

with you
for you



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

OUR BOROUGH STRATEGY
ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

INTRODUCTION

LOOKING BACK OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS I AM DELIGHTED TO INTRODUCE OUR BOROUGH STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025-26, WHICH SHOWS THAT BY WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER TO DELIVER OUR 6 PRIORITIES WE CONTINUE TO CREATE A BETTER BOROUGH WITH PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO.

2025-26 was truly an extraordinary year of progress and achievement for our borough. During the year, we not only delivered on our key priorities, but did so with a renewed sense of confidence and purpose, strengthening our position both regionally and nationally.

One of the year's standout achievements was the Care Quality Commission rating our Adult Social Care Services as 'Good', making St Helens, at the time, the only local authority in the Liverpool City Region to hold a 'Good rating' for both Adults and Children's Services. This is an achievement of which we are immensely proud and speaks to the quality and compassion of our social care teams.

We also secured further strong external validation through feedback from the Local Government Association. Following the initial very positive Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2025, the team returned in January 2026, to review our progress against a small number of recommendations. We were exceptionally pleased that they found we had made strong overall progress, highlighting a number of further achievements. This powerful endorsement

reflects the dedication, skill, and professionalism of our staff and partners who work tirelessly to improve lives across St Helens.

Over the year our regeneration ambitions accelerated at pace. Work advanced significantly on the transformation of St Helens town centre, with the demolition of the Hardshaw Centre, approval of a landmark £69.7m investment driving Phase One of the redevelopment, and the commencement of work on site. In Earlestown, strong progress on the regeneration of the historic market square and restoration of the iconic Town Hall represent another major step in revitalising our proud and distinctive communities.

Alongside this, we progressed our One Neighbourhood programme with two new Community Hubs now open in the borough, expanded our Family Hubs and secured funding for community managed libraries. We delivered improvements to our transport infrastructure, with work commencing on a new town centre £35m state of the art transport hub, as well as being granted approval and funding for a long awaited

new rail station at Carr Mill. Our environmental achievements, included winning a national recycling award, achieving the lowest recycling contamination rate in the North West, and securing six Green Flags in recognition of our high-quality parks and open spaces. highlighting our commitment to a greener, cleaner borough.

Although we continue to face the significant challenges that the local government sector is experiencing with rising demand for services set alongside reduced budgets and increased cost pressures, the achievements highlighted within our report reflect a council that is ambitious, resilient, and firmly focused on delivering for its residents.

I would like to warmly thank all Members, staff and partners for their ongoing contributions, and I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.



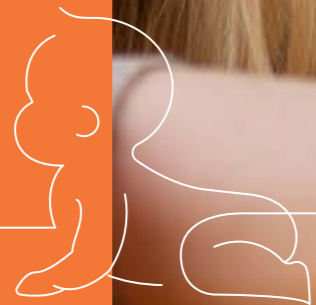
Mark Palethorpe
Chief Executive,
St Helens Borough Council





PRIORITY ONE

ENSURE CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A
POSITIVE START IN LIFE



As our number one priority, over the year we remained passionately committed to giving every child and young person in our borough the very best start in life. By ensuring they are healthy, safe, secure, and fully supported to reach their ambitions, we continue to place their wellbeing at the heart of everything we do. Our ongoing investment and dedication are delivering outstanding results, recognised in our most recent Ofsted inspection which rated our children's services 'Good' overall, with support for care leavers achieving 'Outstanding'. Our work together with partners through initiatives such as our Family Hubs and network of children's centres is now driving real, positive change and transforming the futures of children, young people, and their families across St Helens.

Some of the highlights of our recent notable achievements include:

Our network of **Family Hubs and children's centres** have continued to make a really positive difference to the lives of children and young people and their families. This year they've continued to offer a wide range of services to help and support families in a variety of ways, including advice on child development and family health, early education and speech and language support, SEND support, parenting programmes, a timetable of activities for children including our half-term holiday activities and food programme, volunteering opportunities and help with benefits and financial assistance as well as access to employment and training.

BETWEEN APRIL AND DECEMBER 2025, OUR FAMILY HUBS AND PARR CHILDREN'S CENTRE DELIVERED OVER 400 ACTIVITIES AND NEARLY 2,600 SEPARATE SESSIONS. ATTENDANCES AVERAGED AT AROUND 7,340 UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS AND 1,500 FAMILIES EVERY 3 MONTHS, WHILST THE FEEDBACK FROM THOSE ATTENDING HAS BEEN FANTASTIC. YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FAMILY HUBS ON OUR [WEBSITE](#).

At the end of April 2025, we launched our **Families First Partnership Programme**. Backed by a £1.28 million grant from Government, the programme is set to transform children's social care by reshaping Early Help and safeguarding services in line with the latest national guidance. The significant investment will help create resilient family support and build on the strong foundations already laid through the borough's Family Hubs and Children's Centre programmes. Family help and safeguarding practice will be strengthened through the creation of dedicated Family Help and new Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams. There will be greater collaboration between safeguarding partners, especially education, whilst the establishment of Family Support Networks will promote a strengthened 'family first' culture. Together, these changes will create a more responsive, joined-up system that puts children and families at the heart of local decision-making to address current levels of demand across statutory children's social care services.

In February 2026, in line with our unwavering commitment to safeguarding and to creating safer, more secure futures for every child and young person in St Helens, we approved the **St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy 2026–2030**. Coproduced with partners and families with lived experience, the strategy sets out seven priorities designed to reduce the prevalence and impact of neglect by strengthening early intervention and improving the consistency and quality of support, across all agencies. By enhancing workforce training, developing a more effective assessment framework, and deepening collaboration between services, the strategy aims to ensure that children and families receive earlier, more compassionate, and more coordinated help and support that address the root causes of neglect.

