



METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH OF ST HELENS

50TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Telephone: 01744 676277 (James Morley)

Agenda

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE WEBCAST (LIVE STREAMED)

Date: Monday, 3 February 2025 Time: 5.30 pm Venue: Room 10

Membership

Lab 8 Councillors	Hattersley, Hodkinson, Johnson, McQuade O' Connor, Preston, Sweeney, and Uddin(Chair)
Green 1 Councillor	Richards
LD 1 Councillor	Pearl
Inds 1 Councillor	Tasker
Con 1 Councillor	Mussell
Co-opted (Voting)	David Thorpe (Church of England)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u>	
2.	<u>Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2024</u>	3
3.	<u>Declaration of Interest from Members</u>	
4.	<u>Declarations of Party Whip</u>	
5.	<u>Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024/25</u>	5

Vicky Willett – Director of Policy and Transformation has been invited to attend the meeting.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
6.	<u>Financial Monitoring Report Period 2 2024/25</u>	27
	Richard Gibson – Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) has been invited to attend the meeting.	
7.	<u>Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report 2025/26</u>	75
	Richard Gibson – Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) has been invited to attend the meeting.	
8.	<u>Scrutiny Work Programmes 2024/25</u>	81

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

At a meeting of this Committee held on
14 October 2024

- (Present) **Councillor Uddin (Chair)**
 Councillors Hattersley, Hodkinson, McQuade, O’Conner,
 Sweeney, and Tasker
- (Not Present) **Councillors Preston, Richards and Spencer**
- Mr D Thorpe (Church of England Representative)**
 Mr B McMullen (Roman Catholic Representative)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, Preston, and Spencer

10 MINUTES

- * **Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2024 be approved and signed.**

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

12 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

No Declarations of Party Whip were made.

13 QUARTER 1 PERORMANCE REPORT 2023/24

A Report was submitted which provided an analysis of progress and performance over the period from April to June 2024 against the Council’s priority 6 “Be a responsible Council”

The Assistant Director for Policy and Transformation provided an overview of the Quarter 1 Performance Report 2023/24.

It was highlighted that 79% of indicators were performing on or above target, or within the 5% performance threshold. With regards to specific indicators, performance against complaint response times and the three contact centre indicators around customer satisfaction score (CS-008), customer effort score (CS-009), and (CS-010) percentage of customers that have had their call answered within the promised timeframe showed continued improvement and have met target.

It was further noted that performance against the volume of complaints, the timeliness of responses, and Freedom of Information requests required improvement. Further plans had been explored to improve performance in this area.

Staff and Member development training and learning courses remained on track.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the Quarter 1 performance Report 2023/24 be noted.**
- (2) actions planned by the Corporate Services Directorate and other services to address specific areas for performance improvement in relation to Priority 6 be noted.**

14 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES


A report was presented to provide information about the work programme setting process for Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its thematic Committees for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission was responsible for all overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council, including the monitoring and co-ordination of work of the four Scrutiny Committees. To support the Commission in its role, the work programmes of all 3 Scrutiny Committees were included in the report as appendices, alongside the Commission's Work Programme.

Chairs of the Thematic Committees provided feedback on recent Committee work as well as planned work for their respective committees.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

-oOo-

 <p>ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</h2> <h3>3 February 2025</h3>
---	--

Report Title	Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024-25
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.	
	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 The Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024-25 (Appendix 1) provides an analysis of progress and performance over the period April to the end of September 2024 against the Council's priority 6 "Be a responsible Council".
- 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 22 May 2024. This framework provides the basis for quarterly performance reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny over the course of 2024-25.
- 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

Commission is recommended to:

- i) Note the performance position at Quarter 2 2024-25;**
- ii) Note the actions planned by the Corporate Directorate to address specific areas for performance improvement in relation to Priority 6; and**
- iii) 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 2 2024-25.
 - Part 2 of the report is a commentary on performance against delivery of the 6 Borough Strategy priorities and their respective outcomes, summarising performance and action being taken to improve performance where required. Scorecards for each priority outcome area are included to provide further information on individual performance measures, split between indicators achieving targets and indicators not achieving targets.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 The Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024-25 reflects performance over the period April 2024 to the end of September 2024. The indicators reported are split between Tier 1 and Tier 2:
- **Tier 1:** Key strategic performance measures linked to the outcomes of the Borough Strategy, subject to target setting and reporting to Cabinet.
 - **Tier 2:** A set of further performance measures necessary for the effective monitoring of performance at Directorate / Portfolio level, both outcome and output measures also linked to the Borough Strategy and subject to target setting / reporting to Cabinet.
- 4.2 The annual targets were set, where possible, within the context of national, North West, and local authority comparator group data. Targets aspire to be challenging to reflect the ambition for our borough. The targets also took account of performance during 2023-24 and issues including the cost-of-living crisis, rising service demand and a challenging financial position for local government.
- 4.3 There are 94 performance indicators, where Quarter 2 performance against target is available to be reported. Of these:
- **73%** of indicator targets have been either exceeded, met fully, or met within 95% of target. This compares to 74% of indicators at Quarter 2 2023-24.
 - **27%** of indicator targets were not met. This compares to 26% of indicators at Quarter 2 2023-24.
 - The trend measure indicates over the course of the last 12 months **59%** of indicators showed improvement, **4%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **37%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory. The position in Quarter 2 2023-24 was that **47%** of indicators showed improvement, **15%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **38%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory.
 - **16%** of all indicators where comparison is possible are in the top quartile, compared to 18% at Quarter 2 2023-24, whilst **35%** are in the bottom quartile, compared to 29% at Quarter 2 2023-24. 16% and 33% of indicators are in the 2nd and 3rd quartile respectively, compared to 23% and 29% in Quarter 2 2023-24 (NB percentages rounded to nearest whole number in 2023-24).
- 4.4 The report at Appendix 1 takes the format of an executive summary of performance, followed by a more detailed breakdown for each priority and their respective outcomes. Scorecards have been included to highlight performance against each outcome area, along with a summary of actions that are being taken to improve performance.
- 4.5 Performance should be viewed within the context of what has continued to be a challenging operational period for the Council. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis, rising demand for services and the requirement to deliver significant budget savings has impacted on the Council's ability to meet targets and

demonstrate improvements in performance trends. Equally in many areas the impact of these challenges on performance is yet to be fully realised and understood. However, given the effect 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.

- 4.6 In summary, at Quarter 2 2024-25 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.
- 4.7 Improvement action to address underperformance is set out within the scorecards under the respective outcomes' sections of the report. For each priority. Areas of both improvement and challenge include:

Priority 6

The communication and engagement outcome:

The timeliness of the council's response to complaints remains strong. The number of upheld Ombudsman complaints has however increased and the timeliness of FOI responses a challenge given the volume received.

The staff and member development outcome

Performance within the outcome remains generally on track. However, the percentage of staff completing mandatory core E-learning training is performing marginally below target and with the closure of St Helens Chamber and another training provider, the number of apprenticeships that commenced in the year to date is currently below target.

The innovative ways of working outcome

All 3 customer related indicators exceeded the targets in Quarter 2. The percentage of transformation programmes with delivery confidence stated as 'on track' performed marginally below target at the end of Quarter 2.

The value for money and financial resilience outcome

Both the council tax and non-domestic rate collection indicators performed marginally below target in Quarter 2. The Council continues to face severe financial pressures as a result of increased service demand (particularly within children's and adult social care) and delays in the delivery of some of the approved budget savings which have resulted in a predicted net budget overspend of £5.5m forecast for the current year.

5 Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 None.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024-25 at Appendix 1 provides an assessment of the Council's performance over the period April to September 2024.
- 6.2 The continued impact of the cost-of-living crisis, rising service demand and a challenging financial position for local government. continue to pose significant challenges for the Council and St Helens Borough.
- 6.3 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 There are no direct financial implications of the report. However, the council's performance management framework and processes are critical to ensuring the organisation provides value for money.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 None.

10 Social Value

- 10.1 There are no specific implications noted.

11 Net Zero and Environment

- 11.1 Indicators within the performance framework include measures relating to net zero and the environment.

12 Health and Wellbeing

- 12.1 Indicators within the performance framework include measures relating to health and wellbeing.

13 Customer and Resident

- 13.1 Indicators within the performance framework include measures relating to customers and residents' perceptions.

14 Asset and Property

- 14.1 There are no specific implications noted.

5

15 Staffing and People Management

15.1 There are no specific implications noted.

16 Risks

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

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 Our Borough Strategy and other key council strategies.

18 Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 There are no specific implications noted.

19 Background Documents

19.1 None.

20 Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1 – Corporate Services Quarter 2 Performance Report 2024-25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2024-25



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
4. Executive Summary	5
4. Part 1 - Statistical analysis	6
4.1 Performance Against Target	6
4.2 The Performance Trend	7
4.3 Inter Authority Comparison.....	7
4.4 Summary and conclusion of statistical analysis.....	8
5. Part 2 - Commentary on performance against priority and outcome	9
Priority 6 - Be a responsible council	9

1. Our Borough Strategy 2021-30 Priorities

Performance Management in St Helens Council is focused around achieving the 6 strategic priorities and outcomes 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.

14

 <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 2 2024-25 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 2 2024-25.

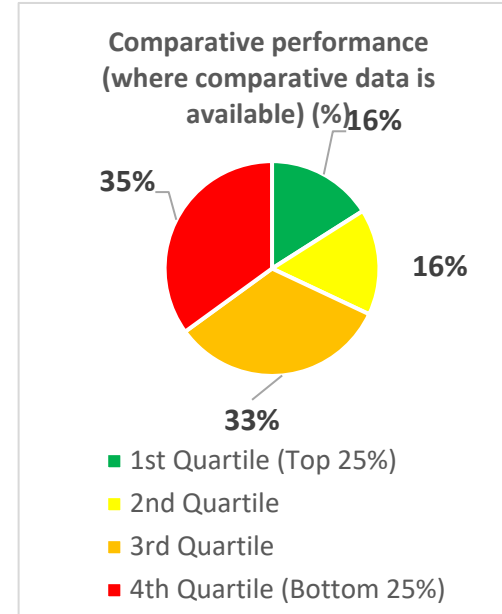
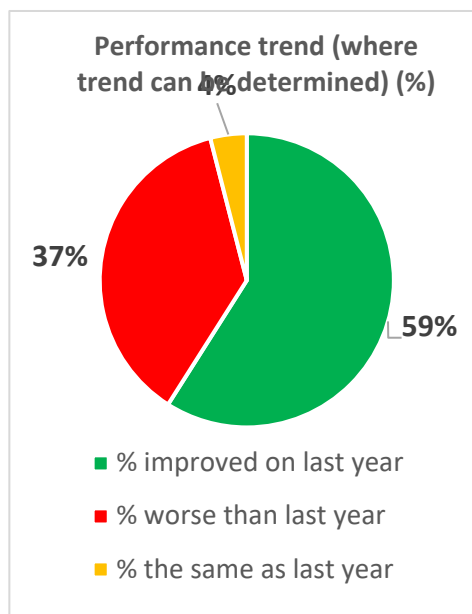
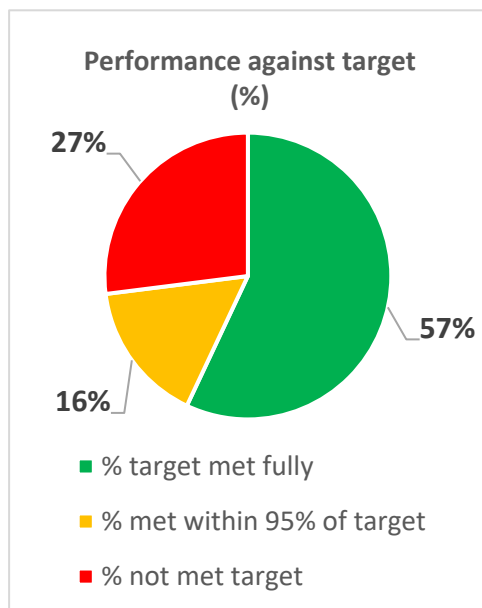
Part 2 of the report is a commentary on performance against delivery of the 6 strategic priorities and their respective outcomes summarising current performance within the quarter and action being taken to improve performance where required.

4. Executive Summary

The charts below provide an overview position of all performance measures across all 6 Borough Strategy priorities as at Quarter 2 2024-25, 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.

15



5

4. Part 1 - Statistical analysis

To measure performance at Quarter 2 2024-25, the Council is reporting against a total of 94 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 1 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	22	64% *(14)	14%* (3)	23%* (5)
2. Health, independence, and care	23	61% (14)	17% (4)	22% (5)
3. Safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods	14	57% (8)	7% (1)	36% (5)
4. Strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy	9	67% (6)	11% (1)	22% (2)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	11	45%* (5)	36% *(4)	18%* (2)
6. Responsible Council	15	47% (7)	13%(2)	40% (6)
Total	94	57% (54)	16% (15)	27% (25)

NB – * percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number

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 2 2024-25 with performance at Quarter 2 2023-24 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.

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 2024-25, where performance data in 2023-24 was 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	64% (14)	36% (8)	0% (0)
2. Health, independence, and care	23	57% (13)	30% (7)	13% (3)
3. Safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods	14	64% (9)	36% (5)	0% (0)
4. Strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected economy	9	56% (5)	44% (4)	0% (0)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	11	55% (6)	45% (5)	0% (0)
6. Responsible Council	13	54% (7)	38% (5)	8% (1)
Total	92	59% (54)	37% (34)	4% (4)

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	20	15% (3)	20% (4)	25% (5)	40% (8)
2. Health, independence, and care	13	15% (2)	8%(1)	54% (7)	23% (3)

Priority	Number of Indicators with data	% in 1st quartile	% in 2nd quartile	% in 3rd quartile	% in 4th quartile
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)	33%* (2)	0% (0)	33%* (2)
5. Green and vibrant places reflecting our heritage and culture	2	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (1)	50% (1)
6. Responsible Council	2	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (1)	50% (1)
Total	43	16% (7)	16% (7)	33% (14)	35% (15)

NB - * Figures rounded to nearest whole number

The latest available picture of inter authority performance largely relates to the 2022-23 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 2023-24 comparative performance position as and when verified data is published.

4.4 Summary and conclusion of statistical analysis

- **73%** of indicator targets have been either exceeded, met fully, or met within 95% of target. This compares to 74% of indicators at Quarter 2 2023-24.
- **27%** of indicator targets were not met. This compares to 26% of indicators at Quarter 2 2023-24.
- The trend measure indicates over the course of the last 12 months **59%** of indicators showed improvement, **4%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **37%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory. The position in Quarter 2 2023-24 was that **47%** of indicators showed improvement, **15%** of indicators maintained the same performance and **38%** of indicators showed a downward trajectory.
- **16%** of all indicators where comparison is possible are in the top quartile, compared to 18% at Quarter 2 2023-24, whilst **35%** are in the bottom quartile, compared to 29% at Quarter 2 2023-24. 16% and 33% of indicators are in the 2nd and 3rd quartile respectively, compared to 23% and 29% in Quarter 2 2023-24 (NB percentages rounded to nearest whole number in 2023-24).
- Annual targets were set where possible within the context of national, regional, 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 impact of the 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 impact of 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 these challenges on performance is yet to be fully realised and understood. However, given the effect 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.

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

Priority 6 - Be a responsible council



Overview of priority performance

The tables below show provide an overview of performance at Quarter1 2023-24 for the indicators reported.

Performance Against Target

Number of Indicators with data	% target fully met	% target met within 95%	% target not met
15	47% (7)	13%(2)	40% (6)

The Performance Trend

Number of Indicators with data	% improved on last year	% worse than last year	% the same as last year
13	54% (7)	38% (5)	8% (1)

Inter Authority Comparison

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

Overview Summary of Performance Against Outcomes

- **Communicate, listen, engage, and work in partnership well with our residents, communities, local organisations, and partners recognising the strengths and skills in our community.**

The timeliness of the council's response to complaints remains strong. The number of upheld Ombudsman complaints has however increased and the timeliness of FOI responses a challenge given the volume received.

- **Invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce and elected members.**

Performance against the outcome shows areas of good performance and challenge. The number of apprenticeships commencing is lower than anticipated and the completion of mandatory training is marginally below target at the end of Quarter 2.

- **Embrace innovative ways of working to improve service delivery and the operations of the council and meet our community's needs by delivering accessible and responsive services.**

The customer experience measures continue exceed target and work across the transformation programme continues to be closely monitored to ensure delivery of this outcome.

- **Provide value for money and ensure we are financially resilient and sustainable.**

The Council continues to face severe financial pressures as a result of increased service demand (particularly within children's and adult social care) and delays/failure to deliver some of the approved budget savings which have resulted in a net budget overspend of £5.5m forecast for the current year.

