:

- Engage with a variety of housing partners in the Borough.
- Understand the challenges facing the housing sector.
- Understand the turnover of properties and the number of void properties that exist in the Borough.
- Investigate the work underway to reduce void turnaround times.
- Explore the impact voids have on the Council's statutory housing function.
- Scrutinise the actions undertaken by the Council and partner agencies to address the issues.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1. At the Place Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Workshop held on 12 June 2023, Members agreed to establish a Task Group to strengthen their understanding of the issue of Housing Voids, with a focus for the review being voids in the Social Housing Sector. Members agreed to hold a Spotlight Review to gain a better understanding of the wider issues within the housing sector and to identify potential areas for improvement.

- 4.2. Members of the Place Services Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in the Spotlight Review. Participating Members included:

- Councillor Robyn Hattersley (Chair)
- Councillor Tracy Dickinson
- Councillor John Hodkinson
- Councillor Keith Laird

- Councillor Ann McCormack
 - Councillor Geoffrey Pearl
- 4.3. The following officers and housing partners supported the Spotlight Review meeting, which was held on 2 October 2023:
- Samantha Murray Assistant Director (Housing and Communities)
 - Paul Warburton Managing Director, Torus
 - Lisa O Connell Service Lead (Allocations), Torus
 - Samantha Lloyd Policy Manager, Torus
 - Heidi Hewitt Service Manager, Your Housing Group
 - Karl Allender Scrutiny Support Officer
- 4.4. The following officers attended the 2nd Spotlight Review meeting, which was held on 20 November:
- Samantha Murray Assistant Director (Housing and Communities)
 - Karl Allender Scrutiny Support Officer
- 4.5. At the initial meeting, Members were provided with an overview and background information relating to the context of the Council's role in relation to Housing Allocations and Homelessness. Whilst the Council is not a housing provider, it retains the statutory duties of a Strategic Housing Authority. The relevant data that was shared with Members included:
- there are 6,500 people on the Under-One-Roof waiting list as of October 2023.
 - 20% of the Borough's housing stock is in the socially rented sector.
 - 981 lettings of social homes were completed in 2021/22.
- 4.6. In order to fulfil its statutory duty the Council must:
- Periodically review the Borough's housing needs in relation to housing conditions and housing mix.
 - Distribute Disabled Facilities Grants (subject to means testing and up to a prescribed maximum) to enable Homes to be adapted to meet the needs of the Borough's existing population.
 - Have a Housing Allocation scheme, publish a summary of it and allocate housing accommodation in accordance with the scheme.
 - Make inquiries into cases of homelessness or threatened homelessness, to provide interim accommodation to people who are homeless and secure permanent accommodation for people who are eligible for assistance.
 - Ensure that homelessness and the prevention of homelessness advice is freely available.
 - Publish a homelessness strategy at least every 5 years and take it into account in discharging its functions.
 - Inspect dwellings to identify hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and take appropriate enforcement action where Category 1 hazards exist.

- Licence Houses in Multiple Occupation where there are five or more persons in two or more households sharing of facilities.
 - Develop and publish a Tenancy Strategy for the borough.
- 4.7. In recent years, the social housing sector has had to respond to several challenges regarding an increase in the number of vacant properties (Voids), which has resulted in applicants waiting longer for a property to become available and ready to occupy. For Homelessness Services this impact results in residents staying longer than is suitable in temporary accommodation.
- 4.8. The challenges faced are reflected in the Council's Quarterly Performance Reports. The Place Services Scrutiny Committee has been monitoring the respective Housing related performance indicators, in particular:
- HS001 - Number of households who are assessed as owed a full housing duty (where homelessness has not been prevented or relieved).
 - HS003 - Number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned to occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the Local Authority.
 - HS005 - Number of households that are families with children living in temporary accommodation.
- 4.9. Although the Council is a non-stock holding authority, it retains a key role in terms of ensuring there is suitable housing available to meet the needs of the Borough. As a Housing Authority, the Council provides an Allocations Scheme for determining housing need priorities and for defining the procedure to be followed in allocating social rent and affordable rent properties.
- 4.10. The Council has a Nominations Agreement with Registered Housing Providers, which sets out the percentage of available properties that the Providers will make available to the Local Authority. The delivery vehicle for this Nominations Agreement is called 'Under One Roof' which is a 'choice based' letting system managed on behalf of the Council by Torus.
- 4.11. Members were provided with the current context and key challenges that the social housing sector is facing. Supply and demand issues are key contributors to the increasing waiting times for social housing, with demand significantly outstripping supply. Members were advised that the current economic context, together with the cost-of-living crisis, has had a significant increase in the demand for affordable homes. This coupled with changes over recent years with regards to supporting refugees' programmes, such as the Homes for Ukraine programme, has meant that the number of available homes is not sufficient to meet the need.
- 4.12. Members were informed that the scale of demand has increased year on year. There are over 1,000 calls to the contact centre per month seeking support from the Housing Options Service. At the time of this report, the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation (as temporary accommodation) to avoid homelessness involved 13 families. As a result, families are being

accommodated in temporary accommodation that is out of the Borough, which is increasing the financial impact on Council expenditure.

- 4.13. Members were informed that the Council's responses included a letter to all Registered Providers requesting assistance to maximise the availability of properties and to maximise the use of the Under One Roof letting scheme. There had also been an operational commitment from Torus to prioritise voids allocated to people in temporary accommodation.
- 4.14. Officers meet with Registered Providers on a quarterly basis and most recently there was significant dialogue with the sector in relation to the recent Allocations Policy Changes and the review of the Nominations Agreement.
- 4.15. Members were informed that the key priorities to improve the process are:
- to minimise the time that applicants wait for an available property.
 - to encourage move on and throughput of hostel accommodation (time delays result in the need for B&B accommodation to be used which in turn creates frustration for applicants).
 - acknowledge that properties need to be prepared to a good standard.
- 4.16. Members raised questions around the use of benchmarking data around void turnaround times, homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation; they queried if our statistics are comparative with neighbouring authorities. It was noted that the issues experienced in St Helens are a national trend. Members were also reassured that information is shared between regional authorities via a Merseyside Working Group, to highlight best practice and planning and processes for improvements.
- 4.17. Further questions were raised around Registered Providers and how the working arrangements are in terms of cooperation and engagement. It was noted that the Council does have a positive working relationship with all Registered Providers with housing stock in the Borough associated with the authority; however, it was noted that there are some challenges with the Registered Providers who have a small stock presence in the Borough. Some Registered Providers also now operate on a national basis and have a presence in many areas, making them less visible in the borough.
- 4.18. The Task Group was informed that the Torus baseline for properties to be allocated via Under-One-Roof is 75% and for all other Registered Providers it is 50% of their vacant properties. It was highlighted that the allocations baseline needed regular monitoring across all respective Registered Providers in the Borough.
- 4.19. Members also raised concerns about the lack of engagement into this Spotlight Review from some of the Registered Providers operating in the borough; only two Registered Providers engaged from the eight that were invited. Members suggested that a regular Focus Group should be held with

all Registered Providers encouraged to attend. Members agreed that collective action is imperative.