As a hugely committed corporate parent we continued to deliver strong support to all our young people leaving care, being determined to ensure that every young person leaving our care does so with confidence, aspiration, and the support they need to succeed.

In July 2025, we approved plans to lease and operate a new semi-independent living facility for young people leaving care. Known as Millersdale, the property provides six trainer flats for care leavers aged 17 and over, helping them transition into adulthood while staying close to their families, schools, and support networks. The project offers more than just a place to live as it also provides wraparound support and continuity of care that will help our young people thrive.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WE SUPPORTED:



194 care leavers



567 children that we looked after at some point in the year



168 foster carers across 106 households



We ensured over 98 per cent of families secured their preferred secondary school place

Our young people leaving care are also now embracing new opportunities thanks to the introduction during the year of the Liverpool City Region's Care Leavers MetroCard, which offers free, unlimited travel across buses, trains and ferries. The scheme, designed for 18–21-year-olds, promotes the freedom, independence and opportunity they deserve, helping young people move confidently into adulthood by removing transport costs so they can access education and jobs, whilst maintaining contact with friends, and vital support networks.

Throughout the year, we achieved consistently strong outcomes for our young people leaving care, performing well above the averages for England and the North West. We remained in contact with almost all care leavers, ensured that nearly all were living in suitable accommodation, and supported high numbers into education, employment, or training.

With 20% of our children and young people in the borough having special educational needs (SEND), we continued a strong focus on the delivery of our Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2024-27. In December 2025 we approved a £1.6 million investment to expand high quality SEND provision for children with autism. Using dedicated Department for Education funding, four new classrooms and 20 specialist places will be created at Broad Oak Primary School's Parr site by September 2027. The project strengthens the borough's commitment to inclusive education by offering children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder the specialist support they need within a mainstream school environment and closer to home.

This approach not only benefits families but delivers excellent value for money, reducing reliance on expensive out of borough placements.

We also completed the transformation of Haydock Library into a pioneering, fully SEND inclusive space for children and adults. The innovative redevelopment has seen the library completely remodelled into a welcoming inclusive space featuring assistive technology, adaptive furniture, sensory tools, accessible digital content and specialist learning material. The project was developed by placing residents with disabilities at the heart of the design process, ensuring the new library reflects the needs and ambitions of the community and is a model for future inclusive cultural spaces.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

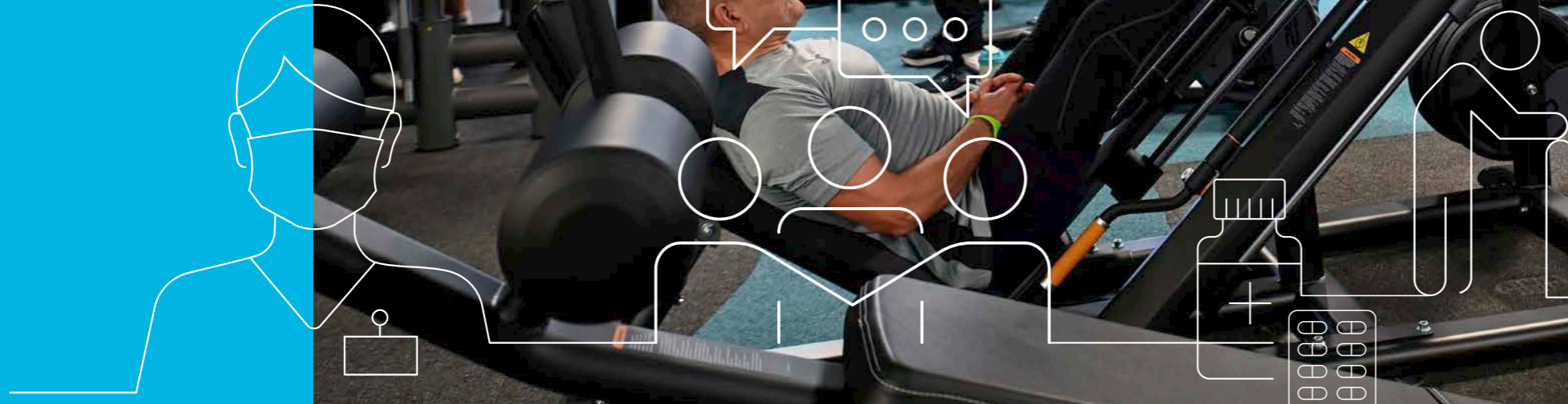
- Effectively deliver our Families First Programme to keep our children and families safe and reduce demand on children's social care resources.
- Embed and effectively deliver our new Neglect Strategy through our Safeguarding Partnership.
- Implement fostering reforms and progress the development of our Residential Children's Care provision in the borough to ensure children can access high quality local placements.
- Continue to effectively deliver our SEND Strategy in the light of recent national reform.
- Ensure our Family Hub and children's centres offer are effective in giving our children the best start in life, whilst supporting the delivery of our early help model.





PRIORITY TWO

PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH
INDEPENDENCE AND CARE
ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES



Throughout 2025–26, we have continued to strengthen our partnership working with a wide range of organisations, driving forward new and innovative approaches to delivering high-quality health and social care in St Helens. Our focus remains clear: to help people live well independently, to ensure positive experiences of care, and to support improvements in both physical and mental wellbeing.