Outcome 1 - Communicate, listen, engage, and work in partnership well with our residents, communities, local organisations, and partners recognising the strengths and skills in our community

Indicators Exceeding or Meeting Target


Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-002	Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within policy timescales.	Quarterly	Higher	77%	75%	82%	84%	11.32%	↑	N/A
<p>A total of 300 complaints were received in Quarter 2, 252 were responded to within agreed policy and statutory timescales, which equals 84% compliance across all directorates combined. Improvements have been made for children's statutory complaints increasing from 88% (Q1) to 100% for Quarter 2. For adult's social care complaints, compliance has decreased with 2 of the 4 complaints received during the quarter responded to late. There have been further improvements for Corporate and Place services with a compliance of 84%.</p>										

Indicators Not Meeting Target & Action for Improvement

20 Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-001	Number of upheld ombudsman complaints per 100,000 population.	Quarterly	Lower	3.2	5	1.08	4.3	-72%	↓	N/A
<p>Over the course of Quarters 1 and 2 a total of 8 Ombudsman complaints were upheld, with 7 upheld due to fault and justice, a rate of 4.3 per 100,000 population. Over the course of 2023-24 a total of 6 complaints were upheld, with 3 upheld due to fault and justice.</p> <p>Action for Improvement – Work continues across all directorates to identify complaint themes and resolve complaints prior to being escalated to the ombudsman. There has been an increase in ombudsman complaints received, with 50% of upheld complaints relating to SEND. Work is ongoing to ensure improved responses are issued and that the council is utilising the remedy guidance published by the ombudsman.</p>										
Tier 2										
CS-013	Percentage of FOIs responded to within policy timescales.	Quarterly	Higher	65%	75%	64%	62%	-18.97%	↓	N/A

The total number of Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) received in Quarter 2 was 207. Of the FOIs received during the quarter, 122 requests were responded to and closed within timescales, which equals a provisional compliance of 62%. This is a marginal decrease compared to Quarter 2 2023/24, which was recorded as 62.4%. NB Q1 and Outturn Data 2023/24 have been revised.

Action for Improvement – Weekly reporting to case managers has been implemented to ensure visibility of FOI cases across all directorates. Plans are in place to extend the distribution of these reports to the wider Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for further oversight. Work is ongoing to identify and assign cases to appropriate officers with the support of the Executive Support Team. Development of an FOI toolkit is ongoing, which will be launched later this year, this will provide additional guidance and support for colleagues responding to FOI requests.


CS-014	The number of users engaging with the Council's social media posts	Quarterly	Higher	97,827	101,740	17881	36139	-28.96%		N/A
--------	--	-----------	--------	--------	---------	-------	-------	---------	---	-----

Engagement via social media posts was below target this quarter however was similar to the same period last year.

Action for Improvement - We tend to see a decrease in engagement over the summer months but can often mitigate this with the promotion of events. However, a smaller events calendar means we have had far fewer things to promote that would ordinarily attract high levels of engagement. The Communications team continue to actively engage with communities and residents to promote a wide range of subject matter via social media. The launch of our 'With You, For You' campaign has been a success.

Outcome 2 - Invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce and elected members

Indicators Exceeding or Meeting Target

Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-004A	The percentage delivery of the Member Development Programme over 12 months	Quarterly	Higher	100%	100%	100	100	0%		N/A

Member Training has run to plan this quarter and is on target for the year.

CS-004B	Number to plan completion of the Annual Management Development Programme	Quarterly	Higher	42	124.0	57	95	53.23%	N/A	N/A
The target for 24/25 is for 124 staff trained, we currently have 95 staff who have completed or currently undertaking the training by the end of Quarter 2.										
CS-005	The percentage of training outcomes perceived to be above 'Satisfactory'.	Quarterly	Higher	95%	90%	96	96.59	7.32%	↑	N/A
Current feedback data indicates that 19.81% rate the training completed as Good, 46.75% rate it is very good and 30.03% rate it as Excellent giving us an overall average of 96.59% for this quarter, which is higher than our 90% target.										

Indicators Not Meeting Target & Action for Improvement

Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-003	The percentage of staff completing mandatory core E-learning training	Quarterly	Higher	58%	70%	68.8	66	-5.71%	↑	N/A
At the end of Quarter 2, 66% of mandatory training had been completed by staff. The figures account for employees leaving and joining the organisation and the expiration of training modules with a refresher training requirement i.e., Fire Awareness and Data Protection Training.										
Action for Improvement – Reminders to complete Mandatory Training have been shared regularly in All About Us and employees can see their mandatory training to complete and their progress when they log onto My Learning. Managers have been reminded how to access their team dashboard on My Learning which will enable them to monitor mandatory training more effectively within their team. A question relating to completion of Mandatory Training is included in the Time to Reflect & Plan Conversation form as a reminder to both the employee and their manager. It has been suggested to DMTs that they include Mandatory Training as a regular standard agenda item.										
CS-006	The number of apprenticeships commenced in financial year as a percentage of the total workforce.	Quarterly	Higher	1.47	1.9	0.16	0.55	-42.11%	↓	N/A

The September figure 0.55% equates to 24 apprenticeships commencing over this 2nd quarter which is higher than our target but due to not meeting our target in the 1st quarter, we are under target in total for where we would like to be at this point in the year. In Quarter 1 and the beginning of Quarter 2 resources have been primarily focused on transferring existing learners undertaking apprenticeships to new providers where the original provider ceased trading.

Action for Improvement – Work is ongoing with directorates to identify and promote suitable apprentice standards which will support the Council to meet the annual target of 1.9% by the end of quarter 4. The ILM L5 Diploma Operational Leaders and Managers Apprenticeship and the ILM L7 Aspiring Executive Leadership Apprenticeship have been successfully launched and these cohorts will feed into figures for Quarter 3.

Outcome 3 - Embrace innovative ways of working to improve service delivery and the operations of the council and meet our community's needs by delivering accessible and responsive services

Indicators Exceeding or Meeting Target

Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-008	Customer Satisfaction Score - Customer rating on satisfaction with contact with the Council	Quarterly	Higher	4.1	4	4.22	4.09	2.25%	↑	N/A
Performance is in line with target and expectations, this is based on 1321 surveys completed this quarter.										
CS-009	Customer Effort Score - Customer rating on how easy the Council made it to resolve their issue	Quarterly	Higher	4	4	4.08	4.06	1.5%	↑	N/A
Performance is in line with target and expectations, this is based on 1321 surveys completed this quarter.										
CS-010	Percentage of Customers that have had their call answered within the promised timeframe	Quarterly	Higher	53.10%	75%	75.4	77.46	3.28%	↑	N/A
Performance is in line with target, based on 44139 calls answered this quarter.										

Indicators Not Meeting Target & Action for Improvement

Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-007	Percentage of transformation programmes with delivery confidence as 'on track'	Quarterly	Higher	83%	80%	66	66	-17.5%	N/A	N/A
<p>Eight out of 12 programmes (66%) are on track to be delivered within timescale (Digital, People, Commissioning, Customer, Commercial, Finance, SEND Transport, ASC Transformation).</p> <p>Action for Improvement – Progress across the transformation programme continues to be closely monitored and the PMO team continue to actively support programme leads to progress projects. A draft Power Bi Dashboard has been produced to assist with future programme monitoring.</p>										

Outcome 4 - Provide value for money and ensure we are financially resilient and sustainable

24 Indicators Not Meeting Target & Action for Improvement

Ref	Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Higher / Lower is better?	23/24 Outturn	24/25 Target	Q1 June	Q2 Sept	% Variance from Target	Trend	Comparative Performance
Tier 1										
CS-011	Percentage of council tax collected	Quarterly	Higher	94.19%	94.75%	27.1	52.9	-1.12%	↓	3rd Quartile Eng Av. 96 LA Av. 95.2 (2022/23)
<p>In year performance is slightly below target at the end of Q2.</p> <p>Action for Improvement - Work is continuing to recover outstanding debt, in accordance with debt recovery procedures.</p>										
CS-012	Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Quarterly	Higher	97.15%	96.2%	29.5	56.7	-0.53%	↑	4th Quartile Eng Av. 96.8 LA Av. 97.1 (2022/23)

In year performance is slightly below target at the end of Q2.


Action for Improvement - Work is continuing to recover outstanding debt and review large assessments.

Finance Commentary

- The Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have substantially completed their work on the audit of the Statement of Accounts and have provided a draft opinion, that was presented to Audit & Governance Committee on 23 September, giving an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. Subsequently, Grant Thornton have undertaken extensive work to assess the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources (Value for Money) and their report was presented to Audit & Governance Committee on 4 November.
- The CIPFA Financial Resilience Index compares a range of financial measures across comparable authorities and movement between years. Whilst it is not a definitive measure, it facilitates review and Member participation in a crucial measure of the status of the Council. The annual report to the Finance to Audit & Governance Committee on 29 July 2024 examined the current position of the Council and the status. It concluded that whilst there are continued pressures, the Council maintains its resilience.
- The Financial Monitoring Report showing the Council's Quarter 2 position against the 2024/25 budget and delivery of approved savings is due to be considered by Cabinet on 20 November 2024. The Council continues to face severe financial pressures as a result of increased service demand (particularly within children's and adult social care) and delays/failure to deliver some of the approved budget savings which have resulted in a net budget overspend of £5.5m forecast for the current year. Individual directorates continue to implement in-year measures to reduce expenditure and mitigate ongoing budget pressures, and Council wide instruction has been issued in relation to the cessation of all non-essential expenditure, a review of agency workers and a recruitment freeze.

25

This page is intentionally left blank

 ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL	<h2>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</h2> <h3>3 February 2025</h3>
--	--

Report Title	Financial Monitoring Report Period 2 2024/25
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance & Governance
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	Richard Gibson Director of Finance richardgibson@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.	
	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 This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Commission with the forecast financial position in relation to the revenue and capital budget for 2024/25. It also summarises the Council's reserves and balances position and includes the Interim Treasury Management Strategy Report.
- 1.2 The report also provides detail on the delivery of the 2024/25 programme of budget savings, including savings brought forward from prior years. The failure to deliver agreed savings presents a key risk to the Council.
- 1.3 There is a forecast portfolio overspend of £8.910m against the updated net portfolio budget of £185.838m. There was a similar portfolio overspend in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, making 2024/25 the third consecutive year in which the Council is forecasting a significant overspend.
- 1.4 One-off corporate underspends are forecast to offset the portfolio overspend by £3.410m, resulting in a forecast net budget overspend of £5.500m for 2024/25. This presents a significant financial risk to the Council. There is an urgent requirement for mitigating actions to be implemented by management to minimise this risk.
- 1.5 The forecast position is summarised in the table below.

Portfolio	Forecast Variance at P2 £000
Transport & Environment	+1,989
Finance & Governance	+85
People, Performance & IT	(91)
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	+285
Integrated Health & Social Care	+800
Public Health	0
Business, Culture & Leisure	0
Children & Young People	+6,142
Supporting Neighbourhoods	(300)
Net Portfolio Position	+8,910
Corporate Budgets	(3,410)
Net Forecast Position 2024/25	+5,500

- 1.6 The main pressure is within Children & Young People, the main drivers of this being increasing demand, social work staffing challenges and unachieved savings. The pressure in the Transport & Environment portfolio is primarily as a result of the unsuccessful retendering of the Recycling contract. The other main

pressure is within Integrated Health & Care, reflecting ongoing demand pressures and the complexity of service users' needs.

- 1.7 If the forecast overspend is not reduced, 2024/25 will be the third consecutive year in which the Council has significantly overspent, requiring further unplanned use of reserves. It is vital for the Council's financial sustainability that it is able to control its costs and operate within its approved budgets.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Overview and Scrutiny Commission is recommended to:

- 1) Note the severe forecast outturn revenue overspend position for 2024/25 summarised at Section 1 above and detailed in Sections 1 and 2 of the Appendix, and in individual portfolio positions detailed at Annex C.
- 2) Note the latest position with regard to the implementation of 2024/25 budget savings and those brought forward from prior years, as detailed in Section 3 of the Appendix.
- 3) Note the revised capital programme as detailed in Section 4 and Annex F of the Appendix.
- 4) Note and approve the latest Reserves and Balances position as detailed in Section 5 of the Appendix.
- 5) Note the Dedicated Schools Grant position as detailed in Section 6 of the Appendix.
- 6) Note the Other Financial Monitoring Matters as detailed in Section 7 of the Appendix.
- 7) Note the £0.538m of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support development work on the St Helens to Widnes Active Travel route.
- 9) Note the Interim Treasury Management Strategy Report 2024/25 at Annex G to the Appendix.

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 The Council remains committed to the regular monitoring of its financial performance. This report is provided to update Cabinet on the position in respect of the revenue budget for 2024/25.
- 3.2 The report is also provided to update Overview and Scrutiny Commission on progress in delivering the capital programme, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 This report is prepared excluding any financial implications that may arise during or since the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2024.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 This is the second Financial Monitoring Report of 2024/25, covering the period to September 2024.
- 4.2 The Council's budget supports all the Borough priorities through the allocation of resources and ensuring that they are effectively managed.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 None.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 N/A

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the forecast financial position of the Council and has no direct legal or other implications unless noted.
- 7.2 Local authorities are required by legislation to set a balanced budget for each financial year, with the Section 151 Officer having a duty to issue a formal report if they believe that the Council is unable to set or maintain a balanced budget.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 As detailed in Appendix 1.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 Whilst there are no equality implications arising directly from the report, any potential implications need to be considered and understood when taking action to ensure sustainability of the Council's financial position.

10. Social Value

- 10.1 There are no direct social value implications arising from the report, but the financial challenge is such that any associated adverse impacts on the local economy, particularly in terms of spend and procurement, need to be fully considered and understood.

11. Net Zero and Environment

- 11.1 There are no specific implications directly arising from this report.

12. Health and Wellbeing

- 12.1 There are no specific implications directly arising from this report.

13. Customer and Resident

13.1 There are no direct implications on people accessing Council services or those resident in the Borough from this report, but any potential adverse impacts must be fully considered and understood when taking action to ensure the Council's financial sustainability.

14. Asset and Property

14.1 Section 4 and Annex F provide detail on the Council's capital programme, which includes significant levels of investment in the Council's land and property assets.

15. Staffing and People Management

15.1 The report has no direct staffing and human resources implications, though the financial challenge is such that future potential adverse impacts on staffing must be acknowledged.

16. Risks

16.1 This report describes the budget position of the Council and highlights a number of risks in relation to the Council's financial position and sustainability.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 There are no specific implications directly arising from this report.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 There are no specific implications directly arising from this report.

19. Background Documents

19.1 None.

20. Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1 – Financial Monitoring Report Period 2 2024/25

This page is intentionally left blank

FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT – PERIOD 2 2024/25**SECTION 1: SUMMARY****Revenue Budget**

- 1.1 This is the second Financial Monitoring Report of 2024/25, covering the period to September 2024. There will be a further Financial Monitoring Report covering quarter 3 and a final outturn report covering the full-year financial performance for 2024/25.
- 1.2 There is a forecast portfolio overspend of £8.910m against the updated net portfolio budget of £185.838m. There was a similar portfolio overspend in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, making 2024/25 the third consecutive year in which the Council is forecasting a significant overspend. This suggests that, despite the Council having allocated significant additional resource into both Children & Young People and Integrated Health & Social Care budgets in 2024/25, demand and price pressures are still having an impact. Failure to deliver planned savings is also contributing to the adverse position.
- 1.3 One-off corporate underspends are forecast to offset the portfolio overspend by £3.410m, resulting in a forecast net budget overspend of £5.500m, of which £2.284m relates to the non-delivery of savings. This presents a significant financial risk to the Council. Therefore, there is an urgent requirement for delivery of approved savings to be progressed and mitigating actions to be implemented by management to minimise this risk for both this and future years.
- 1.4 The forecast position is summarised in the table below.

Portfolio	Forecast Variance at P2 £000
Transport & Environment	+1,989
Finance & Governance	+85
People, Performance & IT	(91)
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	+285
Integrated Health & Social Care	+800
Public Health	0
Business, Culture & Leisure	0
Children & Young People	+6,142
Supporting Neighbourhoods	(300)
Net Portfolio Position	+8,910
Corporate Budgets	(3,410)
Net Forecast Position 2024/25	+5,500

6

- 1.5 The most severe pressure is within Children & Young People where there is a forecast overspend of £6.142m, the main drivers of this being increasing demand, agency social work costs and unachieved savings. Placement costs associated with caring for children looked after, frontline social care staffing costs and costs relating to family support packages continue to be significant pressures. Actions continue to be progressed to try to mitigate and combat these challenges, as discussed at Annex C, section vii.
- 1.6 There is a forecast pressure of £1.989m in the Transport & Environment portfolio, primarily as a result of the unsuccessful retendering of the Recycling contract. Work continues to be ongoing to address this pressure, with an options appraisal now in progress.
- 1.7 The other main pressure is a forecast £0.800m overspend within Integrated Health & Care, reflecting ongoing demand pressures and the complexity of service users' needs. The most significant pressures are within Physical Support (Frail & Elderly) and Learning Disability Support.
- 1.8 At this stage, there is no overall forecast variance across the Finance & Governance and People, Performance & IT portfolios. In previous years, underspends within these portfolios have assisted in mitigating the overall budget pressure, but with staffing savings taken within these services, there is limited opportunity for further reductions.
- 1.9 If the forecast overspend is not reduced, 2024/25 will be the third consecutive year in which the Council has significantly overspent, requiring further unplanned use of reserves. This is not a sustainable position. As well as reducing the Council's financial resilience, Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, have raised a potential risk around an unfavourable risk assessment in the future. It is vital for the Council's financial sustainability that it is able to control its costs and operate within its approved budgets.
- 1.10 In response to this severe situation and discussions with the Executive Management Board, the following measures will be implemented with immediate effect like in previous years:
- A recruitment freeze
 - The cessation of all non-essential expenditure
 - Continued review and reduction of agency workers
- These measures are vital to ensure that the ongoing pressures are mitigated.
- 1.11 The 2024/25 approved budget allowed for pay inflation to be in the region of 4%. Agreement has now been reached with the National Employers on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2024. The rates being an increase of £1,290 per annum or 2.5% whichever is the higher amount. This equates to an overall average increase of around 4%. It is therefore not envisaged that the pay award will generate either a significant pressure or underspend in 2024/25.
- 1.12 It is critical that the severe forecast overspend position continues to be closely monitored during the year and reported on in subsequent Financial Monitoring

Reports and other reports, with significant focus via the Budget & Performance Monitoring Board.