- 4.20. Members questioned how often the Nomination Agreement is reviewed. It was advised that the review should take place every few years and preparations were in place to commence a review of the existing agreement. It was further highlighted that this was a good opportunity to reach out and negotiate with Registered Providers on the percentage baseline, and to scrutinise and monitor more closely the behaviour of Providers in maximising housing provision.
- 4.21. It was noted that a new post of Strategic Housing Officer has recently been recruited to, which will support this process by providing additional capacity to monitor the delivery of the expected properties and adherence to the Nominations Agreement. The Task Group agreed that an update should be brought to the Place Services Scrutiny Committee on the developments of the Nomination Agreement as well as the progress made to engage with all Registered Providers.

Evidence from Registered Providers (Torus)

- 4.22. Members received a presentation from Torus who gave an overview of the organisation and its remit. Torus has a significant footprint across the Northwest supporting 11 authorities with approximately 40,000 units in its portfolio. Approximately 13,500 homes are within St Helens consisting of 11,298 for general needs; 1,410 housing for older people; and 111 supported housing units.
- 4.23. Torus administer the UnderOneRoof allocations scheme on behalf of the Local Authority and have delivered this service since 2006 as one of eleven Registered Providers on the Under One Roof Scheme. Torus is the largest participating landlord, hosting a nomination agreement of 75% of Housing Provision. The banding criteria is set out below:
- Band A – for households with an urgent need to move,
 - Band B – for households with a high priority to move,
 - Band C – for households with an identified housing need,
 - Band D – for households with no other housing need but interested in affordable social housing and home buy.
- 4.24. The demand for housing as of September 2023 is set out in Table 1 below. Following a refresh of the waiting list membership in March 2022, the number of applications reduced from 10,800 to 6,015. Recent evidence is showing an increase in demand which has been attributed to the cost-of-living crisis, high interest rates, property availability and cost of rents in the private rented sector and new build properties. The increase in demand is particularly prevalent with Band A and in Band B.

Table 1

Bands	Numbers
Band A	214
Band A*	30
Band B	1302
Band B*	92
Band C	1829
Band D	3381
Grand Total	6848

- 4.25. Torus also provided a breakdown of demand by bedroom need as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

1 bedroom	3514
2 bedrooms	2089
3 bedrooms	1018
4 bedrooms	223
5 + bedrooms	4

- 4.26. Torus highlighted that the data indicates demand for smaller dwellings housing will increase even further. It was suggested that this is attributed to both an ageing population and a reduction in the average family size, with the forecast being that this trend will continue over the next 10/15 years. Torus discussed their 5 Year Corporate Plan and the thinking around the 'future demand for housing'.
- 4.27. Data taken from the 2021 Census Housing Summary Overview (31 January 2023 update) shows that 30.8% of housing in St Helens is within the rented sector, with 20.6% of the total rented accommodation being in the Social Housing Sector. Currently, demand is higher than the regional and national averages; moreover, St Helens has a lower percentage of 1 and 2-bedroom

properties than the rest of the region and nationally. Based on the future trend forecast, Members agreed that it would be helpful for the 'Future Demand for Housing Report' to be shared with the Place Services Scrutiny Committee to enable Members to keep up to date on the national housing market context and the trend of demand.

- 4.28. Demand for sheltered accommodation schemes has also seen an increase. The demand appears to be predominantly (but not exclusively) single males. This trend has seen a resultant rise in anti-social behaviour within sheltered accommodation properties, which increases demand on resources and makes these schemes challenging to manage. Torus stated that the sheltered accommodation schemes will be reviewed. Members agreed that Place Scrutiny Committee would like to be kept up to date with the progress of the Sheltered Accommodation Scheme Review.
- 4.29. Torus explained that a new IT system was being procured and developed to support Under One Roof and will become live in 2024. enabling customers and residents to make better informed choices on their tenancy, and easy access to bidding and managing supply and demand mapping.
- 4.30. Torus is the biggest provider of properties in Under One Roof; in the year to date, Torus had provided 218 properties of the 283 let through Under One Roof. It was discussed that the monitoring of all providers should be enhanced to ensure providers are maximising the properties available within the Nominations Agreement.
- 4.31. Torus discussed void turnaround times across the group. At the time of this meeting, the voids end-to-end process was taking a longer period of time than the target. Year to date, the Torus re-let time was 112.6 days, with this being a year-on-year increase since 2020.
- 4.32. Members questioned the process and the cause of the delays and were advised that challenges faced in the sector in terms of void turnaround is staff retention. The capacity to maintain properties in a timely manner has been severely affected due to a high staff turnover rate. HMS, the main contractor supporting Torus with repairs and maintenance, carried out a rigorous procurement exercise to recruit 110 apprentices across the respective skilled areas to improve its capacity to deal with and reduce the number of voids and the time it takes to relet the properties. Stabilising the contractor workforce has been a priority, with staff retention being the focus. Torus and HMS will continue to look at making progress in this area. Members suggested ideas on how the Council may be able to support this process. As well as recruitment and retention issues, the cost increases and accessibility of certain materials was a major challenge that slowed down the repair process.
- 4.33. Torus ensure that voids standards are maintained and remain high, prior to re-letting; however, this is often proving to extend the end-to-end process as it can often take up to two weeks to clear a property ready for inspection. The

turnaround can then often be stalled due to the availability of inspectors. Although adding an additional cost and time factor, Torus stated the importance of maintaining pre-let standards in order to support tenants in setting up their home as well as providing longer term tenancies. The standard of the property alongside the allocations service, create important first impressions on new tenants and can set the course of the future relationship with their landlord.

- 4.34. Torus highlighted issues with rubbish and clearance when a property becomes void. It was noted that property clearance is a significant and increasing problem. This is both costly and time consuming.
- 4.35. Members raised questions around the working relationship between Registered Providers and the Council. Torus highlighted that Registered Providers do not compete against one another and that the relationship with the Council is very good.
- 4.36. In terms of improvements, there was an agreement between the Council and Torus that data sharing needed to be improved from Under One Roof to the Council. A lack of resources had prevented regular, detailed monitoring by the Council and Torus, and improving the ability for cross cutting data sharing and monitoring was crucial. This has been addressed with regular reports being received.

Evidence from Registered Providers (Your Housing Group)

- 4.37. Members received a presentation from Your Housing Group, who reinforced the challenges mentioned by Torus; particularly in relation to space, bedroom requirements and the shifting forecast for demand in the sector going forward.
- 4.38. Similar to Torus, Your Housing Group's voids turnaround time is 90.07 Days on average, with an average turnaround cost of £4k. Although these figures are high, there is evidence of these number decreasing from its peak.
- 4.39. Both Torus and Your Housing are facilitating regular meetings to mitigate the challenges. As well as this, both Registered Providers are delivering Task Groups to scope further potential changes to meet the challenges. Members felt that it would be helpful to understand the outcomes of this work and would welcome the final report to be brought to a future meeting. Members suggested that this should also be shared with all Registered providers.
- 4.40. It was further reinforced that re-let times are significantly hampered by the need for house clearances, this being a particular problematic when drug related paraphernalia is present. Members discussed whether penalties or incentives could be considered and whether Registered Providers had explored opportunities to incentivise tenants to maintain and leave their properties in a reasonable state of repair (i.e., without leaving extensive rubbish for clearance).