Despite ongoing pressures, including rising demand, increasingly complex care needs, growing service delivery costs and the significant health inequalities faced by our population, our joined-up approach is achieving real impact. This was strongly recognised in our recent Care Quality Commission inspection report published in May 2025, which rated our adult social care services as ‘Good’. This result is a testament to the dedication, expertise and unwavering commitment of our staff and partners, and highlights the strength and quality of the support and care we provide to residents across the borough.

The Inspectors stated: “People told us the Local Authority understood the care and support needs of the local communities and worked closely with partners to provide services to meet those needs.”

They are also mentioned that local people said they appreciated our improved engagement with communities and our working directly with them to co-design services. People said the Contact Cares Service (the front-door for access to all St Helens Adult Social Care Services) was easy to access and provided information and advice as well as urgent support when needed.

The report also praised our senior leaders commitment to supporting Adult Social Care and commended our approach to working closely with NHS partners to deliver a community-based approach to joint commissioning across health and social care.

Some of the highlights of our recent achievements include:

Our award-winning approach to the integration of health and care services has continued to go from strength to strength. In September 2025, we were extremely proud when St Helens was confirmed as a **national pioneer area for neighbourhood health development**, positioning the borough at the forefront of delivering more integrated, prevention focused care closer to home. Supported by £10 million of national investment through the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, we will help shape new ways of working designed to better support adults with multiple long-term conditions and improve access, experience and outcomes across local communities. This recognition reflects our strong collaboration with health providers and regional partners, and the excellent progress made to date. As one of the first areas selected, we will play a key role in transforming how health and care are delivered at a neighbourhood level and contributing learning and best practice to be shared across the region and nationally.

Over the course of the year the further improvements and innovations we have continued to deliver have seen our performance within Adult Social Care services remain very strong, verifying and justifying our recent very positive Care Quality Commission Inspection judgement.



Our most recent Adult Social Care Survey results from 2025 show strong and improving satisfaction from our service users across St Helens, highlighting the positive impact of our commitment to delivering high quality, person-centred support.

Our most recent Adult Social Care Survey results from 2025 show us delivering strong, sustained progress for residents who rely on care and support. With one of the highest response rates in the region, the survey highlights rising satisfaction, improved wellbeing, and greater confidence in local services.

This year, 92.7% of service users reported being satisfied with their care, well above national and regional averages, with nearly three quarters saying they are very or extremely satisfied. Residents also continue to experience a better quality of life, with 94.4% stating that care services help them live well.

Improvements were seen across all key areas. More people feel they have choice and control over their support, better access to information (up 6 percentage points), and stronger social connections, with loneliness and isolation continuing to fall. Feelings of safety have risen sharply, reflecting targeted support and strong partnership working.

Residents also report greater independence, with 72.6% able to spend time doing things they value or enjoy, a significant uplift from last year.

The findings reflect the ongoing success of our Adult Social Care Strategy, a service that is listening, improving, and delivering, as well as the dedication of our workforce and partners.

In February 2026 we began work on an ambitious **new Dementia Strategy** by engaging with the Alzheimer's Society, local carers, and residents living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Society are a long standing partner that we continue to commission to deliver vital support and guidance to people across the borough impacted by dementia. With nearly one million people living with dementia across the UK and over 230 St Helens residents receiving daily support, the strategy aims to strengthen prevention, early intervention, and ongoing care. We are now developing a Dementia Partnership Board that will give people with lived experience a stronger voice in shaping the strategy, ensuring it is compassionate, meaningful, and rooted in real community needs. Once finalised the new strategy will represent a major step forward in helping residents live well with dementia and ensuring carers receive the right support at the right time.

During the year we undertook a focused review of suicide rates across the borough to drive forward suicide prevention in St Helens. Working with health partners the review resulted in the development of a boroughwide action plan, which is now expanding suicide awareness training, improving crisis response pathways, and strengthening coordination across local agencies. This work builds on recent progress made through schools, workplaces, and community led initiatives, to ensure people receive timely and effective support to prevent the tragedy of suicide.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

- Continue collaboration with NHS partners on the Neighbourhood Health Programme to improve health and wellbeing in our local communities and neighbourhoods.
- Continue to listen to the voice of the service user and their lived experience to drive further improvement and effective service delivery.
- Implement and deliver our new Dementia Strategy.
- Continue delivery of our Home First Strategy including the use of assistive technology and other preventative approaches to enable people to continue to live independently in the community and avoid admissions to permanent residential and nursing care.
- Continue to grow and develop our workforce to maintain effective social work practice and ensure high levels of satisfaction from people receiving care.
- Continue our commitment to the safety of our service users by building on our strong safeguarding practice and ensuring high levels of satisfaction with safeguarding outcomes.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WE SUPPORTED:



5,099 people with community based long-term social care to live independently at home



917 people in residential and nursing care



2,463 people with home care



5,128 people with a specific social care assessment



PRIORITY THREE

CREATE SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR ALL

The incredible strength, resilience, and generosity shown by our local communities in recent years, exemplified through initiatives like the St Helens Together Partnership, has demonstrated the truly limitless potential of our borough. Collaborative programmes such as our 2 new Community Hubs, our network of Family Hubs, Welcome Spaces, Community Pantries and wider wellbeing initiatives continue to make a real and lasting difference to people's lives.

Over the past year, we have renewed and deepened our work with voluntary and community organisations to ensure they have the support they need to thrive and to continue creating positive change. By empowering local people to come together, identify challenges, and shape solutions, we are driving forward our ambition to build safe, strong and caring neighbourhoods, and to ensure everyone has access to the right home in the right place across our borough.