Savings

- 1.13 The 2024/25 budget was approved by Council on 6 March 2024. In doing so, Members agreed to the delivery of £6.463m of savings during the year. This is in addition to £2.912m of savings previously approved for 2024/25, along with £3.602m of savings slipped from previous years. Section 3 of this report provides a summary of the latest position in relation to the progress towards delivering these savings, and portfolio commentaries provide additional information.
- 1.14 At this stage, it is forecast that savings of £4.752m (36.62%) may not be fully delivered in the year due to delays in implementation or them no longer being achievable. With identified one-off mitigations of £2.597m, the total forecast financial saving is currently £2.155m less than required: a deterioration of £0.332m from the position reported at period 1. This is a contributing factor to the significant forecast overspend. Delivering savings is always challenging, and the Council remains committed to the delivery of the savings plans approved by Full Council. It is critical that these continue to be addressed and implemented over the remainder of the year to ensure that savings are delivered or alternative permanent reductions in expenditure are found or additional income is generated.
- 1.15 It should also be noted that a number of savings that are currently classed as on track to be delivered have not yet been implemented, with decisions to be approved at a future date.

Financial Outlook

- 1.16 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was approved by Council on 6 March 2024 and was underpinned by a number of key assumptions relating to funding and spending. The assumptions were themselves based in part on the Government's own assumptions regarding levels of inflation and other matters. They will continue to be reviewed and refreshed, with future reports being brought to Cabinet.
- 1.17 Local government is facing significant challenges as a sector, after more than a decade of austerity and government cuts and given the crisis engulfing both adults' and children's social care amid continually increasing demand. In the absence of any significant additional government support, these challenges will remain and will continue to require robust financial management.
- 1.18 The change in government may address some of these challenges. The budget announcement on 30 October 2024 included additional funding for local authorities. The specific details of the funding and indicative Councils allocations will follow as part of the Provisional Settlement in late December 2024.

Capital Budget

- 1.19 The capital programme covers a three-year period through to 2026/27. The capital budget has been updated to reflect new schemes approved in the last quarter. Schemes have also been reprofiled to reflect the latest spending estimates.
- 1.20 The key revisions to the capital programme this period include significant additional grant-funded schemes:
- (i) Enabling works for the St Helens Town Multi-Modal Transport Interchange
 - (ii) Addition of Cowley Hill Link Road Scheme
 - (iii) Additional funding for Peasley Cross Roundabout Active Travel Scheme
- 1.21 The capital programme has also been updated to reflect proposals on this agenda, subject to Cabinet approval.

Further details are included in Section 4 and Annex F to this report.

Reserves and Balances

- 1.22 Section 5 of this report provides detail on the Council's reserves and balances. As part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027, Members approved the Council's current Reserves Strategy, which is focused on supporting performance, transformation, regeneration and growth, as well as ensuring financial sustainability and resilience to changes in funding, inflationary pressures and other unexpected events. Having said this, the Council's reserves are not excessive, and it is essential to protect reserves to ensure future financial resilience and stability.
- 1.23 Based on the projected overspend outlined in Table 1, the level of general fund balances at 31 March 2025 is forecast to be £6.500m. This is in contrast to the approved Reserves Strategy, which identifies the Council's required level of general balances as being £12m. The latter is considered a prudent minimum amount set aside for exceptional circumstances. Should the projected overspend for 2024/25 not be mitigated, use of some £5.500m of earmarked reserves will again be necessary in 2024/25 to replenish general balances. The combination of significant overspends and a level of reserves which is not excessive is a key risk.

Treasury Management

- 1.24 The Interim Treasury Management Strategy Report 2024/25 is included at Annex G.

SECTION 2: REVENUE BUDGET

- 2.1 The budget and forecast outturn positions for 2024/25 are summarised in Table 1. At the end of period 2 there is a projected portfolio budget pressure of £5.500m.
- 2.2 The figures detailed in Table 1 exclude any implications of the 2024/25 pay award, which is noted in paragraph 1.13

Table 1 – Revenue Budget 2024/25	Current Budget	Forecast outturn at P2	Variance at P2 + / - (b)-(a) £000	Variance at P1 + / - £000	Section Reference Annex C
	(a) £000	(b) £000			
Transport & Environment	23,511	25,500	+1,989	+1,481	(i)
Finance & Governance	7,589	7,674	+85	0	(ii)
People, Performance & IT	0	(91)	(91)	0	(ii)
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	4,323	4,608	+285	0	(iii)
Integrated Health & Social Care	67,991	68,791	+800	+500	(iv)
Public Health	282	282	0	0	(v)
Business, Culture & Leisure	4,729	4,729	0	0	(vi)
Children & Young People	68,165	74,307	+6,142	+643	(vii)
Supporting Neighbourhoods	9,248	8,948	(300)	0	(viii)
Net Portfolio Budgets	185,838	194,748	+8,910	+2,624	
Levies & Precepts	24,232	24,232	0	0	
Treasury Management	9,609	7,497	(2,112)	(112)	
Restructuring Costs*	1,000	500	(500)	0	
Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	(2,926)	(2,926)	0	0	
Capital Charges	(17,768)	(17,768)	0	0	
Net Corporate Items	14,147	11,535	(2,612)	(112)	
Council Tax	(96,197)	(96,197)	0	0	
Collection Fund**	(388)	(659)	(271)	(271)	
Formula Top-Up	(19,419)	(19,419)	0	0	
Business Rates / Section 31 Grant	(77,657)	(77,657)	0	0	
2024/25 Services Grant	(323)	(323)	0	0	
Other Funding	(6,001)	(6,528)	(527)	0	
Funding	(199,985)	(200,783)	(798)	(271)	
NET POSITION 2024/25	0	5,500	+5,500	+2,241	

* Net of £1.000m sum applied via Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.

** Collection Fund figure includes the prior-year net surplus on Council Tax and Business Rates plus a reimbursement to earmarked reserves relating to shortfalls in Section 31 grants received in prior years.

- 2.3 The previous budget approved by Cabinet on 10 July 2024 has been revised to include:
- (i) Approved use of earmarked reserves in the period (see Annex D)
 - (ii) Neutral technical adjustments relating to recharges and capital charges

- 2.4 Details of portfolio budget movements can be found in Annex A. This report also provides details of the forecast outturn position on a priority basis at Annex B.
- 2.5 There is a forecast underspend of £2.000m relating to Treasury Management activity as a result of, interest receivable from investments exceeding the budget due to higher than expected rates of return in the first 6 months of the year and higher cash holdings.
- 2.6 There is a forecast underspend of £0.112m relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision, as a consequence of changes to the profile and financing of the Council's capital programme.
- 2.7 When setting the 2024/25 budget, provision of £1.000m was set aside (net of budgeted £1.000m flexible use of capital receipts) to fund costs associated with the restructuring and reconfiguring of Council services. Current forecasts suggest that this budget will not be fully utilised in 2024/25, with slippage of £0.500m anticipated.
- 2.8 There is also an underspend of £0.271m as a result of a favourable variance on Section 31 grants received in 2023/24. This will materialise in 2024/25 due to the prescribed statutory mechanics of the Collection Fund.
- 2.9 As part of the Mid-Mersey Business Rates Pool arrangement with Warrington and Halton Borough Councils, St Helens is due a sum of £0.527m in relation to previous financial years, this being a proportionate share of the levy savings that would otherwise have been payable in relation to Warrington's Business Rates growth. This sum has been included in the forecasts at Table 1 above.
- 2.10 Commentary in relation to the key portfolio variances is detailed in Annex C.

SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF 2024/25 SAVINGS PROPOSALS AND OUTSTANDING SAVING PROPOSALS FROM PRIOR YEARS

- 3.1 The budget for 2024/25 was set against a backdrop of significant demand and inflationary pressures, with significant savings that must be delivered during the year to protect the Council's financial position. It is imperative that approved savings are delivered in a timely manner.
- 3.2 As Table 2 shows, of the required savings total of £12.977m, it is currently forecast that only 63.38%% of these savings will be achieved in year: a worse position than that reported at period 1.

Table 2 - Budget Savings 2024/25	Total Saving Requirement 2024/25 £000	Savings on track to be delivered £000 (a)	Slippage on delivery in year £000 (b)	Saving Not Achievable £000 (c)	Mitigation 2024/25 £000 (d)
Corporate Services	839	839	-	-	-
Integrated Health & Care	3,114	2,144	970	-	725
Children's Services	3,873	1,963	1,910	-	-
Public Health	427	173	254	-	254
Place Services	1,727	109	1,618	-	1,618
Council-Wide	2,997	2,997	-	-	-
Total	12,977	8,225	4,752	-	2,597
%	100%	63.38%	36.62%	0%	
Total forecast financial saving 2024/25 (a)+(d)	10,693				

- 3.3 The value of savings that are on track to be delivered is £8.225m. This is £1.040m less than the figure reported at period 1.
- 3.4 Of the £4.752m of savings that have not yet been achieved, temporary mitigations of £2.597m have been identified for 2024/25 only. Allowing for these mitigations, the total forecast financial saving is still £2.155m less than required. This is contributing to the severe overspend forecast for 2024/25. Further work is needed to bring these savings forward in order to minimise the impact on outturn.
- 3.5 The main pressure is within Children's Services, where there are £1.910m of unachieved savings without any temporary mitigations in place. These can be summarised as follows:

Nature of saving	Slippage on delivery £000
Review of Children's Centres and Early Help Services	212
Residential Care Provision	1,098
Therapeutic Foster Care	500
Direct Payments	100
Total	1,910

- 3.6 Slippage in relation to the review of residential care arrangements mainly reflects delays in purchasing suitable properties for the provision of residential care accommodation, with a review of options relating to the refurbishment of Windlehurst Cottage ongoing and the purchase of four additional properties currently at various stages of completion.
- 3.7 Saving from the Review of Children's Centres and Early Help Services will be achieved through the cessation of early years provision at two children's centres, though the full saving will not be realised in 2024/25. A service review is ongoing.
- 3.8 The pressures in relation to therapeutic foster care reflect challenges in the recruitment of specialist foster carers. A recruitment drive remains ongoing.

- 3.9 Within Adult Services, there are £0.970m of unachieved savings which are only temporarily being mitigated by one-off underspends in 2024/25.
- 3.10 Within Place Services, there are £1.618m of unachieved savings which are only temporarily being mitigated by one-off underspends in 2024/25.
- 3.11 The non-achievement of savings is exacerbating the pressure on the Council's financial position. It is essential that action is taken immediately to deliver approved savings in full or identify appropriate alternatives to offset savings that have slipped or can no longer be delivered. These actions will continue to be monitored and challenged through the Budget and Performance Monitoring Board, which has been established to monitor implementation of savings throughout 2024/25 and ensure that directorates are accountable for the delivery of approved savings.

SECTION 4: CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 to 2026/27

- 4.1 The capital budget has been updated to reflect revised expenditure profiles for capital schemes. This includes reprofiling a number of grant funded schemes to the next financial year to reflect the latest forecast spend.
- 4.2 In addition, other key revisions to the programme this period relate to:
 - (i) Addition of the full scheme for the St Helens Multi Modal Interchange and enabling works on the temporary Bus Hub following acceptance of £35m capital funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority as approved by Cabinet at its meeting in September 2024.
 - (ii) Addition of the Cowley Hill Link Road scheme, to support with provision of high quality access to the Cowley Hill Development site and also provide alternative traffic routes into St Helens town centre. This is funded by a £10m grant from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, as approved by Cabinet at its meeting in October 2024.
 - (iii) Additional funding for the Peasley Cross Roundabout Active Travel scheme of £2m, awarded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and accepted by Cabinet at its meeting in October 2024.
 - (iv) Addition of the Evelyn Avenue Remedial Works scheme of £1m to support decontamination of the site and preparation for redevelopment, funded by a grant from the One Public Estate Brownfield Land Release fund, accepted via an urgent Leader Decision on 19 September 2024.
- 4.3 Additional proposals for capital expenditure are included on this agenda and have been reflected in the capital programme presented here. Subject to approval by Cabinet they will be formally included in the capital programme:
 - (i) Addition of £1.189m over 2024/25 to fund pre-development costs for Project Halo, to be financed using Tax Increment Financing
 - (ii) Addition of £350k to implement a new Revenue and Benefits system.

- 4.4 In setting the 2024/25 budget, the Council approved the deferral of the capital pipeline to achieve savings on the revenue impact of financing capital schemes through borrowing. In order to mitigate the impact of the deferral, £10m of capital receipts were set aside to fund schemes over the next three years which meet specific criteria, focussed on essential maintenance, health and safety works, and leveraging match funding for key strategic schemes. The balance of this fund has been reflected in the capital programme.
- 4.5 Business cases for a number of key priorities for investment have been considered through the Council Capital Gateway Process, including essential health and safety works at Hardshaw Brook Depot and replacement of the revenue and benefits system. Proposals for these schemes are being brought forward for consideration and subject to Cabinet or delegated approval, will be added to the capital programme. As set out in paragraph 4.3, schemes on this agenda are reflected in the presented capital programme, subject to Cabinet approval of the proposals.
- 4.6 Table 3 presents a summary of the Council's current 3-year capital programme. The detailed programme is provided at Annex F.

Table 3 - Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27*	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Children & Young People	6,207	14,564	1,858
Integrated Health & Social Care	350	0	0
Supporting Neighbourhoods	5,390	4,406	3,868
Business, Culture & Leisure	3,715	0	0
Finance & Governance	626	0	0
People, Performance & ICT	1,243	0	0
Transport & Environment	46,546	14,015	9,418
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	79,997	59,275	35,676
Cross Portfolio	2,180	3,333	3,334
Total	146,254	95,593	54,154
FINANCED BY			
Grants and Other Contributions	87,285	55,620	26,291
Capital Receipts	3,935	3,392	3,759
Revenue Contribution	1,109	24	0
Borrowing	53,425	35,868	24,104
Tax Increment Financing (Borrowing)	500	689	0
Total	146,254	95,593	54,154

*Including proposals on the same agenda, subject to Cabinet approval

SECTION 5: RESERVES AND BALANCES

5.1 General Balances

The general balances position at 31 March 2025 is forecast to be as follows, having regard to the net current forecast outturn position detailed in Table 1.

Table 4 – General Balances	Original Estimate £000	Forecast Outturn £000
General Balances at 1 April 2024	12,000	12,000
Net Position 2024/25	-	(5,500)
General Balances at 31 March 2025	12,000	6,500

- 5.1.1 The Council recognises that the level of reserves it maintains must reflect its future priorities and the operational and financial risks it faces. The Council's current Reserves Strategy is included within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 report considered by Cabinet on 28 February 2024 and approved by Council on 6 March 2024.
- 5.1.2 The forecast unfavourable movement in 2024/25 is due entirely to the forecast overspend of £5.500m detailed at Section 2.
- 5.1.3 The Council's required level of general balances is identified as being £12m. This is considered a prudent amount set aside to cushion against uncertainty and act as an emergency fund in exceptional circumstances. As outlined at paragraph 1.24, this figure will decrease to £6.500m if the forecast overspend is not reduced. This presents a severe risk to the Council's financial resilience.

5.2 Earmarked Balances

The forecast position in relation to earmarked balances at 31 March 2025 is provided in Table 5. Annex D details approved use of earmarked balances during the period and Annex E provides details of earmarked balances to 2026/27.

Table 5 – Earmarked Balances	£000
Earmarked Balances at 1 April 2024	44,395
Transfer to / (from) during the year*	(4,903)
Forecast Earmarked Balances at 31 March 2025	39,492

* Includes an estimated transfer from earmarked balances of £0.235m to fund planned expenditure on the Council's Agile Hubs owing to recently implemented changes in working arrangements for Council staff.

5.3 Schools Balances

The projected position reflects schools' current spending plans for the financial year, as approved by the individual governing bodies.

Table 6 – School Balances	£000
School Balances at 1 April 2024	10,015
Forecast Net Position 2024/25	(1,015)
Forecast School Balances at 31 March 2025	9,000

5.4 Usable Capital Receipts

Table 7 – Usable Capital Receipts	£000
Capital receipts brought forward at 1 April 2024	19,012
Receipts generated in year to date from land, property and fleet sales	376
Receipts set aside to resource the transformation programme where the use of flexibilities can be applied	(1,000)
Required to fund capital programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 (including capital receipts repurposed for capital investment per approved MTFS to be applied to scheme)	(11,086)
Available Balance (after taking commitments into account)	7,302

SECTION 6: DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

6.1 The current Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position is summarised below.

Table 8 – Dedicated Schools Grant allocation 2024/25	£000
Schools Block	84,543
High Needs Block	32,545
Early Years Block	21,153
Central School Services Block	1,262
Total DSG received by the Authority	139,503
<u>Other DSG funding / adjustments</u>	
Academy Schools	59,942
Business Rates	1,302
Directly funded SEND places	1,396
Total DSG for St Helens	202,143

- 6.2 It is currently forecast that there will be an in-year budget pressure of £1.174m in relation to the DSG. However, there is a cumulative net prior-year surplus of £1.881m, resulting in a projected overall surplus outturn of £0.707m as at 31 March 2025.
- 6.3 The main area of pressure relates to the high needs block of the DSG, which is forecast to overspend in 2024/25 by £1.617m. The most significant area of pressure within the high needs block relates to independent school fees for pupils who cannot be educated in either a mainstream setting, a resource base, or one of the Council's maintained special schools. There are also significant pressures associated with costs to support children remaining in mainstream settings.