- 4.41. Your Housing Group expressed that tenancy retention and sustainability is vital for stable tenancy and improving attrition rates and is a key focus for the organisation on how this can be improved. The tenancy termination data provided to Members is set out in Table 3 below. It is evident that many of the termination reasons are showing a decreasing trend and the overall termination figures have reduced in comparison to the previous year.
- 4.42. As shown in Table 3, 'Deceased' is the most common reason for in the end of a tenancy and the Homes becoming available. In many cases where a tenant has died there are challenges with void turnaround times as many of the properties will not have received maintenance for several years in some cases. Officers explained that it can often be difficult to gain access to properties to assess potential work requirements making pre-planning difficult.
- 4.43. The second highest reason for the end of a tenancy could be mitigated if potential tenants had more control over where they live. Although the Choice Based System currently in place does allow some autonomy over choice of location, the issue with housing voids often limits the potential to choose a preferred location. By reducing the number of voids, the less likely people will want to move to a more suitable location, the fewer terminations, and void periods the registered providers are likely to have to deal with. Members were keen to monitor this data from all providers.

Site Visit

- 4.44. Members undertook a Site Visit on 2 November 2023 to two Torus properties in St Helens. The main purpose was to look at the pre-tenancy voids standard. The voids standard does differ from one provider to the next. Some providers may communicate to tenants at sign-up that it is their responsibility to decorate and furnish their home and keep gardens in good and clear condition. However, members were in support of the high standard set.
- 4.45. It was evident that the voids standard is a priority for Torus and Members valued the site visit. Questions were raised around incentives for tenants to maintain the high standard on leaving the property vacant and or penalties for damage and leaving rubbish for clearance. While members agreed that a high tenancy standard is important for supporting people and families setting up a new home, the turnaround time is significantly affected by this process. As mentioned above, at the time of this report, Torus recorded that the average void turn around was 112.6 days. This is more than twice the target set for a void turnaround and a year-on-year increase. Torus noted that this was unacceptable, and that work is being undertaken to address this. Members agreed to monitor this across all 11 providers. Members suggested that it would be beneficial to see a breakdown of the voids process.
- 4.46. The quality of work and attention to detail was evident. Members thanked Torus for arranging the site visits and meeting staff to talk about their work. Following the site visit, members requested a second meeting with officers to

discuss questions raised. Questions were focused particularly on the Council's Nominations Agreement and the Council's Enforcement Policy.

Table 3.

GN Terminations 01 September 22 to 31 August 2023

Termination Reason	No of Terminations in period 01 September 2022 to 31 August 2023	% of terminations in 22/23	% of terminations in 21/22
Deceased	281	22.6	19.3
To Move Nearer Family/Friends	126	10.1	14.2
Property Unsuitable-Ill Health	111	8.9	9.4
Moved to Support or Care Accom	99	8.0	5.1
Requires Larger Home	89	7.2	8.2
Abandoned	67	5.4	4.9
ASB (Victim)	60	4.8	5.7
neighbourhood Issues	57	4.6	4.4
Property Unsuitable-Poor Cond	54	4.3	5.2
Eviction (Arrears)	37	3.0	1.1
Moving In With Partner	37	3.0	2.9
Domestic Abuse	31	2.5	2.8
Purchase Own Home	30	2.4	2.9
Affordability (Cost of Living)	26	2.1	1.6
Downsizing	24	1.9	1
Moved to Independant Accom	22	1.8	1.7
To Move Nearer to Work	16	1.3	2.1
Affordability (Rents)	15	1.2	1.3
Prison	12	1.0	0.5
Decant	9	0.7	1
No Contact - Keys returned	9	0.7	1
Eviction (Tenancy Breach)	8	0.6	0.6
Decant Temporary	5	0.4	0.6
Re-establish Family Relations	5	0.4	0.5
ASB (Perpetrator)	4	0.3	0.8
Partneship Break(Non Violent)	4	0.3	0.6
Under-occupation	4	0.3	0.5
Total	1242		

2022/23 - 105 Tenancies ended in 12 months or less (8.4% of all terminations)

2021/22 - 134 Tenancies ended in 12 months or less (11.2% of all terminations)

- 4.47. The escalations policy covers the Council's ability to take enforcement action when Registered Providers are not engaging, ensuring high standards are achieved within Registered Provider stock in the borough. Members were reassured to hear that the process works well, and any necessary repairs are responded to in accordance with the protocol without enforcement action. Furthermore, a process of escalation is written into the protocol which utilises the full range of enforcement tools; however, the Council would expect to resolve matters earlier in the process e.g. damp and mould investigations are prioritised for immediate response along with any other matters that are considered imminent.
- 4.48. Registered Provider tenants who contact the Council are always asked to confirm that they have contacted their landlord directly in the first instance.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1. No alternative options have been considered in this report.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1. Members were reassured by recent recruitment of a new Housing Strategy Officer, which will now make available the capacity to undertake further monitoring of housing allocations, ensuring Registered Providers are achieving their agreed allocations targets. Members requested that the respective detail and outcomes from this work will be provided to the committee when available.
- 6.2. Common themes within the evidence received by the Task Group included the challenges experienced by the Registered Providers, including recruitment and retention of contractors, increased resource spent on house clearances and the demand on general day to day resources in dealing with the volume of requests for housing. Members suggested how the Council can support the process of recruitment through its 'Ways To Work' scheme.
- 6.3. A whole system approach across the Registered Providers is key to ensuring a downward trend in housing voids turnaround times. This would reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation by people who have experienced homelessness, improving their wellbeing and reduced costs to both Registered Providers and the Council.
- 6.4. Information sharing and best practice, as well as scrutinising data in a whole system approach across all respective parties, was highlighted as an area for improvement and Members requested that the Place Services Scrutiny Committee be updated on progress in this area.
- 6.5. Members questioned whether customer service/satisfaction was as effective for those tenants of Registered Providers that did not have a presence in the Borough (i.e., customer facing officers/premises) compared to those that did and satisfaction levels had any impact on tenant retention and sustainability.

- 6.6. Members suggested that the Council and Registered Providers work more closely to improve the current trend in housing voids. It was suggested that the Registered Providers Forum for this work should be utilised to initiate wider Scrutiny.
- 6.7. This review highlighted increasing concerns about the supply and demand imbalance of affordable housing in the Borough. The Task Group agreed that this issue should be a priority for the Place Services Scrutiny Committee to continue monitoring on its work programme.
- 6.8. It was evident that Torus seek to maintain a high standard in promoting re-let standards. However, if this could be managed differently, members suggested that an option could be explored to offer a voucher scheme etc in some circumstances.
- 6.9. The Task Group suggests that the Registered Providers consider exploring if tenants can be incentivised to keep homes in a good state of repair and cleared out when they leave or could they be penalised in some way for not doing so.
- 6.10. Both Torus and Your Housing Group are delivering Task Groups to scope potential changes to meet the challenges. Members requested that the outcome of this work would be beneficial for Place Scrutiny Committee to monitor and requested that it is presented at a future Place Services Scrutiny Meeting.
- 6.11. Whilst the Social Rented Sector is a significant proportion of properties in the Borough, the Task Group believes that the Private Rented Sector is an important sector of housing to tackle especially around improving housing standards that impact the health and wellbeing of residents and reduce inequalities. Members raised questions around the Escalations Policy in both the Social and Private Rented Sector and wanted to understand more on how this is progressed and managed, The Task Group suggested that the Place Services Scrutiny Committee considers discussing an item on Private Rented Sector to its work programming workshop for 2024/25.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. There are no direct legal implications for this report.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1. Whilst no Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for this Spotlight Review, an effective system for managing void properties is a central function in the wider provision of providing housing in the Borough, in turn, improving the lives of residents, particularly those vulnerable and in need.

9. Social Value

9.1. Ensuring that there is sufficient capacity, utilising skilled and experienced contractors is essential to an effective void management process. Many Registered Providers operate local employment opportunities such as apprenticeships and engage local contractors, demonstrating wider social value.