Some of the highlights of our recent notable achievements include:

Over the course of the year, we made significant progress in delivering our **One Neighbourhood Strategy** through the development of **two new Community Hubs**. Our South Community Hub is located at Chester Lane Library and brings together council services with key partners such as Merseyside Police, Torus Housing, NHS teams and Career Connect. Our North Community Hub is sited at Moss Bank Children's Centre and co-locates library services with children's centre provision, whilst also offering local access to a broad range of services, including health and mental health support, housing advice, employment and training services, social care, and neighbourhood policing. Since opening both hubs have seen more people using the facilities

and are building strong partnerships with local service providers. Together, our Community Hubs demonstrate our long-term commitment to bring essential services together under one roof, making them more accessible, better coordinated, and tailored to local needs. You can find further information on our [Community Hub web pages](#).

To help foster pride in our neighbourhoods and strengthen connections between residents and the activities happening around them, in February 2026 we launched a major upgrade of community noticeboards to ensure every ward has access to clear, attractive and up to date local information. The project was supported by £75,000 of Liverpool City Region Combined Authority funding and has seen the refurbishment or replacement of all existing boards and the installation of three new ones where none previously existed. In total, 26 black general noticeboards and 26 green community boards have been revitalised to better showcase local services, events and community group activities.

Our Community Safety Partnership 'Safer St Helens' continued to work effectively to enhance perceptions of safety and reduce crime and disorder within our town centres and neighbourhoods by promoting a wide range of initiatives.

This year marked a significant expansion of efforts to ensure that St Helens' night-time economy remains vibrant, inclusive and safe for everyone. In June 2025, to address persistent alcohol related anti-social behaviour, a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was introduced covering key areas of the town centre. The PSPO gives police and council officers new enforcement options to address issues such as street drinking and intimidating or abusive behaviour.



The PSPO has strong community backing and forms part of a broader approach to improving town centre safety, supporting vulnerable people and maintaining a welcoming environment.

This work has been complemented by the launch of a dedicated Night-Time Economy Team and the 'Safe Nights, Great Places Campaign'. The Team is now providing a visible on street presence to reassure residents and visitors and a series of measures and initiatives including, robust venue safety measures, CCTV in taxis, staffed assistance points, a continued focus on women's safety, and "safe home" taxi initiatives, have been introduced to ensure people are able to enjoy a safe night out.

Over the course of the year, further major steps were taken to strengthen our community-wide response to tackling domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. In June 2025, we launched our new Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2025-2028. The strategy aims to change community attitudes and culture and break cycles of abuse by setting out 5 key priorities. Action being taken includes the strengthening of safe accommodation, improving early intervention and support pathways, and supporting children impacted by domestic abuse. In November 2025 all our councillors united to sign the White Ribbon Promise, a visible commitment to never use, excuse or remain silent about violence against women and girls.

Our latest Safer St Helens Executive Annual Report, published in October 2025 highlighted the success of our partnership working to address crime and disorder. The report showed that overall crime in the borough fell by 11% compared to the previous year, the highest drop

across Merseyside Police areas. There were also notable reductions in other crime categories including a 22% fall in burglaries and a 22% fall in public order offences. Of particular note was the success of our three-year Violence Reduction initiative which evidenced a 6.7% reduction in serious violence and a 38% drop in knife crime. To continue this momentum as part of our long-term prevention efforts, we invested £29,000 to support schools in delivering their own knife-crime awareness campaigns. As a result, local pupils presented powerful and meaningful work to partners, demonstrating the importance of youth voices in shaping safer futures.

Throughout 2025-26, we continued to successfully deliver our ambitious housing strategy, working hand in hand with partners and developers to stimulate strong, sustainable growth across the borough. This coordinated approach resulted in the delivery of 745 high quality new homes, offering a vibrant mix of housing types, from premium residential properties to much needed social housing, ensuring that our communities have access to homes that truly meet their needs.

A KEY HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR WAS OUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABILITY, WITH 51% OF ALL COMPLETED HOMES CLASSED AS AFFORDABLE.

We also strengthened our longstanding pledge to make the best use of land and regenerate previously underused areas. Impressively, 78% of all new developments were built on brownfield sites, transforming once redundant spaces into thriving neighbourhoods and helping protect our

green spaces for future generations. In February 2026, we successfully secured £650,000 in Government funding to unlock brownfield land for future homes development in Parr.

IN JANUARY 2026, WE APPROVED THE BOLD FOREST GARDEN VILLAGE MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK, SETTING OUT PLANS FOR A DEVELOPMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 3,000 NEW HOMES. THE PLAN PLACES A STRONG EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY NEEDS, INCLUDING A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEALTHCARE FACILITY, LOCAL CENTRE, GREEN SPACES, AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO SECONDARY AND SEND EDUCATION.

At least 30% of homes will be affordable. Public consultation played a key role in shaping the plan, which also outlines required transport and infrastructure improvements. Further detailed design and transport modelling studies will be completed later this year to support delivery.

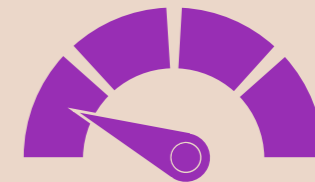
OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WE SUPPORTED:



363 households where homelessness was prevented or relieved



835 households with benefits advice and secured over £2m worth of annual benefit gains for vulnerable residents



1,143 households to reduce fuel poverty



61 empty homes returned to occupation

In November 2025 we successfully secured extra funding to help support the work that we are already doing with local groups such as the Hope Centre, the Salvation Army and the YMCA to combat rough sleeping in St Helens. Between November 2025 and January 2026, we activated the Severe Weather Emergency Provision three times to ensure that emergency accommodation was made available to provide a warm place to sleep for those on the streets, an offer taken up by dozens of people during the freezing temperatures.