- 6.4 Funding has been set aside within the high needs block to resource new and intended SEND bases and the new free school, and to manage demand. Whilst these budgets are underspent in 2024/25, they will be required in future years as the additional places become available. These developments are necessary to help both the Council and schools manage the underlying level of demand associated with the number of pupils who have Statements or Education, Health and Care Plans. Places in these settings are usually at a significantly lower cost than out-of-borough alternatives.
- 6.5 An increasing number of local authorities are experiencing significant DSG pressures due to the rising demand associated with pupils with additional educational needs. Locally, it is expected that such costs will continue to rise, resulting in increased pressures on the DSG, potentially leading to cumulative deficits in future years.

SECTION 7: OTHER FINANCIAL MONITORING MATTERS

7.1 External Grant Funding

7.1.1 Household Support Fund

On 2 September 2024, the Government announced a further six-month extension of the Household Support Fund for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. St Helens' allocation is £1.780m, taking the total allocation for the year to £3.559m.

7.1.2 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Development Funding

The Council has been awarded £0.538m of funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support development work on the St Helens to Widnes Active Travel route. This funding will enable the Council to undertake pre-construction development of the active travel route, in anticipation of future capital funding to deliver the infrastructure improvements. Cabinet is recommended to accept the funding and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance, to enter into a grant funding agreement with the Combined Authority for the scheme.

7.1.3 Active Travel Fund – Tranche 4

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has awarded the Council £0.850m to fund part 1b of the Lea Green to Whiston Hospital Active Travel scheme. Delegated Executive Decision 0043 provides further details.

7.1.4 Highways Maintenance Funding

In November 2023, the Department for Transport announced £8.3 billion of redirected HS2 funding to repair and resurface roads, with funding allocated through to 2034. Of this, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was awarded an allocation of £2.684m for 2024/25, of which the Council's share is £0.375m. Delegated Executive Decision 0042 provides further details.

7.1.5 Young Person’s Guarantee Grant

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has awarded the Council funding of £0.093m for 2024/25 from its Young Person’s Guarantee Fund to deliver employment and training support to 18-to-24-year-olds. Operational Decision ENVP003510-P provides further details.

7.2 Omega Bus Service Legal Agreement

Cabinet is recommended to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place Services to enter into a funding agreement with Merseytravel for the procurement of cross-border bus services to Omega West. The Omega West bus service is planned to begin operation in late 2024 to serve the new units opening at Omega West. Entering into a contract with Merseytravel is crucial in getting the service operational. The agreement will allow Section 106 funds totalling £0.775m secured by the Council for the Omega West development to be transferred over to Merseytravel who will procure, manage and help operate the Omega West bus service contract on behalf of the Council.

7.3 Term-Time-Only Staff Employment Tribunal Claims

7.3.1 As noted in previous Financial Monitoring Reports, the Council has received a number of legal claims for historical back-payments of holiday pay as a consequence of the July 2022 Supreme Court ruling in relation to term-time-only workers.

7.3.2 The Council continues to make settlement offers in response to these claims. As part of the closure of the 2023/24 accounts, provision was set aside to cover these costs and it is not currently envisaged that costs will exceed this provision.

SECTION 8: TREASURY MANAGEMENT POSITION STATEMENT

8.1 A summary of the Council’s Treasury position at the end of the reporting period is included in Table 9. The Interim Treasury Management Strategy is included in Annex G.

Table 9 – Treasury Management Position	As at 1 April 2024	As at Previous Period	As at Current Period
Investments Outstanding	£107.7m	£138.9m	£133.1m
Investment Returns (average for the year to date)	-	5.405%	5.353%
Benchmark Returns	-	5.225%	5.206%
Borrowing	£132.5m	£132.5m	£132.5m

Budget movements since the previous reporting period**Annex A**

PORTFOLIO	Approved Budget £000 *1	Use of Reserves In Period £000 *2	Earmarked Reserves Not Required £000 *2	Technical & Accounting Adjustments £000 *3	Current Budget £000
Transport & Environment	23,446	-	-	65	23,511
Finance & Governance	7,532	96	-	(39)	7,589
People, Performance & IT	-	88	(37)	(51)	-
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	4,251	-	-	72	4,323
Integrated Health & Social Care	67,926	-	-	65	67,991
Public Health	282	-	-	-	282
Business, Culture & Leisure	4,816	35	-	(122)	4,729
Children & Young People	67,769	-	-	396	68,165
Supporting Neighbourhoods	9,223	-	-	25	9,248
TOTAL DIRECTORATE BUDGETS	185,245	219	(37)	411	185,838
Council-Wide Budgets	(185,245)	(219)	37	(411)	(185,838)
Net Position 2024/25	-	-	-	-	-

*1 Approved budget – Council, 10 July 2024

*2 Use of earmarked reserves during the period (see Annex D)

*3 Neutral technical and accounting adjustments (e.g. recharges and capital charges)

Annex B**Portfolio Budgets on a Priority Basis**

	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance 2024/25 £000
Priority 1 – Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	68,165	74,307	+6,142
Priority 2 – Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	67,991	68,791	+800
Priority 3 – Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	9,505	9,205	(300)
Priority 4 – Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	5,257	5,596	+339
Priority 5 – Create green vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	27,973	29,177	+1,204
Priority 6 – Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	6,947	7,672	+725
Total	185,838	194,748	+8,910

(i) Transport & Environment

Transport & Environment	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e)=(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
Place Services Directorate						
Parking Services	1,278	(1,202)	76	301	+225	0
Highways Maintenance	11,976	(2,557)	9,419	9,429	+10	0
Street Lighting	2,271	(156)	2,115	2,130	+15	0
Traffic Management & Road Safety	884	(286)	598	549	(49)	0
Transport Planning, Policy & Strategy	834	0	834	810	(24)	0
Parks & Open Spaces	2,762	(197)	2,565	2,524	(41)	0
Street Cleansing	2,234	(186)	2,048	2,013	(35)	0
Cemetery and Crematorium	2,000	(2,667)	(667)	(628)	+39	0
Waste Collection	3,257	(823)	2,434	2,569	+135	0
Recycling	7,006	(3,113)	3,893	5,384	+1,491	+1,537
Climate Change	103	(25)	78	68	(10)	0
Direct Services	22,441	(22,323)	118	(194)	(312)	+194
Management & Support Services	1,691	(1,691)	0	545	+545	(250)
Councillor Improvement Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	58,737	(35,226)	23,511	25,500	+1,989	+1,481

- 1.1 The portfolio is currently projecting an overspend of £1.989m.
- 1.2 Unachieved staffing savings across the portfolio are currently generating a pressure of £0.634m, while unachieved locality savings are causing a £0.142m pressure. These are being partly mitigated by a £0.347m underspend within Transport and employee slippage of £0.231m within the Place Services management budget.
- 1.3 There is a forecast budget pressure of £0.200m within Parking Services relating to an unachieved saving for charging on out-of-town-centre car parks.
- 1.4 Waste Collection is forecasting a pressure of £0.112m. This relates to an unachieved saving for moving to three-weekly bin collections, for which an action plan is currently being devised tying in with the Recycling pressure reported at 1.5 below.
- 1.5 Recycling is forecasting a budget pressure of £1.491m. As reported at period 1, the service is out of contract due to lack of tenders, which has resulted in the introduction of a gate fee per tonne and loss of recyclable sales income. The forecast for the full year is additional gate fee charges of £1.323m and a £0.247m loss of income, based on the same tonnages disposed of in 2023/24. This is being partially mitigated by employee slippage within the service of

£0.136m and other small underspends across the service. There is also a £0.106m unachieved saving relating to the Commercial Strategy.

- 1.6 There is a forecast pressure of £0.112m within the School Meals service. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to address this overspend, particularly in relation to primary and secondary school meal prices, where an uplift has been applied across the board. Should the uptake remain unaffected by this uplift, it is anticipated that the pressure will have reduced to £0.112m from the £0.300m reported at period 1. Work remains ongoing to review the primary model, as well as reviewing contracts with suppliers to ascertain if further savings can be made.

(ii) Finance & Governance

Finance & Governance	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) = (d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
Corporate Services Directorate						
Local Tax Collection	5,110	(3,383)	1,727	1,683	(44)	0
Contact Centre	1,866	(1,866)	0	(54)	(54)	0
Emergency Planning	123	0	123	124	+1	0
Local Welfare Assistance Schemes	3,738	(3,559)	179	179	0	0
Grants & Donations	43	0	43	43	0	0
Non-Distributed Costs	1,240	(34)	1,206	1,206	0	0
Finance	7,275	(7,275)	0	38	+38	0
Audit & Risk	1,486	(1,486)	0	(5)	(5)	0
Coroners Court Services	270	0	270	340	+70	0
Registration of Births, Deaths & Marriages	330	(232)	98	91	(7)	0
Democratic Representation & Management	1,663	0	1,663	1,671	+8	0
Elections	436	(53)	383	383	0	0
Governance & Administration	283	(283)	0	0	0	0
Legal Services	1,992	(1,992)	0	72	+72	0
Housing Benefit Administration	43,821	(43,564)	257	257	0	0
Corporate Management	1,640	0	1,640	1,646	+6	0
Other Services	129	(129)	0	0	0	0
Total	71,445	(63,856)	7,589	7,674	+85	0

(ii) **People, Performance & IT**

People, Performance & IT	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/24 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e)=(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
Corporate Services Directorate						
People Management	3,272	(3,272)	0	45	+45	0
I.T.	7,096	(7,096)	0	(120)	(120)	0
Press and Public Affairs	1,442	(1,442)	0	(22)	(22)	0
Policy Development	2,485	(2,485)	0	6	+6	0
Organisational Development	1,131	(1,131)	0	0	0	0
Total	15,426	(15,426)	0	0	(91)	0

- 2.1 At the midpoint of the year, it is anticipated that the two Corporate Services portfolios will outturn within budget.
- 2.2 There are a number of vacant posts across both portfolios, and it is forecast at this stage that there will be an underspend on staffing budgets of £0.240m. There is the potential that this figure will increase by the end of the financial year as further vacancies arise due to staff movement, but there has been significant staff savings already made across the two portfolios'
- 2.3 Within the Finance & Governance portfolio there are two areas of pressure to note:
- Information received from Sefton Council in relation to the Coroners Service indicates that there will be a pressure on that budget of circa £0.070m. Officers at Sefton Council have advised that the increase in costs for the service is in part due to a new Post-Mortem & Mortuary Service Level Agreement with Mersey & West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust at Whiston Hospital.
 - The dividend receivable from Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) is forecast to be below budget by circa £0.170m. This has generated a recurring pressure in recent years, and efforts are ongoing to determine the position for 2024/25 through continued work with YPO.
- 2.4 As reported at period 1, the two Corporate Services portfolios have a combined staffing savings target of £1.260m over the next two years, with £0.630m of this relating to 2024/25. Staffing reductions have been delivered through the Council's MARS programme and the removal of vacant posts to meet the required savings for 2024/25. Work in relation to 2025/26 staff savings is continuing.
- 2.5 It should be noted that all savings in the two portfolios are on track to be achieved this year.
- 2.6 In 2023/24, there was a significant pressure in Housing Benefit Administration. Work is ongoing to determine the extent of this pressure in 2024/25.

- 2.7 It is anticipated likely that in some areas pressures will materialise during the year across the two corporate portfolio's, but work is continuing to identify non staffing budget under / overspends, and potential any underspends mitigating any portfolio pressures. An update on this position will be provided in the next Financial Monitoring Report.

(iii) Inclusive Growth & Regeneration

Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) =(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
Place Services Directorate						
Economic Development	1,179	(1,023)	156	102	(54)	0
Building Control	792	(372)	420	567	+147	0
Development Control	2,019	(1,064)	955	902	(53)	0
Planning Policy	805	(175)	630	571	(59)	0
Estates - Industrial & Commercial Premises (including Town Centre)	6,796	(5,881)	915	721	(194)	0
Market Undertakings	934	(359)	575	600	+25	0
Growth Delivering Prosperity	7,573	(6,926)	647	673	+26	0
Management & Support Services	1,604	(1,604)	0	300	+300	0
Building Support Services	6,308	(6,308)	0	230	+230	0
Estates Management	605	(605)	0	(83)	(83)	0
Total	28,615	(24,317)	4,298	4,583	+285	0

- 3.1 The portfolio is currently projecting an overspend of £0.285m.
- 3.2 There are unachieved savings of £0.230m for office rationalisation at Wesley House and Lincoln House. Savings can only be achieved once sale and disposal of Lincoln House and Wesley House have been secured. There is also a £0.140m unachieved saving relating to the Millennium Centre and Beacon Building leaseholds, of which key dependencies will be the notice period to terminate lease arrangements and make alternative accommodation arrangements.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that these unachieved savings will be mostly mitigated by windfall income of £0.347m relating to the granting of an easement for drainage across Council-owned land.
- 3.4 There is an unachieved saving of £0.139m for the review of the Economy Service, which is being mitigated by the utilisation of UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant funding until March 2025. Options had to be further reviewed as a result of the closure of St Helens Chamber.
- 3.5 There is an anticipated capital fee income shortfall of £0.300m. This was also a pressure in 2023/24.
- 3.6 Other unachieved savings pressures include £0.032m relating to staff savings in Market Undertakings, £0.013m in relation to the Commercial Strategy and £0.026m for the storage and installation of Christmas lights.

- 3.7 There is also a pressure within Building Control of £0.147m, due to a shortfall in income.
- 3.8 Employee slippage across the portfolio of £0.249m is mitigating the above pressures.

(iv) Integrated Health & Social Care

Integrated Health & Social Care	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) =(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
People's Services Directorate						
Physical Support - Frail & Elderly	41,317	(25,866)	15,451	16,672	+1,221	+291
Sensory Support	1,506	(300)	1,206	869	(337)	+41
Support with Memory & Cognition	17,493	(8,108)	9,385	8,356	(1,029)	+72
Learning Disability Support	41,480	(13,580)	27,900	29,439	+1,539	+13
Mental Health Support	5,937	(1,071)	4,866	4,919	+53	+227
Assistive Equipment & Technology	4,644	(3,340)	1,304	1,154	(150)	0
Care Management - Assessment & Review	12,808	(4,929)	7,879	7,633	(246)	(50)
Transport and Generic Services	1,676	(1,676)	0	0	0	0
Management, Commissioning & Support Services	5,290	(5,290)	0	(250)	(250)	(94)
Total	132,151	(64,160)	67,991	68,791	+800	+500

- 4.1 The Integrated Health & Social Care position has moved adversely by £0.300m since period 1 to a forecast overspend position of £0.800m. The main causes of this movement are:
- Increased pressure in the Pooled Budget with the ICB: a £0.277m increase from period 1. This has been caused by the transfer of financial risk to the Council as the Health Service continues on its journey to delivering on its Continuing Healthcare ambitions and achieving its agreed financial targets. There is a risk that the Council's exposure to financial risk may increase further in future periods as a result of this.
 - Two new high-cost placements in Supported Living, each costing over £2,000 per week, resulting in a pressure of £0.263m.
 - The overall pressure is being mitigated by slippage of £0.240m resulting from vacancy control.
- 4.2 The department is working closely with Children's Services to change the way joint assessments of young people from age 14 onwards are carried out, to ensure a smooth transition into preparing for adulthood.

- 4.3 Although fee rates for care providers have been set for 2024/25, there are financial risks in relation to out-of-borough and bespoke packages of care for complex individuals, which can be significantly more expensive than standard-rate packages of care.

(v) **Public Health**

Public Health	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e)=(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
People's Services Directorate						
Sexual Health	1,948	0	1,948	1,948	0	0
Primary Care	96	0	96	102	+6	0
Public Health Advice	631	0	631	631	0	0
Obesity	1,035	0	1,035	1,124	+89	0
Physical Activity	641	0	641	684	+43	0
Substance Misuse	4,403	(1,838)	2,565	2,566	+1	0
Stop Smoking Services and Interventions	617	(207)	410	457	+47	0
Healthy Child Programme	4,357		4,357	4,357	0	0
Miscellaneous Public Health Services	1,109	(104)	1,005	1,047	+42	0
Management & Support Services	2,075	(2,075)	0	100	+100	0
Public Health Grant	0	(12,406)	(12,406)	(12,734)	(328)	0
Total	16,912	(16,630)	282	282	0	0

- 5.1 St Helens' Public Health Grant allocation for 2024/25 is £15.877m, of which £12.406m has been set aside to be spent on commissioning external services.
- 5.2 The grant is fully committed and will be spent during the year. Some Public Health Grant carried forward from 2023/24 is mainly being used to mitigate a slight cost pressure caused by the extension of the Integrated Wellbeing service to June 2025.