10. Net Zero and Environment

10.1. Greater recycling of unwanted goods within the void management process could reduce the environmental impact of household clearances.

11. Health and Wellbeing

11.1. Minimising time spent in either temporary accommodation or unsuitable accommodation will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of applicants.

12. Customer and Resident

12.1. Actions to reduce timescales for void properties will have a positive impact on customers and residents in the Borough. Ensuring that there is clear communication within the wider allocations process will also enable applicants to make informed choices on their housing options.

13. Asset and Property

13.1. There are no Council Asset and Property implications for this report.

14. Staffing and People Management

14.1. The agreed actions in this report will be carried out by existing staffing resources identified by the Council and its partner organisations.

15. Risks

15.1. Risks have been identified within this Spotlight Review in relation to the ability to meet demand, the growing challenges of homelessness and the impact of the wider cost of living crisis on the housing sector. Ensuring that operational practices are efficient and effective will assist in mitigating some of the risks regarding timescales for re-letting properties, but the wider challenges will remain in relation to demand for accommodation in the Borough.

16. Finance

16.1. The report highlights the financial implications both for the Local Authority in the use of temporary accommodation and for the Registered Providers in the increased costs of property repairs and delays in re-letting properties.

17. Policy Framework Implications

- 17.1. The Housing Voids Scrutiny Spotlight Report aligns with priorities 1 to 4 and 6 of Our Borough Strategy priorities, together with the St Helens Borough Council Housing Allocation Policy and St Helens Borough Council Housing Strategy 2022-27.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

- 18.1. There are no direct impact and opportunities on localities resulting from this report, which considered borough-wide matters.

19. Background Documents

- 19.1. Performance Monitoring Reports 2022/2023.
- 19.2. St Helens Borough Housing Strategy 2022-27.
- 19.3. Census 2021 - Housing Summary Overview Update 31st Jan 2023.
- 19.4. St Helens Borough Council Housing Allocation Policy.


20. Appendices

- 20.1. Appendix 1 - Housing Voids Spotlight Review Recommendations

Appendix 1- Housing Voids Spotlight Review Spotlight Review Recommendations

Rec No	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation
1	<p>Registered Providers Forum</p> <p>Seek to establish the issue of Housing Voids as a regular Item on the Registered Providers Forum to enable and maintain scrutiny and performance.</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Head of Housing Services</p>	
2	<p>Via the Registered Providers Forum, officers seek to raise for consideration, the potential for Registered Providers to incentivise tenants in keeping homes and gardens in a good state of repair and cleared out when they leave. Incentives such as a Golden Goodbye- to reduce Void time.</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Head of Housing Services</p>	
3	<p>Recruitment of maintenance operatives and contractors/ inspectors.</p> <p>Ways to work to arrange and facilitate meetings with Torus/HMS to establish skills demand and needs assessments. To feedback on progress made to Place Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year</p>	<p>Strategic Growth</p> <p>Head of Economy</p>	
4	<p>Seek to ensure that further detail in the Performance indicator HS004 is provided to establish how many empty homes are in the Social rented sector within the narrative of the report.</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Head of Housing Services</p>	
5	<p>Annual Housing Voids Update</p> <p>The Place Services Scrutiny Committee to receive an annual</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Registered Providers/</p>	

	<p>update on housing voids issues. Housing Officers and representatives from the Registered Providers forum to provide a detailed update looking at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic compliance, (cooperation of the Register Providers in fulfilling their obligations within the Nominations agreement. • Registered Providers to provide Voids Data - Reference of all voids and a breakdown of data relating to voids for each provider. • Registered Provider update on Progress and initiatives on reducing Voids • Torus to provide the 'Future demand forecast for housing'. • Receive feedback from the recommendations and progress from the Task Group reviews to understand the key highlights and progress conducted by Torus and Your Housing Group • Progress made on the review of the Nominations agreement. 	Head of Housing	
7	<p>Place Services Scrutiny Committee to consider including in the work programme for 2024/2025 on the theme of The Private rented Sector (Although outside the remit of this group, valid questions raised by Councillors on the Private Rented Sector prompted members to consider a piece of work on the private rented sector in the next municipal year).</p>	Place Scrutiny Committee	

 ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL	<h2>Place Services Scrutiny Committee</h2> <h3>15 April 2024</h3>
--	---

Report Title	Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update
Cabinet Portfolio	Safer Communities
Cabinet Member	Councillor Mancyia Uddin
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Tanya Wilcock Director of Communities tanyawilcock@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Samantha Murray Assistant Director – Housing and Communities samanthamurray@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life.	X
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities.	X
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy.	
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	
	Be a responsible Council.	X

1. Summary

- 1.1 In 2023, the Place Services Scrutiny Committee published the findings of a Task Group report into the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls. The report made a series of recommendations for services across Community Safety, Licensing and Education to implement, with the aim of delivering improved understanding around the subject of violence against women and girls alongside measures and interventions to prevent further violence. This report provides the Place Services Scrutiny Committee with a progress report and an update on delivery against the Task Group recommendations.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Place Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Note this report and update on the recommendations made by the Task Group on Violence Against Women and Girls.**
- 2) Agree to receive an update in July 2024 on the outcomes of the Safer Streets 5 Programme delivered in the Borough.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 This report provides an update to Place Services Scrutiny Committee on the progress made on implementation of the eleven recommendations made by the Task Group in its report on the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 On 21 June 2023, Cabinet approved the recommendations made by the Place Services Scrutiny Committee Task Group following a review of the response to the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Place Services Scrutiny Committee noted the feedback from Cabinet at a meeting on 26 July 2023 and, since that time, good progress has been made on implementation of the Action Plan as set out at Appendix A.
- 4.2 In June 2023, the Home Office announced the Safer Streets 5 Programme, inviting bids from Local Authorities with a focus on either anti-social behaviour or Violence Against Women and Girls. The priority area of VAWG aligned with the recommendations of the Task Group and the findings of the review and, therefore, a bid was made to the Safer Streets Programme for funding for projects to improve the Night Time Economy in St Helens town centre with the aim of reducing and preventing VAWG.
- 4.3 To inform the Safer Streets Programme bid, feedback from the St Helens Night Time Economy Forum assisted in shaping the proposed projects. Consultation was also completed with both visitors to the Night Time Economy (40 respondents) and with 40 employees within the Night Time Economy. This

engagement reflected the recommendations of the Task Group and directly informed the priorities within the bid.