Our annual campaign to keep well in winter was delivered by the Affordable Warmth Team. This included the distribution of 6,000 packs which contain a Keeping Well in Winter & Beyond advice booklet and Vitamin D voucher. The campaign was targeted at vulnerable households with people aged 85 and above, people living with respiratory, cardiovascular conditions, or dementia. Additional packs were also provided to partners including GP's and the Carers Centre.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

- Continue to progress and deliver the One Neighbourhood Programme and the development of neighbourhood services from community Hubs.
- Continue to deliver the Housing Strategy and develop a Homelessness Strategy and a Supported Housing Strategy.
- Further implement our Domestic Abuse Strategy and continue targeted interventions to reduce anti-social behaviour across the borough.





PRIORITY FOUR

SUPPORT A STRONG, THRIVING,
INCLUSIVE AND WELL-CONNECTED
LOCAL ECONOMY



Our strong and collaborative partnerships across the Liverpool City Region, alongside close working relationships at a local level, continue to drive forward our all inclusive vision for the wholesale regeneration of St Helens. Over the past year, this shared commitment has accelerated progress on our ambitious programme of major investment, inclusive growth, and job creation. By securing substantial levels of both regional and national funding, we have ensured that our regeneration plans remain among the most extensive and far reaching in the region. Behind the scenes, significant work has been underway across a wide range of key projects, positioning us to transform our vision into reality and deliver long lasting benefits for communities across the borough.

Some of the highlights of our recent achievements include:

Our strong partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF) has driven strong momentum in advancing the transformative regeneration of our town centres.

In December 2025, we approved a landmark £69.7m investment which has paved the way for the earliest delivery of phase one of St Helens Town Centre transformation, marking one of the most significant regeneration commitments in our history. Construction commenced in January 2026. Backed by major investment from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, UK Government and partners including ECF and VINCI Building, the project will deliver a reimagined central district featuring a new market hall, hotel, quality homes, a new fully accessible transport interchange, modern retail space and richly landscaped public areas. Aligned

with the council's Inclusive Growth Strategy, the scheme is set to create hundreds of jobs, boost local skills and supply chains, and bring forward a sustainable, future focused town centre that restores pride and unlocks long term opportunities for the community.

Following approval of a further £1.408m of council funding for the Gamble, in January 2026, we unveiled new CGI visuals showcasing the ambitious refurbishment of the iconic building, which revealed plans for a revitalised St Helens Library, new café and social spaces, a purpose built Archive, a dedicated Youth Hub, and flexible business and office accommodation. With enabling works now underway following £1.2m of major external repairs, the project marks a key step in bringing this historic landmark back to life as a vibrant community hub for future generations to enjoy.

Our vision for the transformation of Earlestown reached an exciting milestone in January 2026 with the groundbreaking ceremony marking the start of the major regeneration of the market square and improvements to the surrounding area. The project is supported by £20m from the Government's Levelling Up Fund and £8m investment from the council. Following extensive consultation construction is now underway to create a reimagined square featuring a striking new canopy inspired by the Sankey Viaduct. Together with ongoing restoration of the Grade II listed Town Hall and its transformation into a multi-use community space, this investment is driving forward a long-term vision to create a thriving, sustainable Earlestown.

To further the revitalisation of the Newton / Earlestown area, in February 2026, the Newton-



le-Willows Neighbourhood Board endorsed more than £1.5 million of investment to kick-start a £20 million Government funded regeneration plan. Three Year 1 projects that reflect local priorities were agreed. Funding will deliver a new fully accessible playground at St Johns Park, professional AV and lighting upgrades to transform Earlestown Town Hall, and an arts-on-prescription programme supporting residents' mental wellbeing. In addition, a further £1.2 million was approved for a heritage-led building improvement scheme to revitalise Earlestown's conservation area, support independent businesses and enhance the town's historic character. You can see the Regeneration Plan and 4-Year Investment Plan [here](#).

2025-26 saw us deliver strong support, leading to significant progress on the further development of additional major employment sites within the borough. The Parkside Link Road was officially unveiled in May 2025, marking a major milestone in the transformation of the former Parkside Colliery into one of the region's most significant employment zones. The £60m scheme, funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the council and Parkside Regeneration has created a vital new connection to the M6, unlocking the UK's largest Freeport tax site and paving the way for thousands of high value jobs in logistics and advanced manufacturing.

Over the last 12 months, our Life Science Innovation Zone rapidly progressed, achieving full planning approval in October 2025. Site preparation was completed, design development advanced, and the flagship Project Halo employment campus was formally recognised as part of the Liverpool City Region Life Sciences

Investment Zone, unlocking major benefits for future tenants. With construction due to begin in 2026, the site is now fully primed to become a major hub for R&D, med tech, and advanced manufacturing, supporting high value job creation and strengthening St Helens' position as a key innovation centre in the North West.

In July 2025 the final phase of the major industrial and logistics development at Omega West was completed. The project generated significant social value through local employment, skills, school outreach and community support, and further strengthens the borough's position as a destination for high quality, future ready logistics and advanced manufacturing investment. In February 2026 we expanded sustainable transport links to the Omega West with the introduction of the new 922 bus service, building on the success of the 921 route launched the previous year. The new service, which runs seven days a week and is aligned to shift patterns, improves access for residents and strengthens our inclusive growth ambitions by ensuring local people can benefit from the borough's major employment sites.