(vi) Business, Culture & Leisure

Business, Culture and Leisure	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) =(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
People's Services Directorate						
Adult Community Learning	718	(694)	24	24	0	0
Total People's Services	718	(694)	24	24	0	0
Place Services Directorate						
Arts Development and Support	365	(42)	323	323	0	0
Archiving	536	(347)	189	189	0	0
Sports Development	437	(349)	88	88	0	0
Indoor Sports & Recreation	4,902	(3,512)	1,390	1,390	0	0
Outdoor Sports & Recreation	500	(154)	346	346	0	0
Library Services	2,517	(159)	2,358	2,358	0	0
Tourism and Events	11	0	11	11	0	0
Total Culture and Heritage Services	9,268	(4,563)	4,705	4,705	0	0
Total	9,986	(5,257)	4,729	4,729	0	0

6.1 The portfolio is currently projecting a balanced outturn for the year.

6.2 The Leisure Transformation programme saving of £0.100m is being reported as achieved, though there is still a substantial amount of work being undertaken by both the service and Finance to review budgets.

(vii) Children & Young People

Children & Young People	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) =(d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
People's Services Directorate						
Schools						
Schools Delegated Budget	139,159	(139,159)	0	0	0	0
Schools Total	139,159	(139,159)	0	0	0	0
Non-Schools						
Alternative Provision	3,397	(3,341)	56	56	0	0
Child Protection	15,373	(699)	14,674	16,290	+1,616	+260
Children Looked After	40,528	(9,029)	31,499	35,184	+3,685	+383
Children's Centres and Early Help	3,863	(2,323)	1,540	1,935	+395	0
CWD Services	2,559	(432)	2,127	2,544	+417	0
Family Support Services	2,036	0	2,036	1,646	(390)	0
LA/Corporate Expenditure Attributable to Schools	13,838	(8,334)	5,504	5,504	0	0
Other Education Functions	21,111	(11,178)	9,933	10,377	+444	0
Service Strategy - Education	656	(656)	0	39	+39	0
Service Strategy - Social Care	776	(653)	123	144	+21	0
Youth Justice Services	1,934	(1,261)	673	588	(85)	0
Non-Schools Total	106,071	(37,906)	68,165	74,307	+6,142	+643

- 7.1 The portfolio is experiencing significant financial challenges in 2024/25 due to both demand pressures within children's social care and the ongoing programme of efficiencies.
- 7.2 Placement costs associated with caring for children looked after, including care leavers, are forecast to be in the region of £38.048m, resulting in a projected financial pressure of £3.454m. There are a number of national challenges within the system, including a lack of capacity within the external care market, difficulties in recruiting and retaining foster carers, an increasing number of placement breakdowns due to the complex needs of some of the young people in care, a lack of capacity within the wider system (e.g., within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and the impact of care arrangements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 7.3 The Council has been proactively undertaking a number of actions locally to help mitigate these challenges, which are faced by most local authorities. Nationally, there has been a lack of capacity within the residential care market, which has had an upwards effect on prices as local authorities seek to secure available placements to accommodate their children looked after. Four suitable properties have been identified to purchase which, alongside our existing children's home, will significantly increase internal residential home capacity. In addition, the arrangement of a lease to operate trainer flats under the Staying Close programme will facilitate wider options for those young people who are getting ready to leave care.

- 7.4 The department is also continuing to progress its successful programme to expand in-house foster care capacity. To date, 20 additional foster carers have been approved since 2023/24, with one pending approval, whilst a further five are currently being assessed for suitability.
- 7.5 The cost of maintaining adequate social worker staffing levels to ensure caseloads remain safe and manageable has increased markedly in recent years, in particular, due to the need to engage agency staff. The costs associated with agency staff tend to be higher than those directly employed, and this is the main driver of the forecast budget pressure of £1.759m associated with frontline social care staffing costs.
- 7.6 The challenges associated with the recruitment of suitably skilled and experienced staff are prevalent across the whole sector. The department has been proactive in attempting to address these recruitment and retention challenges through a number of actions, including a review of salary levels of qualified social care staff to ensure a competitive level of remuneration, additional staffing capacity to alleviate social workers of non-statutory functions, programmes to train and develop staff to the level of qualified social worker status, and an ongoing recruitment campaign, including from channels outside of the traditional workforce marketplace.
- 7.7 The Government recognises the benefits of a stable, effective and supportive children's social care workforce and has recently published statutory guidance, effective from 31 October 2024, to help local authorities manage the use of agency workers. The guidance acknowledges the role agency usage can have as an appropriate resourcing option, but sets out several expectations on local authorities, including requirements to:
- Work within their region to agree and implement price caps that all local authorities in the region should comply with
 - Not engage agency workers with less than three years' post-qualification experience
 - Not engage agency workers for a minimum of three months after leaving a substantive post in either the authority itself or any other local authorities within the same region.
- 7.8 There are a number of other budget variances within the portfolio that are projected to deliver a net overspend of £0.929m. These variances encompass a wide range of services, but the position includes a projected pressure of £0.367m from the provision of support to families who have children and young people at risk of needing to be brought into care. This helps the children and young people to continue to remain in the family environment and avoid the need to be brought into more expensive fostering or residential care. These arrangements also include support for a relatively small cohort of young people who have complex and challenging needs. There are also projected pressures of £0.395m in Early Help & Children's Centres and £0.228m in Adoption Services, primarily arising from fees associated with adoptive placements.

(viii) Supporting Neighbourhoods

Supporting Neighbourhoods	Current Expend. Budget 2024/25 £000 (a)	Current Income Budget 2024/25 £000 (b)	Current Net Budget 2024/25 £000 (c)=(a)+(b)	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £000 (d)	Variance P2 2024/25 £000 (e) = (d)-(c)	Variance P1 2024/25 £000
Place Services Directorate						
Housing Services	10,233	(5,467)	4,766	4,515	(251)	0
Homelessness	1,182	(818)	364	364	0	0
Community Safety	2,919	(717)	2,202	2,192	(10)	0
Environmental Health	1,734	(490)	1,244	1,243	(1)	0
Trading Standards	624	(15)	609	571	(38)	0
Licensing & Land Charges	757	(694)	63	63	0	0
Total	17,449	(8,201)	9,248	8,948	(300)	0

8.1 The portfolio is currently projecting an underspend of £0.300m.

8.2 The main underspend (of £0.251m) relates to a review of the Supported Housing contracts, with the requirement going forward to be determined. The remaining £0.049m underspend is being generated by staff slippage.

Utilisation of Earmarked Reserves during the period

Annex D

This table details the approved decisions to utilise earmarked reserves during the period (a) as well as previously approved uses of earmarked reserves that have now been identified as not being required and returned to reserves (b).				
Portfolio	Reserve	Detail	Further detail included in	Cash Limit Change 2024/25 £000
Finance & Governance (a)	Transformation Reserve	To fund the cost of a new Ward Member Grant Scheme for 2024/25	Cabinet 7 August 2024	+96
People, Performance & IT (a)	Transformation Reserve	To provide Programme Manager resource to support delivery of the Customer Experience Programme for 6 months	CORP001498	+31
Business, Culture & Leisure (a)	Transformation Reserve	To provide resource to support the Leisure Transformation Programme	CORP001519	+35
People, Performance & IT (a)	Transformation Reserve	To create a Communication Officer post within the Communication team with a focus on Regeneration	CORP001543-P	+25
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration (a)	Transformation Reserve	To fund planned expenditure on the Council's Agile Hubs owing to recently implemented changes in working arrangements for Council staff	Section 5.2 to this report (pending Operational Decision)	+235
People, Performance & IT (a)	Transformation Reserve	To fund additional interim capacity within People Management	CORP001449	+32
Subtotal – New Approved Uses of Reserves in the Period				+454
People, Performance & IT (b)	Transformation Reserve	To provide resource to strengthen the Council's approach to community engagement.	CORP001510	(37)
Total				+417

Annex E**EARMARKED BALANCES 2024/25 to 2026/27**

Reserve	Balance at 31 March 2024 £000	Balance at 31 March 2025 £000	Balance at 31 March 2026 £000	Balance at 31 March 2027 £000
Transformation Reserve	4,545	2,542	2,393	2,393
Growth Reserve	4,105	4,082	4,082	4,082
Councillor Improvement Fund	184	-	-	-
Insurance & Contingent Liability Reserve	2,930	2,817	2,817	2,817
Waste Management Development Fund	74	66	66	66
Inflationary Reserve	5,340	5,130	5,130	5,130
Restructuring Reserve	3,707	3,707	3,707	3,707
Funding Reform & Volatility Reserve	4,994	6,148	6,936	6,936
Pension Reserve	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Reserve	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Revenue Grants & Contributions Reserve	2,516	-	-	-
Subtotal - General Earmarked Balances	43,395	39,492	40,131	40,131
Covid-19 Reserve - Collection Fund	1,000	-	-	-
TOTAL	44,395	39,492	40,131	40,131

SUMMARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 to 2026/27

Annex F

PORTFOLIO					Funding				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total	Borrowing	Tax Increment Finance (Borrowing)	Capital Receipts	Revenue	Grants / Conts.
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Children & Young People	6,207	14,564	1,858	22,629	3,396	0	0	37	19,196
Integrated Health & Social Care	350	0	0	350	325	0	0	0	25
Supporting Neighbourhoods	5,390	4,406	3,868	13,664	1,781	0	444	0	11,439
Business, Culture & Leisure	3,715	0	0	3,715	2,618	0	18	100	979
Finance & Governance	626	0	0	626	276	0	350	0	0
People, Performance & ICT	1,243	0	0	1,243	22	0	457	764	0
Transport & Environment	46,546	14,015	9,418	69,979	9,450	0	235	40	60,254
Inclusive Growth & Regeneration	79,997	59,275	35,676	174,948	95,529	1,189	735	192	77,303
Cross Portfolio	2,180	3,333	3,334	8,847	0	0	8,847	0	0
TOTAL	146,254	95,593	54,154	296,001	113,397	1,189	11,086	1,133	169,196

INTERIM TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2024/25**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2017) ('the Code') was adopted by Council on 28 February 2018.

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

- creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities,
 - creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives,
 - consideration of an Annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, an Interim Review Report and an Annual Report (outturn report) covering activities during the previous year,
 - delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring Treasury Management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of Treasury Management decisions, and
 - delegation by the Council for the role of scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and Policies to a specific named body. For this Council, the delegated body is the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 1.2 This interim report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code, and covers the following:
- an update on Interest Rates and prospects for future Interest Rates,
 - a review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy and an update on the current investment and borrowing portfolios,
 - a review of any debt rescheduling undertaken and any possible opportunities during 2024/25,
 - an update on other issues affecting Treasury Management,
 - an update on the latest Treasury Management Budget position and

- a review of compliance with Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 and forward Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators for future years.

2 Interest Rate Forecasts

2.1 The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates.

2.2 The latest forecast on 15 October sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will reduce incrementally over the period to September 2026. Link's Bank Rate and PWLB rate forecasts are shown below:

%	Dec 2024	March 2025	June 2025	Sept 2025	Dec 2025	Mar 2026	June 2026	Sept 2026
Bank Rate	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00
5 yr PWLB*	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90
10 yr PWLB*	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00
25 yr PWLB*	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40
50 yr PWLB*	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20

*PWLB rates are net of 0.2% Certainty Rate

2.3 At the time of drafting the initial Treasury Management Strategy, Link Asset Services Link Asset Services had envisaged that the Bank of England would seek to maintain the Bank Rate at 5.25% until the middle of 2024, before falling to 3.75% by the end of the financial year and plateauing at 3.00% by September 2025. Link Asset Services have updated their forecasts and anticipate bank rates fall to 3.25% in September 2025 and plateau until September 2026 when it is estimated rates will fall to 3%.

2.4 The first half of 2024/25 saw:

- Interest rates fall by 0.25% taking Bank Rate from 5.25% to 5.00%
- CPI inflation fall in the first quarter of 2024/25 from 2.3% to 2.0% and despite a small increase in July to 2.2%, CPI inflation fell again in September to 1.7%.
- Core CPI Inflation reduce to 3.2% in September from 3.6% in August.

2.5 In its monetary policy meeting on 31 July 2024, the Bank of England reduced interest rates by 0.25 percentage points, to 5%. There was no change in base rate following the latest meeting in September. This decision was guided by the need to address persistent inflationary pressures and return CPI inflation to the 2% target in a timely manner and on a lasting basis. The next meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee is on 7 November 2024.

- 2.6 Bank Rates are forecast to fall by the end of the financial year; but this has to be supported by a move in CPI Inflation and wage /employment rates. The reduction in the CPI rate of inflation in September is a positive move. However, any evidence of persistent / recurrent inflationary pressures could conceivably force the Bank of England to maintain / raise rates in the future.
- 2.7 In addition, any unexpected movements in the economy could lead to increases or decreases in the bank rate.

3 Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Update

3.1 Investments

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 was considered by Cabinet on 28 February 2024 and approved by Council on 6 March 2024. The Council's Annual Investment Strategy, which is incorporated in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, outlines the Council's investment priorities as the security of capital and liquidity of investments.

The Council aims to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments, commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity, and having properly assessed all inherent risks, as detailed in its Treasury Management Practices.

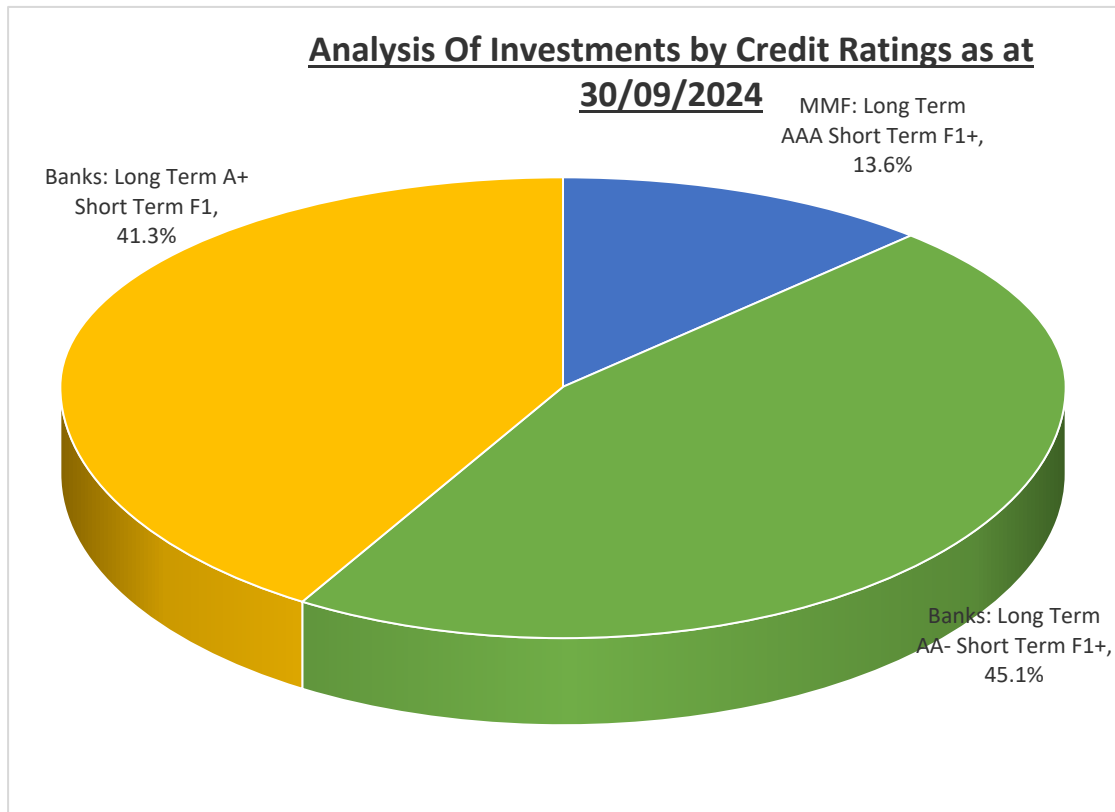
Further detail of the Council's investment portfolio is provided to Cabinet and Council as part of each Financial Monitoring Report. The Council held £133.1m of investments at 30 September 2024 (£107.7m at 31 March 2024) and the following table provides details of the investment returns achieved thus far during 2024/25.

Investment Returns 2024/25 up to 30/09/2024					
2024/25	Returns Achieved			Benchmark Returns	Performance relative to Benchmarks
Month	Fixed Term Investments	Call Accounts	Combined Return	Backward Looking 90 Day SONIA	Overall +/- return
April	5.701%	5.233%	5.500%	5.223%	0.277%
May	5.636%	4.783%	5.311%	5.226%	0.085%
June	5.552%	5.415%	5.509%	5.259%	0.249%
July	5.431%	5.113%	5.310%	5.233%	0.078%
August	5.363%	5.076%	5.258%	5.192%	0.066%
September	5.318%	5.060%	5.232%	5.106%	0.127%

Any sudden changes in rates will impact upon performance against benchmarks as investment decisions need to be made based upon both the desire to maximise interest returns and managing the liquidity of the authority's investments for cashflow purposes, whilst, most importantly,

ensuring the security of investments. Wherever possible, the Council will look to take advantage of favourable rates with a view to locking in investment deals for longer periods, whilst at the same time ensuring liquidity of funds.