- 4.4 In October 2023, the outcome of the Safer Streets Programme was announced, and the Council secured £201,000 to deliver training for employees in the Night Time Economy, improve street lighting at taxi ranks, employ Street Marshalls at key times and to offer a grant programme to promote the installation of CCTV in taxis. The funding has enabled greater engagement and enforcement activity by Merseyside Police and the Licensing Service, thereby ensuring that premises are offering a safe environment and complying with licence requirements. An innovative 'Safe Home Card' pilot has also been developed, offering funding for women to access safe transport home from the night time economy.
- 4.5 The Safer Streets Programme concludes on the 31 March 2024 and the actions within such were directly shaped and informed by the recommendations of the Task Group. Accordingly, good progress has been made on the delivery of the recommendations from the Task Group that relate to the Night Time Economy.
- 4.6 The Task Group also made other recommendations directly relating to engagement with schools on the issue of VAWG and positive progress has been made against these indicators as outlined below:
- The inclusion of information to all schools via the Bulletin during both 2023 and 2024. Information was also sent to schools in respect of training needs on this issue.
 - A further recommendation related to the development of a Survey to share with schools on VAWG. The Survey was circulated in June 2023 and received 218 responses. The findings of this Survey indicate that most school staff have received training around VAWG (with staff tending to receive this training as part of their statutory safeguarding training) although there are some inconsistencies.
 - The PSHE and RSE Curriculums form a key part of the response to VAWG in schools. Schools told us that they generally feel they respond well to VAWG and there is evidence of good practice and initiatives being used. These include production of videos around the topic; mentoring programme where older pupils support their younger peers; workshops for pupils; and the use of specialist agencies and guest speakers. Schools also told us that they feel that more targeted training around VAWG would be beneficial and that they could strengthen their response further by having more resources on the issue; quality assurance of RSE and PHSE curriculum; and linking schools for networking and development.
 - Finally, a dip sample was completed of evidence taken from a 10% sample of schools. Findings included evidence of senior leader monitoring and challenging PSHE provision across their school; updates are provided to governors around PSHE as they are with other curriculum subjects and there

was a named governor for PSHE. 100% of responding schools stated that all statutory elements of PSHE education are covered and regularly reviewed. 86% of schools also detailed that their teachers are confident in delivering PSHE to pupils. 86% of schools sampled also stated that at the time (Summer Term 2023) they had attended St Helens Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour Training. This training supports the use of the PSHE and RSE curriculum in preventing HSB and VAWG. Schools will also utilise external speakers and agencies to cover topics in more details and through varied means. Lessons are also differentiated to address the individual learning needs of pupils. Where schools identified the requirement of additional support was around specific training for teachers in supporting pupils who identify as LGBTQ+. Finally, there was evidence of how schools identify the impact of PSHE lessons; this included student voice evaluations; book scrutiny; alumni and health data; qualifications; and review of units taught.

- 4.7 A further recommendation was made in relation to the potential development of a network to collaborate on the issue of VAWG with Halton and St Helens VCA. Officers have advised that this action will be taken forward during 2024 via the Safer St Helens (Community Safety Partnership) Community Grants programme, which has invited groups that are working to address VAWG, including domestic abuse, as a priority for funding.
- 4.9 The final recommendation made by the Task Group related to the need to consider the workforce of the Council. E-learning training specific to VAWG is currently under development. This will be added to the suite of training that includes Safeguarding Adults Awareness; Safeguarding Children Awareness; and the multi-agency partnership training offer that includes Child Exploitation; Domestic Abuse: the Impact on the Child; and Forced Marriage on-line workshop, all of which touch on elements related to VAWG.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 There are no alternative options for consideration as this report presents an update on the recommendations agreed by Cabinet following a Task Group on the issue of VAWG.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Overall, positive progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations from this Task Group as recorded at Appendix 1: Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update March 2024.
- 6.2 The findings of the Task Group directly shaped the Safer Streets 5 Programme for the St Helens Night Time Economy and further engagement with schools to ensure that this issue is highlighted in an age-appropriate way with children and young people.

- 6.3 It is proposed that the Place Services Scrutiny Committee receives a final report on the delivery and impact of the Safer Streets Programme in July 2024 following its conclusion.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Safer Streets Programme required a Grant Funding Agreement between the Home Office and the Local Authority.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The findings of the Task Group report directly informed the development of the Safer Streets 5 Programme for the Borough. In total, officers secured £201,000 for the delivery of interventions to prevent VAWG in the Night Time Economy.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The scope of the Task Group specifically related to the impact of VAWG. As such, this activity has been targeted to ensure that the outcomes have a positive impact on women and girls in the Borough.

10. Social Value

- 10.1 The measures within the Night Time Economy promote safety, with the wider aim of ensuring that the services provided are more welcoming and an inclusive environment for women and girls; therefore, these initiatives should have a positive impact on local businesses in the area.

11. Net Zero and Environment

- 11.1 There are no direct implications emerging from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing

- 12.1 Prevention of violence is a core objective of statutory partners within the borough. The actions within the recommendations aim to prevent violence and the fear of violence experienced by women and girls.

13. Customer and Resident

- 13.1 The implementation of the recommendations within the Task Group report have provided a positive opportunity to raise awareness of the issue of VAWG across our communities.

14. Asset and Property

- 14.1 There are no direct implications emerging from this report in relation to assets and property.

15. Staffing and People Management

15.1 Consideration has been given to the resource implications in relation to the delivery of the ten recommendations within this review. Securing additional funding has enabled the mobilisation of delivery of the interventions relating to the Night Time Economy. Without the grant funding it is recognised that ability to deliver against some of the recommendations would be limited and this will be a challenge moving forward as the time limited funding expires.

16. Risks

16.1 VAWG remains a risk in our communities. The actions delivered as a result of the recommendations from this Task Group have had a positive impact, but the risks remain and require widescale societal change in order to prevent violence and to ensure that women and girls are safe within society.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 Implementation of the recommendations made aligned with the Borough Strategy priorities of “Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life”, “Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities”, “Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all” and “Be a responsible Council”.

17.2 This activity also aligns with the national VAWG Strategy and the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner VAWG Action Plan.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 The focus for the Safer Streets delivery has been the St Helens Town Centre Locality. This decision was based on police data identifying the town centre as a hot spot for crime alongside engagement with female staff in the Night Time Economy and with women visiting St Helens town centre. This locality was chosen as the area where the funding will make the biggest impact.

19. Background Documents

19.1 Report to Place Services Scrutiny Committee: ‘Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group’ (9 January 2023)

19.2 Report to Cabinet: ‘Scrutiny Review of Violence Against Women and Girls and Cabinet Response (24 May 2024)

20. Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1: Violence Against Women and Girls Task Group Recommendations – Update March 2024.

**Violence Against Women and Girls – Task Group Recommendations
Cabinet Response – April 2023
Update March 2024**

Appendix 1

75

Rec No	Recommendations	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation	Update on Actions – April 2024
1	<p>Local Authority to publish within the School's Bulletin information on VAWG and domestic abuse, including local support pathways available, with schools requested to share this information on their websites or newsletters to parents.</p> <p>Schools to also consider providing an information briefing for parents to attend.</p>	<p>Joanne Davies Assistant Director – Education and Learning</p>	<p>The Local Authority will provide information on VAWG and domestic abuse on the weekly safeguarding bulletin.</p> <p>This will include local pathways and services, and will ask schools to share this information on their websites.</p> <p>Implementation: March 2023</p>	<p>Action Completed Information was circulated on the School's Bulletin on 2 March 2023.</p> <p>As this has been nearly 12 months since last circulated to Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads, the information will be resent on the bulletin for 29 February 2024.</p>
2	<p>Template of a Survey to be provided to all schools with a request to circulate to staff to capture views on the impact of and response to VAWG and to understand training needs.</p> <p>Survey outcomes to be discussed at a future Headteachers Forum meeting</p>	<p>Joanne Davies Assistant Director – Education and Learning</p>	<p>Template of a Survey to be provided to all schools with a request to circulate to staff to capture views on the impact of and response to VAWG and to understand training needs.</p> <p>Survey outcomes to be discussed at a future Headteachers Forum meeting</p>	<p>Action Completed The survey was created and circulated to schools. 218 responses were received, and a report was written June 2023 detailing the findings, which have been shared with Head Teachers Forum.</p>