OUR 'WAYS TO WORK' SERVICE CONTINUED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH LOCAL JOBCENTRE PLUS TO SUCCESSFULLY ASSIST PEOPLE WHO ARE FURTHEST FROM THE LABOUR MARKET THROUGH THE PROVISION OF PERSONALISED JOB PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES, HELPING RESIDENTS BUILD CONFIDENCE AND UNLOCK NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

In October 2025 we launched a new employment support programme to help residents with complex needs move into meaningful, sustainable employment.

The new Connect to Work programme, backed by more than £3.6 million of Government funding will provide tailored support for people with health conditions, disabilities or significant barriers to work. With funding available for five years, this major investment will drive inclusive growth, boost independence, and help more people realise their potential.

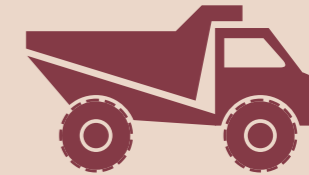
To support our ambitious plans for inclusive growth and regeneration, real progress was made on improving the transport infrastructure across the borough. The new St Helens Town Centre Transport Interchange secured full planning consent in July 2025, and the project has since progressed at pace, with funding secured, demolition of the old bus station completed, and foundations and steel structures now in place. The interchange is set to become a modern, green gateway to a revitalised St Helens town centre, opening in 2026 to support the region's new franchised bus network.

We were also delighted to see approval granted for the long awaited new Carr Mill rail station, made possible through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority securing a landmark £1.6 billion transport investment package from Government. This came on the back of the completion in April 2025 of a major £10m upgrade to Lea Green Railway Station and the approval of grant funding of up to £5.38m to deliver improvements to Earlestown Rail Station.

OVER THE COURSE OF 2025-26 WE:



Supported 1,443 people into employment, education and training over the last 6 years through our Ways to Work scheme



Carried out 1,814 carriageway repairs and 2,605 pothole repairs



Completed 96% of highways repairs in accordance with the Highway Code of Practice timescales



30 adult learning classes per week with approximately 160 learners attending

IN FEBRUARY 2026 WE APPROVED A £17M PROGRAMME TO ENHANCE ROAD MAINTENANCE, ONE OF OUR BIGGEST-EVER ANNUAL INVESTMENTS IN HIGHWAYS WHICH WILL DELIVER EXTENSIVE IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS THE NETWORK IN 2026-27.

The programme will enhance road maintenance, drainage and flood defences, bridges, street lighting, key strategic projects, and better walking and cycling links. Our strong focus on promoting active travel across the borough continued with the delivery of new cycle paths, traffic calming measures and assisted pedestrian crossings installed. We secured £0.9 million from the Department for Transport (DfT) to deliver major improvements along Sherdley Road and a further £0.774m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to advance three major long-term transport projects, which include a new green corridor on the former Sutton Oak line, St Helens Town Centre Phase 2, and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) programme.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

- Continue to work with our partners from the City Region and private sector to implement and deliver our ambitious plans for the regeneration of our town centres and the delivery of our Town Deal projects.
- Continue delivery of our Inclusive Growth Strategy by working with our partners to ensure that plans for investment and growth within the borough benefit the whole community, whilst supporting more people into jobs, training and apprenticeships through programmes such as Connect to Work.
- Continue to deliver a sustainable and effective transport network and infrastructure that promotes economic growth and access to employment, including the development of a modern bus and rail network.





PRIORITY FIVE

CREATE GREEN AND VIBRANT
PLACES THAT REFLECT OUR
HERITAGE AND CULTURE



Looking back over the course of 2025–26, we are really proud of the strong progress delivered in making St Helens such a great place to live, work and visit. Our commitment to a greener future has grown even stronger. With over half of our borough made up of beautiful green open spaces, we continued to safeguard our environment and nurture the places that bring us together by protecting and enhancing our parks, woodlands and waterways so they can be enjoyed for generations to come. At the same time, we have continued to champion the spirit and identity that makes St Helens truly special by celebrating our unique heritage and opening up inspiring free opportunities for all to enjoy our vibrant local arts and culture.

In 2025, St Helens Borough Council reaffirmed its commitment to a cleaner, greener and more resilient future with the review and renewal of its Climate Change Action Plan. Although there is still much to do, clear progress is being made. Since 2022, borough-wide emissions have fallen by 8.56%, supported by a further 2.3% reduction from the council in the year to April 2025. Against our 2008 baseline, St Helens has now cut 938,000 tonnes of carbon, 18,000 tonnes directly through council-led initiatives such as building decarbonisation and the rollout of 33 electric fleet vehicles.

Our Climate Change Action Plan is now well embedded, with 173 actions driving a whole council approach. We have secured over £13.5 million in external funding, against a revenue cost to the council of only £48,000 to support major decarbonisation projects. These efforts are already delivering tangible benefits for residents,

including LED street lighting saving over 1,100 tonnes of emissions each year, green retrofits of historic buildings are preserving heritage while reducing emissions, home energy improvements, and expanded food and textile recycling.

In November 2025, we launched a bold new Open Spaces Strategy to enhance and celebrate the borough's exceptional parks and green spaces. Building on our growing number of Green Flag parks and thriving programme of events, the strategy sets a clear vision for making our open spaces safer, more accessible, and more enjoyable for everyone. The strategy focuses on six key aims: creating high quality spaces, promoting active lifestyles, protecting and nurturing nature, empowering communities, and growing commercial and funding opportunities. Together, these commitments reflect our ambition to ensure St Helens' green spaces continue to inspire, protect and bring joy to residents, both now and for generations to come.