The following chart details the split of the Council's investment by type and the credit rating assigned to the different groups of Counterparties.



3.2 Council's Investment Strategy and Counterparty Criteria

The investment strategy approved in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement is currently being adhered to and forming the basis upon which Officers have operated thus far. The counterparty criteria, which forms the practical basis upon which Officers make decisions regarding those institutions with whom the Council will deal, is subject to constant review during the year and, through delegation to the Executive Director of Corporate Services, this can be amended by way of an Operational Decision.

3.2 Borrowing

The Council has an ambitious Capital Programme for the next three years, including the programme of Growth / Regeneration for the Borough. External borrowing will be necessary to fund these plans.

Movements in the financial markets will impact on the rates at which the Council would be able to borrow. As shown in section 2.2, forecast PWLB rates remain on around the 4.7% mark across all time horizons.

Borrowing should be aligned to the profile of the capital programmes and undertaken at the most opportune time required to fund these schemes/plans, whilst minimising interest rate exposure. Current forecasts, provided by Link and shown in section 2.2, are for a steady decrease in PWLB rates across the next two years.

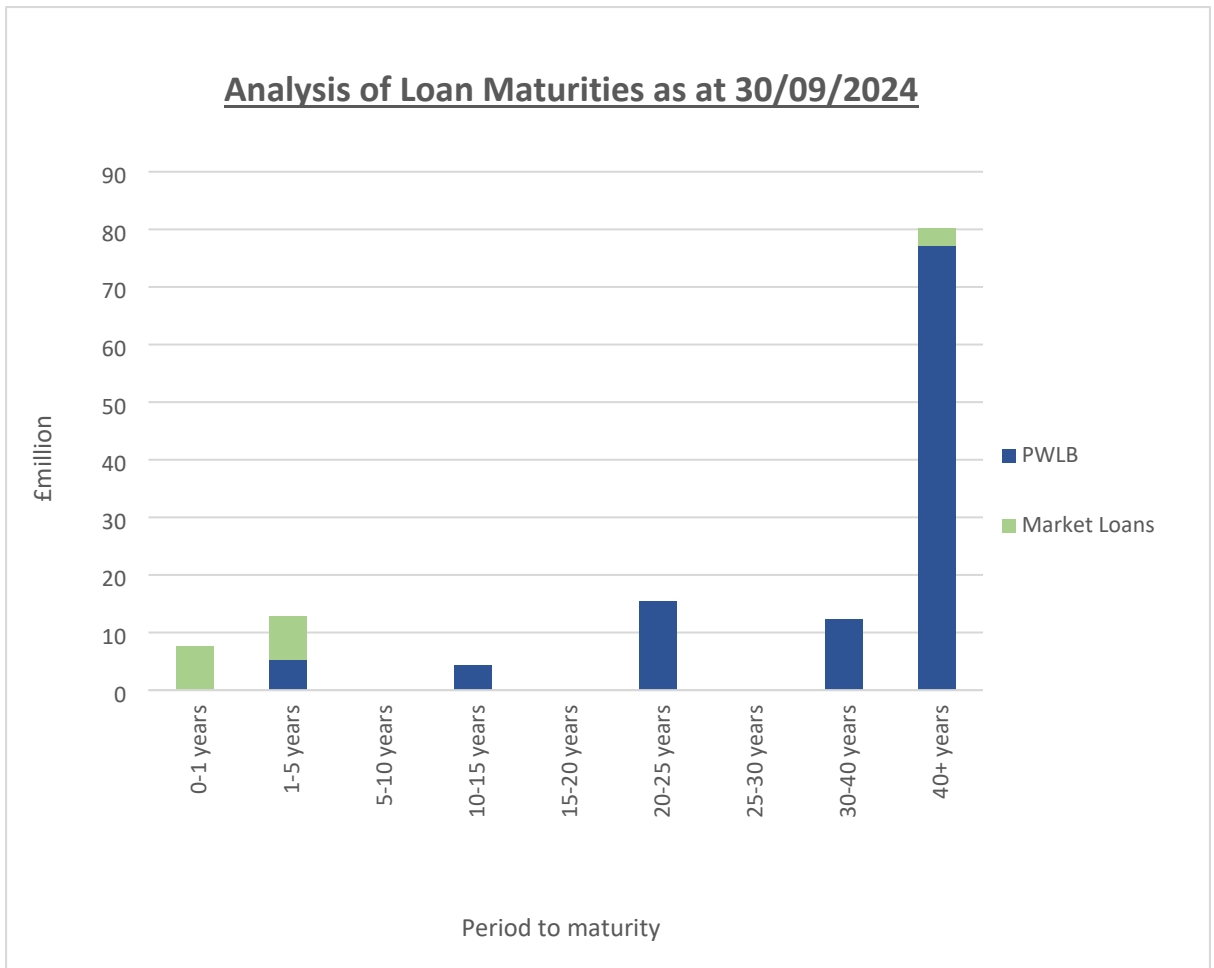
Movements in the financial markets will impact on the rates at which the Council would be able to borrow. As shown in section.2.2, forecast PWLB rates remain around 4.7% mark across all time horizons. This is slightly higher than the borrowing rates of 4.50% assumed at the time of developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027.

Whilst interest rates are high the Council will defer any decisions on undertaking new borrowing until more attractive rates are available, subject to the cash flow, and making sure any future borrowing is within the rates allowed for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions

The strategy of financing capital expenditure by running down cash balances (i.e. in lieu of new borrowing) was formulated predominantly to minimise credit risks associated with holding investments and to protect the Council's budgetary position against diminishing investment returns. The strategy also allows for borrowing to be undertaken when it is deemed most opportune, based upon current and forecast PWLB interest rates. That rationale still holds good, and, in that context, it is considered that the Borrowing Strategy approved is still fit for purpose.

However, it must be noted that this strategy has led to the Council having an "under-borrowed" position, in that borrowing to fund historic capital spend has been deferred and is likely to be needed to be secured at some stage in the future. The issue of when this borrowing may need to be secured needs to be considered in light of the forecast movements in PWLB borrowing rates.

The Council has outstanding debt of £132.5m. The following chart shows the maturity profile of the loan portfolio as at 30 September 2024.



In accordance with the revised Prudential Code, the maturity of borrowing should be determined by reference to the earliest date on which the lender can require payment. If the lender does have the right to increase the interest rate payable (as is the case with a Market Loan (LOBO – Lender Option Borrower Option loan)), then this should be treated as a right to require payment. Due to this guidance the maturity dates of the Council’s LOBO loans have been profiled as the next call date for each. This has made the Council’s position look much more short-term when all of these loans have maturity dates of 30+ years. In the current interest climate, the potential exists that these loans could be called at the next review date for each loan. Work is currently being undertaken to identify potential options if this scenario happens.

There are no plans to restructure debt within 2024/25 at this point and should any debt restructuring become a possibility the Council will explore this with the Council’s treasury management advisors.

3.4 Budget Estimates

The budgeted and projected treasury costs for 2024/25 are detailed in the following Table.

Treasury Management Budget 2024/25	2024/25 Original Budget (£m)	Budget Revisions (£m) (to reflect deferred borrowing)	2024/25 Revised Budget (£m)	2024/25 Full Year Forecast (£m)	2024/25 Variance (£m)
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Debt Management Costs:					
External interest	10.624	(2.672)	7.952	7.952	-
Revenue provision (repayment of principal)	4.543	-	4.543	4.431	(112)
Investment Interest	(5.558)	2.672	(2.886)	(4.886)	(2.000)
Total Treasury Cost	9.609	-	9.609	7.497	(2.112)

As part of the development of the 2024/25 budget there was an assumption that the Council would incur borrowing to fund the current years capital programme and the historic under borrowing from previous years. This position would create the opportunity to invest additional cash holdings and subsequently increase investment income. To date, no borrowing has been taken out and the adjustment in Column b in the above table reflects the updated position in that the budget for borrowing costs has been reduced with a corresponding adjustment to the external interest received budget .

Investment Interest achieved in the year exceeds the budget as a consequence of higher cash holdings and investments securing higher rates of return than was anticipated at the time of the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027.

There is a forecast underspend of £0.112m relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision, as a consequence of changes to the profile and financing of the Council's capital programme.

4 Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators

- 4.1 It is a statutory duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting Regulations for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is termed the "Affordable Borrowing Limit". The Council's approved Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators (affordability limits) were outlined in the approved Treasury Management Strategy Statement.
- 4.2 During the financial year to date, the Council has operated within the Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators approved by and in compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. A copy of the latest Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators are attached at Appendix 1. Such revisions predominantly arise due to changes in the Council's approved capital programme.
- 4.3 In setting the 2024/25 budget, the Council approved the deferral of capital pipeline schemes and in order to mitigate the impact of the deferral, £10m of capital receipts were set aside to fund schemes over the next three years which meet specific criteria. The £10m allocated for such schemes is not included within the Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators in Appendix 1 until such time as they are formally approved and included within the Capital Programme. Amended Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators will need to be approved as part of that process.

5 Annual Revenue Provision Policy

- 5.1 The Council is statutorily required to determine its Policy in relation to the method by which it makes charges to the revenue account in respect of capital expenditure financed by borrowing or credit arrangements.
- 5.2 The current Annual Revenue Provision Policy was approved by Council on 6 March 2024, having been contained within the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25, which formed part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2027 and Revenue & Capital Budget 2024/25.
- 5.3 Section 5 of that report set out the policy for charging the revenue account with an amount of minimum revenue provision which is deemed to be prudent. Paragraph 5.6 of the report considered the provision policy for Loan Financial Investments and stated that the Council will not make a Revenue Provision charge on the basis that the Loan will be repayable at some stage in the future and any risks regarding no-repayment would be quantified and charged in accordance with IFRS9 Financial Instruments, in the year in which they are identified.
- 5.4 Section 5 and Paragraph 5.8 of the report set out the policy for the treatment of leases following the adoption of IFRS 16 from 1 April 2024. This will remove the distinction between operational and finance leases, resulting in a number of

leases being brought on balance sheet. MRP for these leases will be calculated as equal to the element of the rent that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators 2024/25 to 2027/28

Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators			2024/25 Revised	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Estimates	2027/28 Estimates
1(i)	Proposed capital expenditure that the Council plans to commit to during the forthcoming and subsequent two financial years.	Capital Expenditure (£m)	146.254	95.593	54.154	0.700
1(ii)	Additional in-year borrowing requirement for capital expenditure.	In Year Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) (£m)	48.953	30.447	13.754	(10.779)
2	The CFR is an aggregation of historic and cumulative capital expenditure, which has yet been paid for by either revenue or capital resources.	Capital Financing Requirement as at 31 March (£m)	261.946	292.392	304.146	295.367
3	The "net borrowing" position represents the net of the Authority's gross external borrowing and investments sums held.	Net Borrowing Requirement:				
		External Borrowing (£m)	132.496	254.661	268.399	257.606
		Investments Held (£m)	(69.000)	(157.400)	(154.067)	(150.734)
		Net Requirement (£m)	(63.496)	(97.261)	(114.332)	(106.872)

Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators			2024/25 Revised	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Estimates	2027/28 Estimates
4	Identifies the impact and trend of the revenue costs of capital financing decisions will have on the General Fund Budget over time.	Ratio of financing cost to net revenue stream	5.13%	7.04%	13.28%	13.48%
5	The Council's Budget Strategy with regards to unsupported borrowing is such that there is no incremental impact to Council Tax.	Incremental impact of capital investment decisions (increase in Council Tax Band D equivalent)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6	This represents an absolute limit of borrowing at any one point in time. It reflects the level of external debt, which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.	Authorised Limit for External Debt (£m)	226.101	302.006	315.457	304.128
7	This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed.	Operational Limit for External Debt (£m)	193.738	292.573	306.021	294.688

<u>Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators</u>			2024/25 Revised	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Estimates	2027/28 Estimates
8	These limits seek to ensure that the authority does not expose itself to an inappropriate level of interest rate risk and has a suitable proportion of debt.	Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure	50%	50%	50%	50%
9	This limit seeks to ensure liquidity and reduce the likelihood of any inherent or associated risk.	Upper Limit for Sums Invested over 365 Days	60%	60%	60%	60%
10	This indicator is used to highlight where an authority may be borrowing in advance of need	Gross Debt and the CFR (£m)	110.354	19.446	20.170	20.993

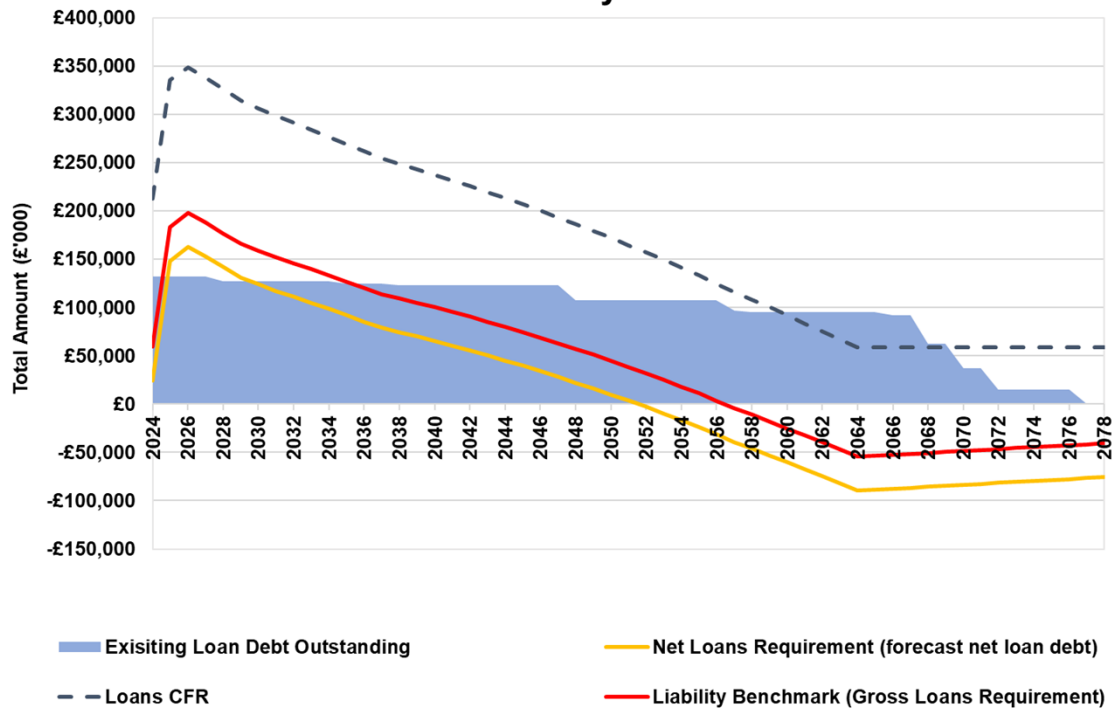
Liability Benchmark


The Authority is required to estimate and measure the Liability Benchmark for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

There are four components to the Liability Benchmark:

1. **Existing loan debt outstanding:** the Authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
2. **Loans Capital Financing Requirement (CFR):** this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Due to only approved prudential borrowing being included in the calculation a peak will appear after four years as no further borrowing will be approved at this point.
3. **Net loans requirement:** this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast. This becomes a negative due to the position the Authority is in as a result of the balance of treasury investments, which are in excess of borrowing; this allows the Authority flexibility in regard to the timing of taking out future borrowing and therefore allows it to make sound treasury management decisions.
4. **Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement):** this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

Liability Benchmark



 <p>ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</h2> <h3>5 February 2024</h3>
---	--

Report Title	2025/26 Budget Scrutiny Task Group Final Report
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance & Governance
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	Jan Bakewell Director of Legal & Governance janbakewell@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	James Morley Senior Scrutiny Officer jamesmorley@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.	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	X
	Be a responsible Council.	X

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the 2025/26 Budget Scrutiny Task Group's examination of the Council's budget setting process and sets out its findings and recommendations. The Commission is required to approve the statement which will be submitted to Cabinet and Council as part of the reports on the 2025/26 Budget.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Overview and Scrutiny Commission is recommended to:

- 1) **note the report;**
- 2) **approve the statement of the 2025/26 Budget Task Group in relation to the robustness of the budget setting process; and**
- 3) **submit the statement to the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) for inclusion in the Budget Report to Cabinet and Council.**

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 This report presents to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, the recommended statement of the Commission on the budget setting process for 2025/26 following the meeting of the 2025/26 Budget Scrutiny Task Group held on 16 January 2025.

4. Background / Reason for the recommendations

- 4.1 As part of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's work programme a Budget Task Group was established to review the Council's budget setting process for the 2025/26 Budget. The aims and objectives of the Task Group were:

- To examine the robustness of the 2025/26 Budget setting process; and
- To examine whether sufficient consideration had been given to relevant information when developing the 2025/26 Budget.