**Violence Against Women and Girls – Task Group Recommendations
Cabinet Response – April 2023
Update March 2024**

76

			Implementation: April 2023	
3	Advise schools of the need to access training on VAWG and trauma informed learning from reputable service providers.	Donna Culley Safeguarding Children in Education Officer	Advise schools of the need to access training on VAWG and trauma informed learning from reputable service providers. Implementation: March 2023	Action Completed This was circulated with the safeguarding bulletin in March 2023.
4	Children’s Services to gather information / quality assurance on a sample of evidence from school RSE curriculum to ascertain suitability and effectiveness	Joanne Davies Assistant Director – Education and Learning	Dip sample will be completed on primary, secondary school, specialist provisions and further education settings. These will be audited by Heather Addison and Donna Cullen. Implementation: May 2023	Action Completed Survey was sent out to schools and report completed September 2023.
5	Resources to be developed and shared with licenced premises to enable them to recognise, report and respond to VAWG. Maximise any future funding opportunities to secure investment into further programmes to promote VAWG related initiatives (e.g., accreditation / training programmes) in the Night Time Economy sectors.	Samantha Murray Assistant Director – Housing & Communities	Licensing and Community Safety Services will develop a resource on VAWG for the NTE sector. Ongoing monitoring of future funding opportunities across service areas. Implementation date - October 2023.	Action Completed Safer Streets 5 funding was secured in 2023/24 with an allocation of £201,000 to the borough. This funding has included the delivery of bespoke training to NTE employees on the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls as well as wider initiatives in this sector – delivered during March 2024.

**Violence Against Women and Girls – Task Group Recommendations
Cabinet Response – April 2023
Update March 2024**

77

6	Review, recognise and share best practice in the night time economy to encourage licenced premises to strengthen their approach and practice to protect women and girls from violence.	Samantha Murray Assistant Director – Housing & Communities	Licensing and Community Safety Services will seek and share best practice with this sector. Implementation date - October 2023.	Action Completed Training packages have been developed and delivered for both in person delivery and for an on-line portal. Engagement and enforcement activity has taken place with Merseyside Police during December – March 2024 to check compliance by licenced premises.
7	Complete a Survey to night-time economy workers on their understanding of VAWG and if they feel safe in work and leaving/travelling home from work.	Samantha Murray Assistant Director – Housing & Communities	The Night Time Economy (NTE) Forum was established in February 2023 and will take forward a Survey of NTE employees. Implementation date - October 2023.	Action Completed A survey was completed to inform the successful bid for Safer Streets 5 funding- in total 40 Surveys were completed by employees in the NTE. The findings of the research directly influenced the priorities within the bid and programme.
8	Engage with Halton and St Helens VCA to assess the viability and interest in the establishment of VAWG network. Council to support VCA with resources and information on the issue of VAWG	Tanya Wilcock Director of Communities	April 2023	Action Completed Discussions have taken place with Halton & St Helens VCA and it has been proposed to hold an annual stakeholder event for the Safer St Helens Executive Community Safety Partnership (CSP), with a specific workshop on the issue of Violence against Women & Girls. This will inform the

**Violence Against Women and Girls – Task Group Recommendations
Cabinet Response – April 2023
Update March 2024**

78

				prioritisation of funding and other resources to address issues raised and to support community & voluntary organisations in tackling this issue. The Safer St Helens Executive CSP will also identify the theme of Domestic Abuse & VAWG as a priority area for funding through its small grants programme, which will be launched in March 2024.
9	Development of a communications strategy (posters, leaflets) to ensure that information in relation to VAWG is accessible across public sectors, businesses, and wider community / voluntary sector.	Samantha Murray Assistant Director – Housing & Communities	The Community Safety Team will collaborate with other local authority areas and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on communications relating to Violence Against Women and Girls. Implementation date - September 2023.	Action Completed As part of the Safer Streets 5 programme, a resource pack for businesses is in development and will be distributed at the conclusion of the Safer Streets programme.
10	Explore the potential methods of developing VAWG Champions across local communities in the borough.	Tanya Wilcock Director of Communities	To be done in association with Halton & St Helens VCA Implementation date – October 2023	Action Completed To be delivered as part of the Safer St Helens Executive CSP, Small Grants programme, which will be launched in March 2024. A specific theme of Domestic Abuse and VAWG has been agreed in respect of this grant pot. Successful

Violence Against Women and Girls – Task Group Recommendations
Cabinet Response – April 2023
Update March 2024

				organisations will be considered VAWG champions.
11	Inclusion of VAWG training for Council employees as part of the wider organisational development programme.	Emma Morris Head of Organisational Development	Organisational Development to review existing training modules and work in conjunction with Community Safety to agree a suitable training package to be incorporated into future programmes. Implementation date – October 2023	Action Completed E-learning training specific to Violence Against Women and Girls is currently being scoped.

This page is intentionally left blank

 ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL	<h2>Place Services Scrutiny Committee</h2> <h3>15 April 2024</h3>
--	---

Report Title	Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24
Cabinet Portfolio	Corporate Services
Cabinet Member	Councillor Martin Bond
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Cath Fogarty Executive Director of Corporate Services CathFogarty@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Karl Allender Scrutiny Support Officer karlallender@sthelens.gov.uk

Borough Priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighborhoods for all	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	X
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the process followed by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its thematic committees in determining their work programmes for municipal year 2023/24. Given resource constraints, new approaches have been introduced to further strengthen the process.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Places Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (i) **Review the items listed in the work programme document and agree priorities and timescales.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the process followed in drawing up work programmes for 2023/24.

4. Background/Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 Overview and scrutiny activities play a key role in a successful democratic process, holding decision makers to account for future (overview) and past (scrutiny) decisions and in turn, contributing to the delivery of positive outcomes for residents and the Council's workforce and resources.
- 4.2 A comprehensive work programme is fundamental to the effectiveness of the Commission and its thematic scrutiny committees. It enables them to plan and manage their workloads to make best use of the available time and resources, ensure a focus on the Borough's priorities and add the most value to the performance of the Council and outcomes for residents.
- 4.3 Each committee agreed an allocation of up to two scrutiny reviews for the year.

Reviewing the Work Programme

- 4.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Scrutiny Committees are required to review and agree their work programme at every committee meeting. When reviewing the work programme, new items can be added and items that no longer require scrutiny or are not considered to be a priority for action or monitoring can be removed.
- 4.5 When considering whether to add, remove and prioritise items for consideration Members should be mindful of the following:
- Would the Committee be able to add value through its work on the issue?
 - Is the issue linked to a Borough Priority?
 - Is the issue a priority/concern for partners, stakeholders, and the public?

- Is the issue related to poorly performing services?
- Is there a pattern of budgetary overspends?
- Are there significant levels of public/service user dissatisfaction with the service?
- Has there been media coverage of the issue?
- Is the issue related to new Government guidance?
- Would consideration of the issue be timely?
- Are there sufficient resources (e.g., officer capacity to support a review or provide a report) to effectively consider the issue at this time?
- Would Scrutiny be duplicating work being undertaken elsewhere?
- Is the matter subject to judicial review (sub judice)?