This year we proudly secured our highest-ever number of Green Flag Awards, with two additional parks, Sutton Park and Bankes Park, joining Taylor Park, Mesnes Park and Victoria Park in achieving this internationally recognised mark of excellence. Alongside these, the Friends of St Helens Cemetery once again earned Community Green Flag status for the Memorial Gardens, bringing the borough's total to six award winning sites.

This achievement reflects the dedication of our hardworking teams and passionate volunteer groups who maintain our parks to exceptional standards, ensuring residents and visitors can enjoy safe, vibrant and welcoming green spaces.



During the year, we also renewed our commitment to the Mersey Forest Partnership ensuring ongoing action to plant more trees in the borough, deliver further environmental improvements in communities and continue to tackle the environmental and climate crisis. Our involvement in the partnership has seen the creation of new woodland in the borough, the management of existing woodland and access to funding such as the Northern Forest Grow Back Greener initiative provided over £450k over 2 years for the planting of 415 standard trees and 13,573 whips covering 6.28 Hectares.

In 2025 we achieved national success, winning the Best Waste Minimisation or Prevention Award at the LARAC Conference Celebration Awards. Our winning project, delivered in partnership with local schools, boosted awareness of food waste prevention and piloted food waste collections in school kitchens, resulting in over 1,500kg of food waste recycled and significant reductions in overall waste.

This recognition highlights our long standing leadership in sustainable waste management. With one of the lowest recycling contamination rates in the England (0.16%) and a decade long track record of providing weekly food waste collections ahead of national requirements, we continue to set the standard for effective recycling. To support residents, we also delivered 80,000 food caddy liner rolls, to ensure collected food waste is transformed into biogas green energy, potentially powering up to 12,600 homes each year.

During the year we also successfully rolled out new textile recycling banks across the borough following a highly effective trial that has already

saved more than 80 tonnes of textiles from landfill. The scheme gives residents convenient new ways to recycle clothing, shoes and fabrics, helping reduce environmental impact and cutting down the 2,800 tonnes of reusable textiles previously found in household waste. With 20 recycling banks now located in council managed car parks, and more being added, the initiative comes at no cost to the council while generating additional income.

In October 2025, we approved plans to invest in new waste collection vehicles as part of a refresh of the fleet. The move was in line with our Net Zero commitments as one of the six vehicles will be electric, and the other five vehicles will also offer significantly lower emission levels.

THIS YEAR SAW MAJOR PROGRESS IN DELIVERING OUR LIBRARIES STRATEGY 2023-2028, WITH THE LAUNCH OF OUR COMMUNITY LIBRARIES GRANT SCHEME SUPPORTING NINE LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO ESTABLISH NEW COMMUNITY RUN LIBRARY SPACES ACROSS THE BOROUGH. NEARLY £50,000 WAS AWARDED OVER THE TWO FUNDING ROUNDS, ENABLING GROUPS IN BILLINGE, RAINHILL, NEWTON LE WILLOWS, PARR, SENELEY GREEN, ECCLESTON, GARSWOOD AND ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE TO EXPAND ACCESS TO BOOKS, DIGITAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

These new community libraries will offer everything from book exchanges and IT access to employment support, homework clubs, social cafés and targeted youth provision. ensuring residents have welcoming, accessible spaces at the heart of their neighbourhoods. This programme highlights the strength of local partnerships and our commitment to widening access, tackling inequalities and empowering community groups to play a bigger role in shaping library services across St Helens Borough.

We also continued to invest in our existing libraries facilities, in addition to the creation of our first fully SEND inclusive space for children and adults at Haydock Library, we invested in a suite of new and improved technology across all our libraries, including self-service machines, upgraded PCs and secure, public access tablets.

In May 2025, we were successful in securing funding to extend our highly acclaimed Arts in Libraries Project into 2026-27. A standout year for the Arts in Libraries has seen the service continue to break down barriers and bring high quality cultural experiences directly to local residents. Over the course of 2025 the programme delivered 230 events, engaging 7,100 people, and supporting 169 artists, over half from the borough. Families made up a quarter of all audiences, and 85% rated activities as good or very good. The programme also continues to break down barriers, with 20% of audiences identifying as deaf or disabled and 41% coming from underrepresented or deprived areas. A further funding bid is being prepared for 2027/28 to ensure culture remains accessible for all.

OVER THE COURSE OF 2025-26 WE MAINTAINED:



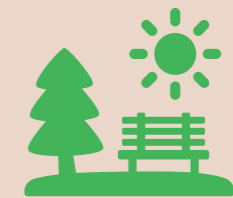
58,450 attendances at our Library and Arts service events



Over 1.6 million visits to our Sports and Leisure facilities



4.4 million weekly Recycling Collections in the last 12 months



110 parks and 67 play areas across the borough

We continued to invest strongly in our sports and leisure facilities across the borough and have earmarked £10 million over the next two years for a strategic leisure investment programme that will have a positive impact of residents' health and wellbeing by creating new opportunities to engage in activities. The year also marked a major milestone in our Community Asset Transfer programme, with the first two council owned playing fields transferred into community stewardship. FC St Helens and Newton le Willows FC will take on Bishop Road and King George V Playing Fields, unlocking new investment and creating sustainable, community led futures for these well used sites.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

- Continue to deliver our Climate Change Action Plan ensuring St Helens remains at the forefront of climate leadership.
- Effectively continue to deliver our Libraries Strategy 2023-28 and celebrate the impact of the National Year of Reading.
- Develop effective plans for delivery of our £10m strategic leisure investment programme.

