Updates:

Local Growth Hub
The Liverpool City Region Local Growth Hub has been officially launched.

Developed by the LEP in consultation with business, government, local authorities and support organisations, it is designed to provide a single access point for businesses across the six local authority areas, to discover the right advice and support to help them grow.

Businesses can access the Local Growth Hub services at www.localgrowthhub.com via their Local Growth Hub broker or on Twitter @localgrowthhub and LinkedIn Local Growth Hub

Mental Health Awareness Week
Mental Health Awareness Week takes place from 16 – 22 May, with a range of activities planned to help local people look after their mental health and wellbeing. Based on the ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ local people will be encouraged to get up and out, learn something new, take notice of their surroundings, make someone smile and connect with people. A full timetable of events is now online here. Another way to take part will be a selfie challenge on social media, more details on Twitter @HaltonHIT; @HaltonBC and on Facebook: Halton Health Improvement. Just search #maketimehalton for more details.

Ways to work
£3.3 million of ESF funding has been awarded to Halton to deliver a three-year project as part of a wider Liverpool City Region bid.

Funding is available to support individuals into temporary employment with an employer where there is community benefit. More information here

Local & PCC Election Results
Following last week’s elections, the political make up of Halton Borough Council (56 seats) is:

- Labour: 52
- Conservatives: 2
- Liberal Democrats: 2

In the PCC elections, David Keane, Labour was elected as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire.

Full results can be found online here

UN forecast significant growth in older people population
There are around 600 million people over the age of 60 across the globe; a figure which is expected to double by 2025, according to the United Nations.

There were more than half a million people aged 90 and over living in the UK in 2014, almost triple the number thirty years ago.

Here are some more facts about older people in the UK.

Foster Care Fortnight
Foster Care Fortnight™ 16-29 May is the UK’s biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, delivered by The Fostering Network. The campaign showcases the commitment, passion and dedication of foster carers. It also supports fostering services to highlight the need for more foster carers, with the greatest need being for foster carers for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
News in brief

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This year’s campaign will focus on the fact that every 20 minutes across the UK a child comes into care, in need of a foster family. This means that during Foster Care Fortnight over 1,000 children will require a foster family. In Halton we will be supporting the campaign with a range of activities and would encourage everyone to get involved and show their support by printing off the attached placard and sharing your favourite 20 minutes of last year on social media using #FCF2016. For more about fostering visit www.foster4halton.co.uk

Merseytravel news update:
Details of planned changes to public transport and Mersey Tunnel closures can be found here

Progress reports:

Mersey Gateway
In a scheduled rotation of the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board (MGCB) executive team, longstanding Independent Non-Executive Director, Rod Holmes is appointed as Chairman and Geoff Brown is welcomed as an Independent Non-Executive Director.

On 1 April this year, Cllr Rob Polhill, Leader of Halton Borough Council stepped down from his two-year tenure as Chairman of the MGCB. This comes as part of a procedural requirement of the contract in place between Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board which sets out the delegation of powers to oversee and administer the Mersey Gateway Project.

It is agreed that the post of Chairman must rotate between Independent Non-Executive Director and Council Non-Executive Director every 24 months. Cllr Polhill will remain on the Board as Council Non-Executive Director. More Mersey Gateway news here.

Efficiency
Updates on all work streams can be found on Efficiency Programme team site which can be accessed via the homepage of the intranet under ‘My Job’, ‘Efficiency Programme’ or via this link: If you have any questions regarding the Efficiency Programme, please approach your line manager in the first instance. Alternatively, submit a suggestion via the ‘I want to ask’ portal. If you do not have access to email, please put your comments in writing and send them through the internal post to the Efficiency Programme Office, Municipal Building.

Council Business:
Scheduled meetings:
Development Control Committee (16 May); Executive Board (17 May); Council (20 May) – agenda items include Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to move that Cllr Ged Philbin be elected Mayor for 2016/17 and that Cllr Alan Lowe be elected Deputy Mayor for 2016/17

Full details of meetings and agendas can be found here.

Staff news:

Post training applications
Applications are now being received for Post Entry Training (PET) funding for the academic year 2016-17.

Annually released, funding is accessible through an application process and evaluated against a set of criteria including job relevance, organisational/directorate priority and service needs.

The fund forms part of the Council’s organisational development strategy and is seen as an important investment in our employees, as our most valuable asset.
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It enables proactive learners to undertake qualifications to meet their professional development needs.

The Council benefits in terms of improvements in service provision based on the skills gained, the good practice information shared and up-to-date theoretical knowledge gathered. Application forms and Guidance can be found here. Applications should be sent to training.reception@halton.gov.uk no later than 12noon on Friday 22th July 2016. Provided all paperwork is completed correctly and prioritised appropriately we aim to let learners know of decisions within a fortnight of this date.

Just Drive Car Scheme
Over the next few months we will be holding a number drop in sessions where you will be able to speak to Inchcape about our salary sacrifice car scheme. The scheme gives staff the opportunity to ‘fuel and go’ with a brand new vehicle. The scheme, which includes insurance and servicing, can be used by staff for vehicles for their own use, or for use by their spouses, and children.

At the drop in sessions, a number of car dealerships, including Audi, Mercedes, Volvo and Ford will be also be on hand, if you want to find out about specific models, or arrange a test drive. More details to be released soon. You can find more information about the scheme including how to get quotes here.

The Queen’s Summer Fete: 11-12 June, Runcorn Hill Park – come along and celebrate the Queen’s 90th birthday. For more details on this and other events happening in the borough follow Runcorn and Widnes events on Facebook.

The final word

In the news:
Coverage: 29/4-13/5
To see the full report on coverage over the last two weeks click here.

Let’s get digital

Connected Councils – A Digital Vision of Local Government in 2025
Nesta (the innovation foundation) has published a report that examines how digital technologies could help councils save money, foster local economic growth and deliver better outcomes for local residents and communities.

They predict that rapidly evolving needs and expectations of residents and cost-saving potential of channel shift will see a very different Council in the future. Read the Nesta report here.

Dates for your diary:

All Star Hollyoaks FC v Transplant Liverpool FC: Select Security Stadium, Thursday 9 June, 8pm. Kids go free. Contact:info@motiv8sport.co.uk or call 0800 6894308.
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Website is a Christmas hit
During the Council Christmas closure (24th December - 4th January) we had 30,000 individual user sessions to the Council website.

The bin collection timetable had 13,000 page views (compared to 6,000 for the whole of November!)

Digital Media Portal
The Digital Media Portal is available to staff and includes:

- IT training
- Library IT clinics
- Learn my way
- Digital Skills Quiz
- GO-ON
- Tips for searching on google