- 4.2 The following members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission took part in the Task Group:

- Councillor Mancyia Uddin (Chair)
- Councillor John Hodkinson
- Councillor Linda Mussell
- Councillor Damian O'Connor
- Councillor Geoff Pearl
- Councillor Lisa Preston
- Councillor Michelle Sweeney
- Councillor James Tasker

- 4.3 The Task Group met on the 16th January 2025. All Cabinet Members and Executive Directors were invited to attend the meeting to provide an overview of the processes that they had undertaken to develop the budgets for their respective areas.
- 4.4 The Task Group focused on assessing the robustness of the budget setting process, the general implications of the budget proposals and any alternatives that had been considered rather than a formulaic line-by-line scrutiny of the individual decisions themselves.
- 4.5 During the meeting the Task Group received a presentation about the budget setting process. The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) provided an overview of the budget timetable, the current in-year financial position, an update in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), an overview of the provisional settlement from Government and other funding streams, and an overview of the public consultation process. Executive Directors presented an overview of the budget proposals in each of their directorates (namely: People, Place and Corporate).
- 4.6 Cabinet Members were present to answer questions from the Task Group. Prior to the presentation by officers, the Leader provided an overview of the role Cabinet Members played during the budget setting process. As the Leader and Cabinet had been newly appointed at the beginning to the municipal year Cabinet Members had been reviewing their budgets early in the year to develop an understanding of their new portfolios. There was an understanding that following the setting of the MTFS the previous year there was little room within budgets for additional spending or savings and every penny needed to be managed effectively. It was noted that Cabinet Members had worked with officers to develop mitigations in relation to in-year overspends and to look at where additional savings could be made where required.
- 4.7 To document its findings and conclusions the Task Group developed the statement on the budget setting process set out in section 4.8 to 4.14. The Task Group recommends that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission adopt this statement and that the statement be submitted to Cabinet and Council for consideration during determination of the 2025/26 Budget.

Statement of the Commission on the Budget Setting Process

- 4.8 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (Commission) established a cross-party Task Group to examine the robustness of the 2025/26 budget setting process undertaken by Cabinet Members and officers. To examine the budget setting process, the Task Group held a meeting on 16 January 2025. Cabinet Members and senior officers attended the meeting to provide an overview of the processes they undertook to determine the decisions that were required to set a balanced budget. The Commission is thankful to all Cabinet Members and

Senior Officers for their commitment to supporting the scrutiny process.

- 4.9 The Commission notes the overspends and undelivered savings that have occurred this year as documented within the Financial Monitoring Reports for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2. The reasoning behind the Council's financial position following quarter 2 is well understood by officers and Cabinet members and the Commission notes the efforts that have been taken to address those budget pressures.
- 4.10 The Commission recognises that demand for Children's and Adults' services together with inflationary pressures have contributed hugely to an increase in costs to the Council that are difficult to mitigate and are unavoidable. The Commission also notes the pressure pay increases and increases in employer national insurance contributions have had across the Council but particularly in Place where a large proportion of staff are employed.
- 4.11 The Commission is reassured with regard to the stability of the Council's financial position given the additional funding from Grants, Business Rates and in-year savings that have enabled the Council to again set a balanced budget. The Commission notes, however, that increased revenue will not lead to additional spending power but rather cover the increased costs that the Council is facing.
- 4.12 Overall, the Commission is satisfied that the Council's budget setting process has been robust and that decisions regarding spending plans are well understood and relevant information has been taken into account.
- 4.13 The Commission acknowledges that the public consultation process was ongoing during the work of the Task Group so feedback from the public was not available for Members to consider as part of their deliberations. The Commission notes that as budgets had already been projected as part of the MTFS the consultation process is different this year. The Commission is assured that the feedback from the public will be given due consideration during the finalising of the Council's budget.
- 4.14 The Commission will continue to play its role in holding services to account for the delivery of savings through its work on the Quarterly Financial Monitoring Reports and contribute to efforts to communicate effectively with the public on this issue where appropriate.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1 N/A

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This report provides an overview of the 2025/26 Budget Scrutiny Task Group's examination of the Council's budget setting process and sets out its findings and recommendations. The Commission is requested to approve the statement on the robustness of the budget setting process that the Task Group developed following their meeting with senior officers and cabinet members. An approved statement will be submitted to Cabinet and Council as part of the report on the 2025/26 Budget.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Whilst there will be legal implications associated with the approval of a Budget for 2025/26 by Cabinet and Council, there are no legal implications of the decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to submit a statement in relation to the budget setting process to Cabinet and Council for them to consider. The Budget Task Group process has been undertaken in line with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution and good scrutiny practices.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Whilst there will be financial implications associated with the approval of a Budget for 2025/26 by Cabinet and Council, there are no financial implications of the decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to submit a statement in relation to the budget setting process to Cabinet and Council for them to consider.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 No equality impact assessment was required as part of the 2025/26 Budget Scrutiny Task Group's work.

10. Social Value

- 10.1 The proposed statement of the Commission will have no direct impact on social value.

11. Net Zero and Environment

- 11.1 The proposed statement of the Commission will have no direct impact on sustainability of the environment.

12. Health and Wellbeing

- 12.1 The proposed statement of the Commission will have no direct impact on health and wellbeing of residents.

13. Customer and Resident

13.1 There are no direct customer or resident impacts in this report. The report provides customers and residents with the opportunity to understand more about the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Council's budget setting process.

14. Asset and Property

14.1 There are no direct impacts on assets and property of this report.

15. Staffing and People Management

15.1 There are no direct staffing or People Management implications of this report.

16. Risks

16.1 Failure to carry out some form of scrutiny in relation to the budget setting process would undermine the robustness of the budget setting process and could potentially lead to issues within the final budget. Having undertaken a scrutiny review of the budget setting process the Council has mitigated this risk.

17. Policy Framework Implications

17.1 No Council policies are affected by the recommendations in this report.

18. Impact and Opportunities on Localities

18.1 There are no direct impacts or opportunities on localities resulting from this report.

19. Background Documents

19.1 2025/26 Budget Task Group agenda for meeting held on 16 January 2025

19.2 PowerPoint presentation delivered to the Task Group on 16 January 2025

20. Appendices

20.1 None.

 <p>ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</h2> <h3>3 February 2025</h3>
Report Title	Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2024/25
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance and Governance
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	Jan Bakewell Director of Legal & Governance janbakewell@sthelens.gov.uk
Contact Officer	James Morley Scrutiny Support Officer jamesmorley@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	X
	Be a responsible Council	X

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 2024/25.

2. Recommendation for Decision

Overview & Scrutiny Commission is recommended:

- (i) **to review the items listed within its work programme document for 2024/25 and agree priorities and timescales;**
- (ii) **to request updates on the work programmes of the Scrutiny Committees from the Chairs; and**
- (iii) **to note the Scrutiny Committees' work programmes.**

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 2024/25.

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, 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 During June 2024, the Commission and each of the Scrutiny Committees held workshop meetings to discuss potential ideas for their work programmes for 2024/25. Officers and Cabinet Members were invited to attend the workshops to contribute to the discussion of potential topics. Each committee agreed an allocation of up to two scrutiny reviews for the year based on available resources.
- 4.4 Each of the Scrutiny Committee chairs should be requested to provide a verbal update on the progress their committees are making in relation to their work programmes. The Commission's agenda was published prior to the January 2025 meetings of the Scrutiny Committees taking place so the attached work programme documents may have been amended following each Scrutiny Committee's meeting.
- 4.5 There is scope during the municipal year for items to be amended, added, or removed from the work programmes due to changes in circumstances. Commission and Scrutiny Committee chairs will hold meetings with Cabinet Members and Officers

periodically during the municipal year to discuss potential amendments to the work programmes to be presented to the Commission and Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

Reviewing the Work Programme

- 4.6 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. When amending the work programme committees should look to maintain a maximum of two reviews during the municipal year.
- 4.7 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)?
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 To enable members, officers, partners or the public to submit work programme ideas for consideration a Scrutiny Work Programme Item Suggestion Form has been developed and can be accessed electronically via the Scrutiny pages on the Council's website. The form requests respondents to answer a series of questions about the

potential scrutiny topic and why it would be valuable for one of the committees to consider it. The information collected would be used by the committee to consider whether the idea is suitable and could be prioritised within the work programme using the criteria outlined at 4.5. Anyone submitting a work programme suggestion form will receive a response from the Scrutiny Team regarding the decision of the relevant scrutiny committee to add/or not the suggestion to the work programme.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

5.1 None

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Commission is requested to review its work programme and agree any amendments. The Commission is also requested to receive updates from the Scrutiny Committee chairs regarding progress against the work programmes for their committees.

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

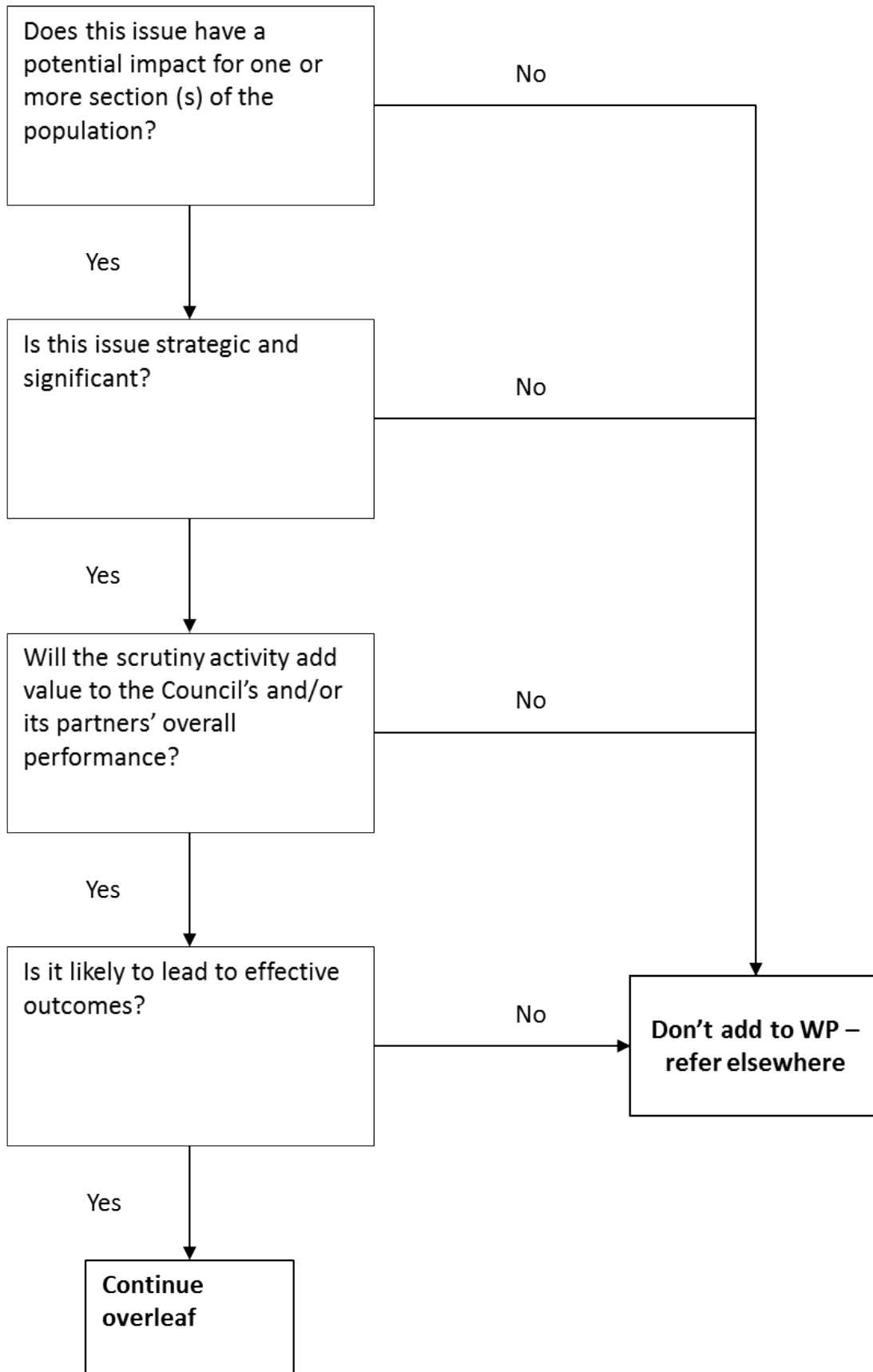
19. Background Documents

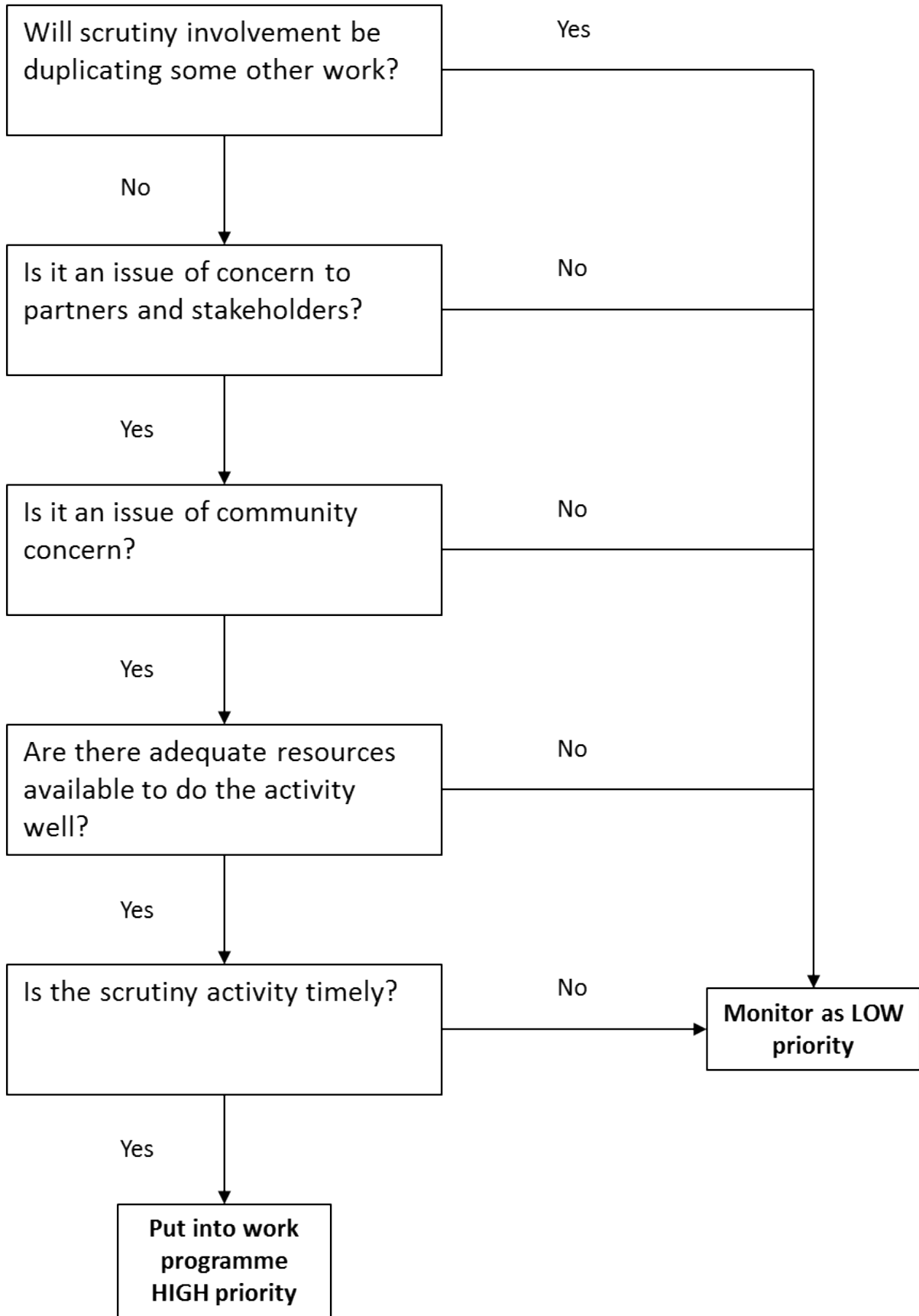
19.1 None

20. Appendices

1. Work Programme Prioritisation Aid
2. Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2024/25
3. Adults Health and Social Care Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25
4. Children and Young People Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25
5. Place Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024/25

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





This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

<u>Corporate Priorities</u>
Be a responsible Council

<u>Scheduled Meetings</u>		
Date: 3 February 2025 Time: 5.30pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall	Date: 31 March 2025 Time: 5.30pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall	Date: 30 June 2025 Time: 5:30pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall

Title	Description	Aims /Purpose	Portfolio	Lead officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
Committee Agendas							
Financial Monitoring Reports	The Council produces quarterly reports regarding its Financial Performance in relation to the Budget for the municipal year.	To monitor the Council's financial performance against budgets and highlight any areas for further scrutiny.	All	Richard Gibson	Be a responsible Council	Report to committee	3 February 2025
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	People, Performance & IT (Cllr Laird) Finance & Governance (Cllr Bond)	Vicky Willett Richard Gibson	Be a responsible Council	Report to committee	3 February 2025



Scrutiny Reviews							
Finance Scrutiny Task Group	The Committee has agreed to consider changing the way finance scrutiny is undertaken by the Commission taking into consideration recently published guidance from CfGS. Terms of reference will be developed for consideration.	To maintain oversight of the Council's financial performance and delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy including savings targets and in year adjustments.	All	Tara Kirkman	Be a responsible Council	Task and Finish Group Report Draft Report to Committee	Next Meeting TBC In Progress 31 March 2025
Annual Budget Scrutiny	The Commission is responsible for arranging scrutiny of the Council's budget setting process.	To ensure the Council's budget setting process is robust and that Cabinet Members understand budgets within their portfolios and the implication of budget changes on theirs and other portfolios.	All	Richard Gibson	Be a responsible Council	Task and Finish Group Report to Committee	16 January 2025 3 February 2025
Workforce Strategy	Workforce Strategy was previously brought to the Commission in October 2023. The Strategy timeframe is due to be	To understand the development of the Workforce Strategy and implications for staff and service delivery across the Council.	People, Performance & IT (Cllr Laird)	Vikki Morris	Be a responsible Council	Spotlight Review Report to Committee	TBC circa February 2025 31 March 2025

	completed in December 2024 following further engagement with staff.						
Completed Items							
Financial Monitoring Reports	The Council produces quarterly reports regarding its Financial Performance in relation to the Budget for the municipal year.	To monitor the Council's financial performance against budgets and highlight any areas for further scrutiny.	All	Richard Gibson	Be a responsible Council	Report to committee	2023/24 Outturn and 2024/25 P1 - 22 July 2024
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	People, Performance & IT (Cllr Laird) Finance & Governance (Cllr Bond)	Vicky Willett Richard Gibson	Be a responsible Council	Report to committee	2023/24 Outturn - 22 July 2024 2024/25 Q1 – 14 October 2024
Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24	The Scrutiny Function is required to produce an Annual Report to set out its activity and outcomes each year. Report will be presented to Council once	To inform the Council, Partners and Public about the work the Scrutiny Function has undertaken during the municipal year.	Finance & Governance (Cllr Bond)	Jan Bakewell	Be a responsible Council	Report to Committee	22 July 2024



	approved by Commission.						
--	----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Corporate Priorities	Scheduled Meetings		
Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Date: 24 March 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 23 June 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 8 September 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall

<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>
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.	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden) /Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Mark Palethorpe/ Jamaila Hussain/ Ruth Du Plessis	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Report to Committee	24 March 2025
Homes First Model Including a Site Visit to the Brookfield Centre	It is the Council's policy for residents to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible as it is believed to be better for wellbeing and is less expensive than residential care. There are a variety of services and products that can be used to help people to maintain their	To explore whether more can be done with Assisted Technology and Artificial intelligence to support residents to remain in their own homes for longer whether as part of a social care package or as private clients not yet eligible for social care. To promote	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden)	Jamaila Hussain	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Report to Committee Site Visit	24 March 2025 TBC



<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>
	independence at home.	effective planning for older age to maintain independence and reduce crises requiring acute care. To ensure that the introduction of technology into care services does not increase risk of social isolation.					
9 10 Appointment of Co-Opted Representative for Healthwatch to Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee	The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution state as follows: (f) The Overview and Scrutiny Commission or a Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to recommend the Council to appoint a number of people as non-voting co-optees, as appropriate.	Recommend to Council the appointment of Rita Chapman as the new non-voting co-opted representative for Healthwatch on the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden)	Jamaila Hussain	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Report	24 March 2025

<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>
Scrutiny Reviews							
Suicide Prevention	<p>For every life lost there can be over 100 other people affected and impacted.</p> <p>Prior to the pandemic, St Helens had recorded the highest rates of suicide in the country. Since that time, a significant amount of work has been done by our communities, schools, workplaces, and services to raise awareness, provide support and prevent and reduce suicide.</p> <p>Although Suicide rates reduced post pandemic, rates in the Borough are once again rising.</p> <p>suicide rates are also rising nationally and across the northwest. (St Helens is sadly seeing a steeper rise currently,</p>	<p>To understand the contributing factors leading to a suicide.</p> <p>To look at the Suicide prevention strategy and consider if a focused approach could be adopted and if partners are flagging high risk individuals, how this is being managed and where there may be triggers or common traits is the strategy adapted to focus its resources</p>	Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	<p>Ruth Du Plessis</p> <p>Michelle Loughlin</p>	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Task and Finish Review	Next meeting 31 January 2025

<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>
	probably due in part to the wide inequality in our borough.)						
Economic Inactivity due to Long Term Illness as a Cause of Unemployment	St Helens' economic inactivity rate due to long-term sickness is significantly higher than the NW average, and the England average.	<p>The link between ill health and economic inactivity is growing in the Borough as the gap widens between the Borough and the national averages.</p> <p>Mental health is a key health indicator that has demonstrated significant increases as a cause of economic inactivity. This review will explore the link between ill health and economic inactivity.</p> <p>It will review both the employment and health programmes that are targeted at solving this problem.</p>	<p>Inclusive Growth & Regeneration (Cllr McCauley)</p> <p>Integrated Health and Social Care) Social (Cllr Andy Bowden)</p> <p>Public Health Cllr (Sue Murphy MBE)</p>	<p>Sean Traynor (Lead Officer)/</p> <p>Rob Crookes /Lisa Birtles</p> <p>Ruth Du Plessis</p>	<p>Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy.</p> <p>Promote good health independence and care across our communities</p>	Joint Task Group with Place Services.	Scheduled to Commence March 2025

<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>
		The Task Group will explore the link between economic inactivity and poor life chances with links to the tackling inequalities agenda.					
97 Falls Prevention	Injuries from falls can be serious, life changing or even fatal. The overall trend in injuries from falls in the over 65s is a generally downward trajectory since 2011/12. The current work around falls prevention, is being reviewed and refreshed and a new task group has been established led by Adult Social Care. Better Care Funding is to be used to increase capacity to deliver strength and balance work and the direction of the wider falls prevention	To understand the Causes of FALLS and Reduce the Emergency hospital admissions for falls	Integrated Health and Social Care) Social (Cllr Andy Bowden)	Jamaila Hussain.	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Spotlight Review	TBC



<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>
	service is currently under review.						
Previous Items							
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.	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden) /Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Mark Palethorpe/ Jamaila Hussain/ Ruth Du Plessis	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Report to Committee	2023/24 Outturn – 15 July 2024 2024/25 Q1 – 7 October 2024 2024/25 Q2 – 13 January 2025
Urgent Emergency Care Recovery	The ICB is undertaking a review of Urgent Emergency Care Recovery. This may have an impact on Adult Social Care.	To understand any proposed changes at ICB level and the impact on local authority services.	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden)	Mark Palethorpe	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Report	7 October 2024
Market Position Statement Draft Strategy	Underpinning the challenges facing Adult Social Care	Enable Members to understand the vision and direction of adult social care.	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden)	Mark Palethorpe/ Jamaila Hussain	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities.	Report	7 October 2024
CQC Inspection Verbal Update	In December 2024 the Council is undergoing a CQC (Care Quality Commission Inspection) which will	To receive an update on the findings, and considerations to forward planning from the outcomes	Integrated Health and Social Care (Cllr Bowden) /Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Mark Palethorpe/ Jamaila Hussain/ Ruth Du Plessis	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	Verbal Update	13 January 2025

<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>
	provide a rating on overall performance in Adult Social Care Services'	of the CQC Inspections.					

This page is intentionally left blank

Children and Young People’s Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Scheduled Meetings</u>		
Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Date: 31 March 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 30 June 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 15 Sept 2025 Time: 10:00am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall

101

Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
Committee Agenda							
Quarterly Performance Reports	Scrutiny Committees are responsible for reviewing the performance reports for priorities relevant to their remit.	To monitor the performance of services within portfolios and to hold Cabinet Members to account.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)/ Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Jamaila Hussain Shirley Goodhew	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to committee	31 March 2025
Scrutiny Reviews							
Reducing Ketamine Use Among Young People	Concerns have been raised about the levels of ketamine use among young people and the impact it has on their health, their families and communities. Services have observed a rise in the use of ketamine in	To develop an understanding of the issue and consider possible interventions the Council and partners can pursue to reduce numbers of young people gaining	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)/ Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Michelle Loughlin	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Task and Finish Group	First Meeting 6 December 2024 Next meeting TBC

Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
	recent years and its serious impact on young people's health.	access to and using ketamine.					
Reducing Vaping Among Young People	The prevalence of vaping among young people both in school and in the community has become a concern for education and public health. Concerns include the negative health impacts of vaping and the lack of clarity regarding the contents of some vaping products and how young people are gaining access to them.	To develop an understanding of the issue and consider possible interventions the Council and partners can pursue to reduce numbers of young people using vaping products.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)/ Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Shirley Goodhew	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Task and Finish Group	Due to Commence February 2025
Completed Items							
Quarterly Performance Reports	Scrutiny Committees are responsible for reviewing the performance reports for priorities relevant to their remit.	To monitor the performance of services within portfolios and to hold Cabinet Members to account.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)/ Public Health (Cllr Murphy)	Jamaila Hussian Shirley Goodhew	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to committee	2023/24 Outturn – 22 July 2024 2024/25 Q1 – 14 October 2024

Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
							2024/25 Q2 – 6 January 2025
Review of the provision of mental health services for young people in St Helens.	Research, such as the DfE State of the Nation Report (published 2023) and recent anecdotal reports to Council from local Head Teachers, indicate that significant numbers of children and young people continue to experience challenges with their mental health. Half of all life-time mental health illnesses start in teenage years although treatment is often received only many years later. Mental health is also an equalities issue with the poorest fifth of the population being twice as likely to develop mental health	In the light of continuing mental health challenges experienced by children and young people, it is essential that the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health services for them, including those with SEND, are scrutinised to understand the support available, its strengths and the challenges within the provision.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)	Matt Davies (C&M ICB)	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to committee	22 July 2024

Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
	problems in adulthood.						
TESSA Spotlight Review Cabinet Response	TESSA was introduced to provide schools with a streamlined system to use to request support for children and young people with SEND.	To consider the impact of the TESSA process, contribute to its evaluation and make appropriate recommendations.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)	Jo Davies	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to Committee	22 July 2024
SEND Update Report	An inspection of SEND is expected in Autumn 2024. The Committee has previously received reports at public meetings regarding the Council's preparations for an inspection. The LGO has recommended that an action plan regarding casework and Educational Psychology Team Capacity be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee. At the July 2024 meeting the Committee requested	To review performance in relation to the SEND Strategy and receive an update on Delivering Better Value. To receive an update regarding EHCPs following below target response rate in the Outturn Performance Report for 2023/24.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)	Jo Davies	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to Committee	14 October 2024

Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
	an update on EHCPs. The Council is also required to report to the DfE regarding Delivering Better Value in October 2024.						
Response to the Multi-Agency Response to Neglect Spotlight Review	Child neglect is a form of abuse which can impact on a child's physical and mental health and can lead to long term adverse consequences. It arises from many complex issues including parental mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and poverty.	Following the approval by the Committee of the spotlight review report in July 2024 the report has been shared with all agencies that took part in the review with a request for a response to the recommendations to be received by the Committee.	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)	Jamaila Hussain	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to Committee	6 January 2025
NEET & Youth Offer	PI E&S-005, Percentage of young people academic are (16-17) not in education, employment or training and not known combined, has been above target of	To examine reasons for an increase in the number of NEETs, the challenges of addressing the issues and what plans services and partners have	Children and Young People (Cllr Charlton)	Jo Davies	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	Report to Committee	6 January 2025



Title	Description	Purpose	Portfolio	Lead Officer	Corporate Priority	Method	Date
	5.3% throughout 2023/24 and worse than previous year. The closure of St Helens Chamber will have had a negative impact on the provision of apprenticeships and other support.	developed to make improvements and develop a stronger education, employment and training offer for young people in the Borough.					

Place Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

<u>Borough Priorities</u>
Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy
Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all
Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture

<u>Scheduled Meetings</u>		
Date: 24 March 2025 Time: 5:30 pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall	Date: 23 June 2025 Time: 5:30pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall	Date: 8 September 2025 Time: 5:30pm Venue: Room 10 Town Hall

<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>	
Reports to Committee								
107	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.	Inclusive Growth & Regeneration (Cllr McCauley)	Tanya Wilcock	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all. Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy. Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	Report to Committee	24 March 2025
				Transport & Environment (Cllr Gomez-Aspron)	Sean Traynor			
				Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long)	Trevor Nicoll			
				Business, Culture & Leisure (Cllr Groucutt)				

<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>
Domestic Abuse Strategy	In recognition of the prevalence of this issue and the impact on our communities, the Council is working with partner agencies to refresh the Domestic Abuse Strategy	Members of the Committee will be consulted on the content of the strategy as part of the consultation process.	Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long)	Tanya Wilcock	Create safe and strong communities.	Consultation	24 March 2025
Cabinet Response to the Leisure Services Task Group Report	The Committee undertook a task and finish review of Leisure Services during 2024/25 and the report to approved by the Committee on 6 January 2025 and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.	To receive the Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Leisure Services Task Group Report.	Business, Culture & Leisure (Cllr Groucutt)	Tanya Wilcock	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life. Promote good health independence and care across our communities. Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	Report to Committee	24 march 2025
Scrutiny Reviews							

<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>
Leisure Services Task and Finish Group	The Council operates three Indoor Leisure Facilities and several outdoor sites. 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>The Review will investigate:</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. • To identify the level of investment required and where should that investment be targeted. • How the service supports the Council's journey to net carbon 	Business, Culture & Leisure (Cllr Groucutt)	Tanya Wilcock Dave Boocock	<p>Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life.</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>Task and Finish Review</p> <p>Report to Committee</p> <p>Report to Cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Response to Committee</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>6 January 2025</p> <p>19 March 2025</p> <p>24 March 2025</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. 					
<p>Economic Inactivity due to long term Illness as a Cause of Unemployment</p>	<p>St Helens' economic inactivity rate due to long-term sickness is significantly higher than the NW average, and the England average.</p>	<p>The link between ill health and economic inactivity is growing in the Borough as the gap widens between the Borough and the national averages.</p> <p>Mental health is a key health indicator that has demonstrated significant increases as a cause of economic inactivity. This review will explore the link between ill health and economic inactivity.</p> <p>It will review both the employment and health programmes that are targeted at solving this problem.</p> <p>The Task Group will explore the link between</p>	<p>Inclusive Growth & Regeneration (Cllr McCauley)</p> <p>Integrated Health and Social Care) Social (Cllr Andy Bowden)</p> <p>Public Health Cllr (Sue Murphy MBE)</p>	<p>Sean Traynor</p> <p>Ruth Du Plessis</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>Joint Task Group with Adult Social Care & Health</p>	<p>To Commence March 2025</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>
		economic inactivity and poor life chances with links to the tackling inequalities agenda.					
Road Safety Review	<p>The Road Traffic Act 1988 places a statutory duty on the Council as Roads Authority to carry out a programme of measures to promote road safety and prevent road accidents.</p> <p>The importance of road safety is further emphasised within the Councils' Local Transport Strategy (LTS) to reduce the number of those killed and seriously injured (KSI's) on the roads within the borough, working towards an overall Vision Zero that aims to ensure that by 2040 there are no avoidable collisions which result in</p>	<p>To recognise the significant increase in the number of KSI's in road traffic collisions in the borough in the last year.</p> <p>To Review the effectiveness of the Road Safety Strategy 2023-27.</p> <p>To collaborate with the Police, Fire Service, Merseyside Road Safety Partnership and relevant road safety community groups to review the effectiveness of the Road Safety Action Plan.</p> <p>To explore good practice from other areas, sharing expertise and data to review the change in approach to road safety as part of the Road Safety Strategy 2023-27.</p>	Transport & Environment (Cllr Gomez-Aspron)	Paul Lawrenson	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	Task Group	Next meeting 4 February 2025

<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>
	fatalities or life-changing injuries on the council's roads.	Establish the specific cohort of road user that is at the most risk and identify the most appropriate actions to influence behaviour change in that cohort.					
Completed Items							
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.	Inclusive Growth & Regeneration (Cllr McCauley) Transport & Environment (Cllr Gomez-Aspron) Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long) Business, Culture & Leisure (Cllr Groucutt)	Tanya Wilcock Sean Traynor Trevor Nicoll	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all. Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.	Report to Committee	2023/24 Outturn 15 July 2024 2024/25 Q1 – 7 October 2024 2024/25 Q2 – 6 January 2025
Housing Voids-Registered Providers	The Committee undertook a Review of Housing Voids and approved a report was	The Committee to receive the Cabinet response.	Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long)	Sam Murray	Create safe and strong communities and	Spotlight review (October 2023)	15 July 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>
Cabinet Response	submitted to Cabinet on 15 April 2024.				neighbourhoods for all.		
Community Safety Partnership (CSP)	The Place Services Scrutiny Committee is the designated Crime and Order Committee as per the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009. As such the Committee is responsible for scrutiny of the work of the Community Safety Partnership.	To consider how the CSP spent its funding from the Office of Police and Crime Commissionaire (OPCC) in 2023/24. To invite the organisations who were funded to deliver on behalf of CSP to review the effectiveness of initiatives.	Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long)	Tanya Wilcock	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	Report to Committee	7 October 2024
Housing Voids Update	Annual Housing Voids Update. The Place Services Scrutiny Committee to receive an annual Housing Registered Providers/ update on housing voids issues. Housing Officers and representatives from the Registered Providers forum to provide a detailed update	To understand and scrutinise - Thematic compliance, (cooperation of the Register Providers in fulfilling their obligations within the Nominations agreement. provide Voids Data - Reference of all voids and a breakdown of data relating to voids for each provider.	Supporting Neighbourhoods (Cllr T Long)	Tanya Wilcock	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.	Report	6 January 2025



<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>
		update on Progress and initiatives on reducing Voids Torus to provide the 'Future demand forecast for housing'.					