4.6 The Work Programme Prioritisation Aid attached to this report is designed to assist members in considering whether a suggested addition to the work programme is suitable and meets the necessary criteria. If members consider that a suggestion would not be suitable for scrutiny, the Scrutiny Committee could choose to refer the matter elsewhere. If an item is considered an important issue but not a priority at this time an item may be added to the end of the work programme to be monitored for further consideration in the future.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

5.1 None

6. Conclusions

6.1 As this is the final meeting of the municipal year the Committee should Note consider which outstanding items in the work programme need to be carried forward into the 2024/25 municipal year.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 N/A

8. Financial Implications

8.1 N/A

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 N/A

10. Social Value

10.1 N/A

11. Net Zero and Environment

11.1 N/A

12. Health and Wellbeing

12.1 N/A

13. Customer and Resident

13.1 N/A

14. Asset and Property

14.1 N/A

15. Staffing and People Management

15.1 N/A

16. Risks

16.1 Failure to effectively manage the work programme could lead to inefficient use of the Committee's time and resources, negatively affecting the Committee's ability to add value and help the Council achieve its priorities. By examining the work programme regularly and following the prioritisation aid as recommended, the Committee should minimize the risk of using time and resources on ineffective items.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 N/A

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 N/A

19. Background Documents

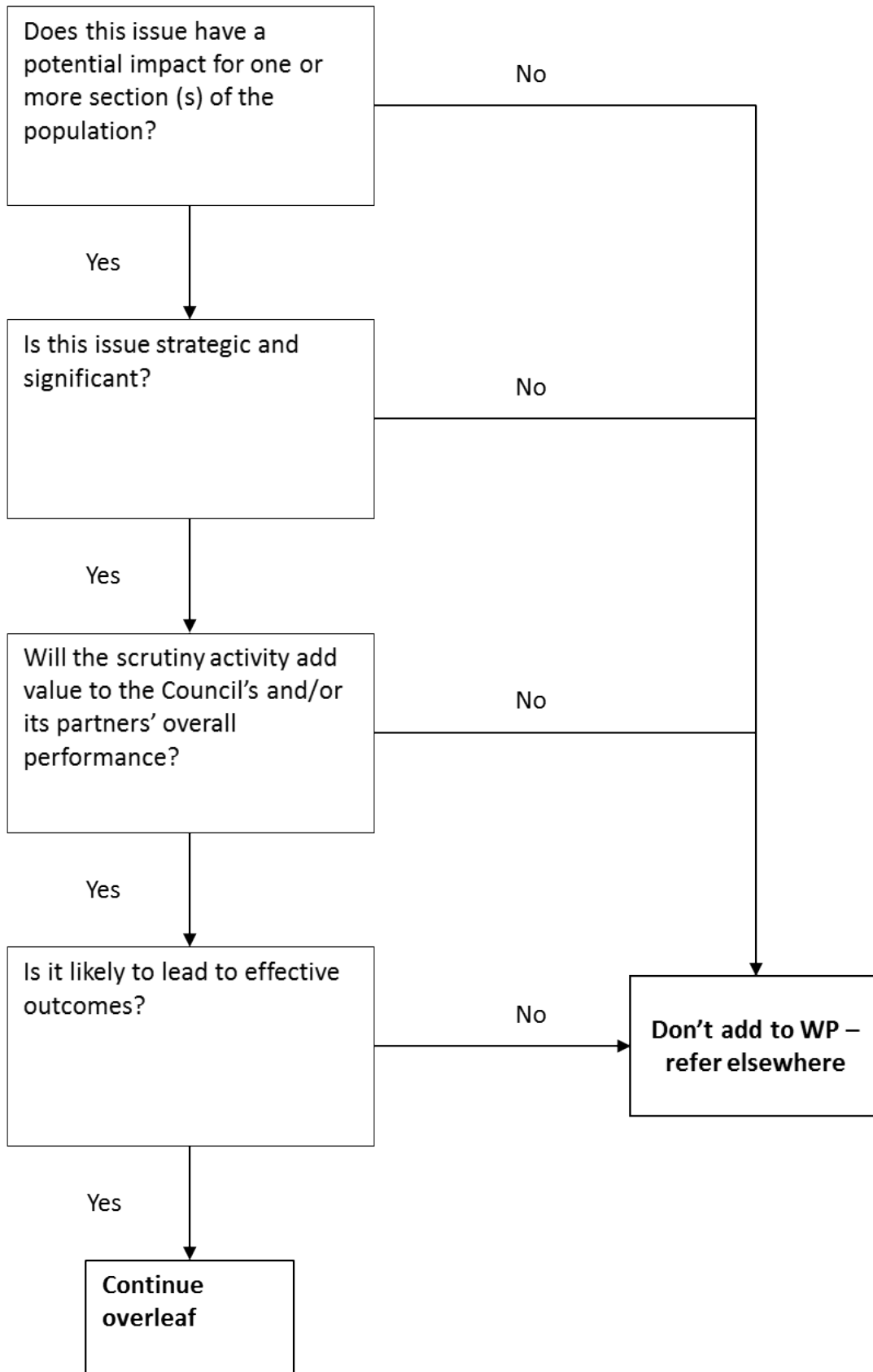
19.1 None

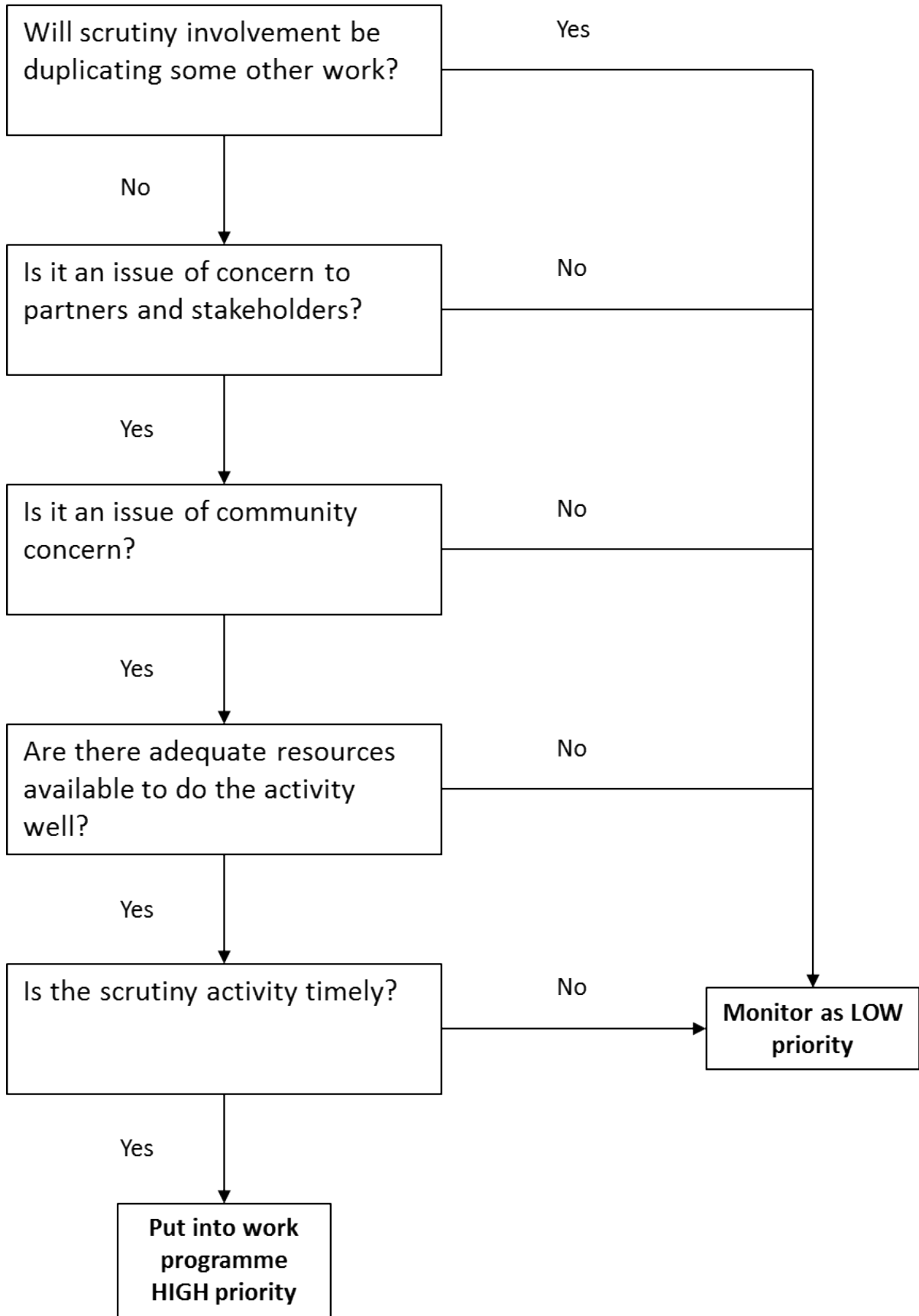
20. Appendices

20.1 Work Programme Prioritisation Aid

20.2 Place Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

**Appendix 1
Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Prioritisation Aid**





Appendix 2

Place Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

<u>Borough Priorities</u>	<u>Next Meeting</u>
Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	Date: 15 April 2024 Time: 5:30 pm Venue: Room 10
Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	
Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
87 Performance Reports	Scrutiny Committees are responsible for reviewing the performance reports for priorities relevant to their remit.	To use performance reports to monitor the performance of services within portfolios and hold Cabinet Members to account.	Environmental Services and Climate Change (Cllr Bowden) Regeneration and Planning (Cllr McCauley) Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage (Cllr Burns) Economy,	Lisa Harris	Priority Two: Promote good health independence and care across our communities. Priority Three: Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all. Priority Four: Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected	Report to Committee	26 July 2024 (Completed) 9 October 2023 (Completed) 8 January 2024 (Completed) 15 April 2024

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
			Business and Skills (Cllr Groucutt) Strategic Transport (Cllr Gomez-Aspron) Safer Communities (Cllr Uddin)		local economy Priority Five: Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.		
88 Review of Task Group Update recommendation Violence Against Woman and Girls (VAWG)	Domestic abuse is a key focus for Place Scrutiny. The committee would like an update on the progress made on the work carried out between October & December 2022 VAWG Task group.	For the Committee to receive an update on Task Work recommendations for VAWG	Safer Communities (Cllr Uddin)	Tanya Wilcock	Priority Three: Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	Report	15 April 2024
Climate Commission	Progress on Recommendations	Progress update on the delivery of the action plan as set out in the Cabinet report. 24 May 2023	Environmental services and climate change (Cllr Bowden)	Trevor Nicoll	Priority Five: Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	Presentation	15 April 2024
Housing Voids-Registered Providers	St Helens Council is not a landlord but has statutory responsibilities in relation to homelessness and the	The review will: •Seek to engage the variety of housing partners in the borough.	Regeneration and Planning (Cllr McCauley)	Sam Murray	Priority Three: Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	Spotlight review	15 April 2024

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
	<p>allocation of social housing to those in need.</p> <p>20% of the housing stock in the borough is in the socially rented sector. 981 lettings of social homes were completed in 2021/22 but there are 6500 people are on the Under- One-Roof waiting list.</p> <p>Over recent years, the sector has had to respond to several challenges with vacant properties (voids).</p> <p>This has resulted in applicants waiting longer for a property to become ready to occupy and for Homelessness Services this has an impact which means residents stay longer than is suitable in temporary accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Seek to understand the challenges facing the housing sector. •Understand the turnover of properties and the number of void properties that exist in the Borough. •Investigate the work underway to reduce void turnaround. •Seek to understand the impact that this has on the Council statutory Housing related functions. 					
Leisure Services Task and Finish Group	The Council operates three Indoor Leisure Facilities and several	The Review will investigate:	Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage	Tanya Wilcock	Priority One: Ensure children and young people	Task and Finish review	To commence April 2024



06

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
	<p>outdoor sites, the largest of which is Ruskin Sports Village. Last year those sites were visited by over 1.3 million people There are over 7,000 members who pay a monthly subscription and the service collected income of over £3m. It is recognised that the service needs to change to maximise the health and well-being outcomes, optimise the commercial opportunities and meet the challenge of rising costs. It is proposed to conduct a full-service review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the service contributes to the Council's priorities, in particular its Public Health priorities and tackling inequalities. • How customer data & intelligence is used to lead service development, facility improvement and guide decommissioning. • How we can improve the management and maintenance of the facilities, in order to meet customer expectations. <p>To identify the level of investment required and where should that investment be targeted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the service supports the Council's journey to net carbon 	<p>(Cllr Burns)</p>	<p>Dave Boocock</p>	<p>have a positive start in life.</p> <p>Priority Two: Promote good health independence and care across our communities.</p> <p>Priority Five: Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture</p> <p>Priority Six: Be a responsible council</p>		

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
		<p>zero.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How Value for money is embedded in the service and the level of commerciality within the services. 					
Alcohol and Anti-Social behaviour	To understand the wider issues on alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour. The challenges and ongoing cost and resource required to manage.	To enable the committee to make focused and informed recommendations to reduce the use of alcohol, reduce anti-social behaviours because of alcohol and the lessen the impacts on communities	Safer Communities (Cllr Uddin)	Sam Murray / Sup Int Steve Brizell	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	Presentation	9 October 2023 (Completed)
Tree Planting	The Council has been successful in securing £150.000 from the woodland creation accelerator fund (WCAF). The fund provides financial support to increase the capacity of specialist skills to accelerate the delivery of tree planting and woodland Creation commitments.	<p>A report to look at the progress being delivered by the fund, benefits to residents and the environment.</p> <p>The committee would support and steer potential further opportunities in the councils' committees to delivering Net -Zero</p>	Environmental services and climate change (Cllr Bowden)	Trevor Nicoll	Priority Five: Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	Presentation	9 October 2023 (Completed)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
Catering	The Council's Catering service provides meals to most of the schools within the borough, both in primary and secondary schools	<p>A report to look at how this service contributes to achieving the borough priorities and maximising the benefits to the health of young people.</p> <p>An opportunity to consider the opportunities and risk to the service.</p>	Environmental services and climate change (Cllr Bowden)	Trevor Nicoll / Andrew Ferguson	Priority One: Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Presentation	8 January 2024 (Completed)
Business Support Delivery Report (UK SHARED Prosperity Funding)	<p>The draft St Helens inclusive Growth Strategy and its baseline assessment (St Helens state of the borough) set out a range of issues and barriers to growth faced by local businesses.</p> <p>The data shows a declining GVA (Gross Value Added), a lack of knowledge base businesses and an overall lack of competitiveness leading to under performance in business growth which is undermining the wealth creation potential of the area.</p>	<p>The report would focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the current business support infrastructure that exists in the borough. • Identify the local needs and the desired outcomes. • Identify the intended outcomes required to align with UK SHARED Prosperity Funding. • Consider the service structure required to 	Economy, Business and Skills (Cllr Groucutt)	Steve Berlyne	Priority Four: Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	Report	8 January 2023 (Completed)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
		meet the commitment in the inclusive growth strategy to create conditions for business growth and inward investment.					

This page is intentionally left blank