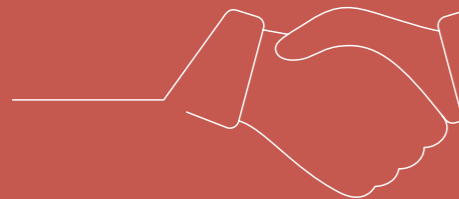




PRIORITY SIX

BE A

RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL



Over the past year, we worked closely with our residents, local organisations, and partners to drive forward our ambition of delivering innovative, accessible, and responsive services that truly meet community needs. Even within an increasingly challenging financial environment, our commitment to sustainability and value for money has remained unwavering, ensuring we continue to provide high-quality services while embracing new and better ways of working. We remain proud of our transformation journey and remain committed to building on our successes for the benefit of our residents and communities.

Some of the highlights of our recent achievements include:

Following the excellent feedback from our LGA Corporate Peer Challenge at the end of 2024-25, the team returned in January 2026 to review our progress against a small number of recommendations. We're proud that they found we had made strong overall progress. They highlighted the smooth transition to our new Chief Executive, with strong leadership now fully in place, and our improved storytelling approach, which is helping us communicate more clearly about the great work happening across the borough.

They also recognised our strengthened financial checks and challenge processes to manage our budget and the positive impact of our refreshed Transformation Programme, which is enabling smarter, more efficient ways of working through better use of technology and resources.

KEY STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD, INCLUDING OUR NEW WORKFORCE STRATEGY, MAJOR REGENERATION PROJECTS, AND OUR ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD LOCALITY MODEL. THE TEAM ALSO REAFFIRMED OUR STRONG LEADERSHIP ROLE WITHIN THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION, PARTICULARLY IN DELIVERING AMBITIOUS REGENERATION PLANS.

Although extremely challenging fiscal conditions continue, our financial management has remained very strong with our independent auditors giving the council a clean bill of health, through an unqualified opinion on our annual accounts and a strong value for money statement.

Our new budget for 2026-27 invests in what matters most by supporting families, protecting vital services, investing in schools and roads and driving forward major regeneration in our town centres.

Protecting the most vulnerable remains a priority, with significant funding for children's and adults' social care, including plans to grow local fostering and children's home provision. We're also continuing support for those households most in need of help through our Council Tax Reduction scheme, whilst building a stronger, fairer, and more vibrant St Helens for everyone.





In September 2026, we renewed our commitment to supporting and working effectively with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector with the launch of our refreshed St Helens Together Strategy 2025-2028. The aim of the refreshed strategy is to champion a future where VCFSE organisations are recognised, valued and supported to make a real difference and continue their long standing role at the heart of community life. The strategy also supports the role of local partners in shaping services, ensuring residents remain central to decision-making to create a more inclusive borough. A launch event brought partners together to collaborate, showcase services, and reflect on the needs of local communities. A public consultation was then undertaken, inviting residents to share their views on the type of local support and the services they'd like to see in their neighbourhoods.

Strong progress continued to improve our ways of working and service delivery by embracing the safe introduction and use of innovative new technology, whilst investing in and supporting digital growth in the borough.

After a successful pilot showing substantial time savings and faster assessments, we rolled out an AI tool called Magic Notes to 450 frontline social care staff. By freeing practitioners from paperwork, Magic Notes is improving the quality of conversations, speeding up support, and helping teams focus on what matters most: **spending more time with residents and delivering great care.**

Our partnership with Elevate and the Town Deal Board saw the brand-new £2.5m full fibre network completed in less than a year across St Helens town centre. The ultrafast, ultrareliable network will boost business growth, attract investment and make St Helens one of the best-connected towns in the region. **The project is also creating a really positive social impact across the borough by improving education, inclusion and digital access. This includes funding careers and education support for SEND young people, online learning for vulnerable residents, and delivering free high-speed internet to support people with disabilities, community services and digital inclusion in St Helens. Over the summer of 2025, the project was named as a finalist in the national 'Let's Celebrate Towns' competition.**

In June 2025, we were extremely proud to be recognised as a leading Fair Employer, through the award of Accredited status in the Liverpool City Region Fair Employment Charter. This is the highest level of recognition, and we were only one of 11 employers in the region to achieve this status, which demonstrates our commitment to championing fair treatment, Real Living Wage employment, strong trade union engagement, career development for young people and a supportive, inclusive workplace culture. Our new Workforce Strategy, 'Thriving Together 2025-2028', launched in December, will continue this commitment through an ambitious plan designed to nurture talent, champion our values, and enable a thriving workforce equipped to effectively serve our residents and meet our communities' evolving needs.

Looking ahead, the actions that we will prioritise over the course of 2026-27 are to:

- Ensure the council's ongoing financial balance, sustainability and resilience.
- Continue to deliver our transformation programme, including support for the One Neighbourhood Programme and delivery of a series of service optimisation reviews with a 2.5% efficiency target.
- Effectively deliver our new Workforce Strategy to ensure a skilled, inclusive, and future-ready workforce.
- Develop a new Corporate Plan for the council with a new strategic vision.
- Continue to develop new ways of engaging and listening to our community
- Develop a Data, Insight & Technology roadmap to promote innovation, efficiency and improved service delivery.

KEY FACTS:



£567.1m Revenue Budget 2026-27



135.5m in organisational savings delivered since 2010



Our workforce of 2,889 staff has reduced by nearly a third since 2010



169,068 calls answered by our Contact Centre and 12,091 visitors to our town hall customer hub



3.17m views and engagements with our social media channels



for **with** you
you



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL