

Cabinet

Agenda

Date: Monday, 6th June, 2011
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1, 2 and 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach , CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Public Speaking Time/Open Session**

In accordance with Procedure Rules Nos. 11 and 35 a total period of 10 minutes is allocated for members of the public to address the Cabinet on any matter relevant to its work.

Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes but the Chairman will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned where there are a number of speakers. There is no requirement to give notice of the intention to make use of public speaking provision but, as a matter of courtesy, a period of 24 hours' notice is encouraged.

In order for an informed answer to be given, where a member of the public wishes to ask a question of a Cabinet Member, three clear working days' notice must be given and the question must be submitted in writing at the time of notification.

Please contact Cherry Foreman on 01270 686463
E-Mail: cherry.foreman@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies or requests for further information or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 May 2011.

5. **Key Decision 67: Economic Development Strategy** (Pages 5 - 34)

The report updates Cabinet on developments and progress in respect of the Draft Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East. Consultation has been undertaken internally and with external partners and incorporates findings from the Local Economic Assessment.

Cabinet is required to approve the revised Strategy for adoption.

6. **Key Decision 84: Highways Services Services Procurement**
(Pages 35 - 46)

The report provides a summary of the procurement process and recommends a decision to appoint a Highways Services Contractor to start on 6 October 2011.

The report sets out the rationale for change as well as the key provisions of the new Highways Services Contract.

Cabinet is asked to award Preferred Bidder to the company which receives the highest score on the evaluation which will be tabled at the meeting.

7. **Appointments to Outside Organisations 2011-2015** (Pages 47 - 50)

The report gives details of Category 1 outside organisations to which Cabinet is required to make appointments.

Cabinet is asked to make appointments for a four-year term of office and to adopt a procedure for dealing with vacancies which occur between appointments.

A schedule of nominations will be available at the meeting.

8. **Review of the Fostering Services** (Pages 51 - 98)

The final report of the "Task and Finish" Group which conducted a Scrutiny Review of the Fostering Service, is attached.

Cabinet is asked to receive the report and note that the Children and Families Portfolio Holder will report formally to a future meeting of Cabinet in respect of each recommendation.

9. **Review of Family Support Services: Portfolio Holder Response to Scrutiny Review** (Pages 99 - 110)

The attached document is a response to the report of the Review of Family Support Services presented by the "Task and Finish" Group of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee considered by Cabinet on 20 December 2010.

10. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The report relating to the remaining item on the agenda has been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matter may be determined with the press and public excluded.

The Committee may wish to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

PART 2 - MATTER TO BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

11. **Workforce Change** (Pages 111 - 116)

The report gives details of posts which the Chief Executive recommends be approved or noted for severance.

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet**
held on Tuesday, 3rd May, 2011 in The Tatton Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1DX

PRESENT

Councillor W Fitzgerald (Chairman)
Councillor R Domleo (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Rachel Bailey, D Brown, H Gaddum, A Knowles, J Macrae,
P Mason and R Menlove

Councillors in attendance:
Rhoda Bailey, Lesley Smetham and Brian Silvester.

Officers in attendance:
Chief Executive; Borough Solicitor; Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets;
Director of Adult, Community Health and Wellbeing Services; Director of
Children and Families; Head of HR and Organisational Development; Head of
Policy and Performance; and Strategic Director Places.

175 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

176 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

177 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from members of the public.

178 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2011 be approved as a
correct record.

**179 KEY DECISION CE10/11-92 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF
MACCLESFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

Consideration was given to the outcome of the statutory public notice and
the responses received during the representation period regarding the
closure of Macclesfield High School on 31 August 2011; the closure of the
High School being contingent upon the opening of an Academy on the
existing site on 1 September 2011.

RESOLVED

1. That approval be given to the closure of Macclesfield High School on 31 August 2011.
2. That approval be given to the recommendation that closure is to take effect only if, by the date of closure, an agreement has been made under section 482(1) of the Education Act 1996 for the establishment of an Academy on the same site.

180 **KEY DECISION CE11/12-1 NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING
SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

Consideration was given to the development of a Neighbourhood Policing Service Level Agreement with Cheshire Constabulary. The report took into account the views of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee which had discussed the draft agreement at its meeting on 7 April 2011 and put forward a number of recommendations for consideration to Cabinet. These were detailed in the report with proposed responses.

RESOLVED

1. That approval be given to the proposed response to the recommendations of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Section 10.1 of the report.
2. That the final Neighbourhood Policing Service Level Agreement for 2011-2012 be approved.

181 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 or 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

182 **KEY DECISION CE10/11-78 WILSON BOWDEN TOWN CENTRE
DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Director Places.

RESOLVED

1. That approval be given to the Terms of Variation as set out in the report.

2. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, the Borough Treasurer, and the Borough Solicitor, to finalise the agreement in consultation with the Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Prosperity and the Portfolio Holder for Procurements, Assets and Shared Services.

183 **WORKFORCE CHANGE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet supports the decision of the Chief Executive to release the employees whose roles are listed as 1 to 35 in Appendix A under the arrangements agreed in relation to voluntary severance provisions for employees in the Council.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.35 am

W Fitzgerald (Chairman)

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of meeting: 6th June 2011
Report of: Strategic Director - Places
Title: Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This paper updates Cabinet on developments and progress in relation to the Draft Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East, which has been consulted upon both internally and with external partners and incorporates findings from our Local Economic Assessment, which we have a statutory duty to complete.
- 1.2 The Strategy sets the context for the delivery of Cheshire East's work programme on key priorities relating to economic development and regeneration, with the purpose of driving economic prosperity over the next 15 years. It also plays a key role in shaping and supporting the work of our new Local Enterprise Partnership and key activity such as the formulation of the Local Development Framework.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to agree the revised Strategy and the headline findings of the Local Economic Assessment.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Work has proceeded over the last year on several major spatial strategies, all of which need an overarching framework to provide a context for their delivery plans. The publication of the EDS will provide this, as well as a platform on which to further develop spatial and thematic priorities for the Council and, critically, to inform the plans of the new sub-regional Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The Economic Development Strategy sets out how we will deliver the business growth priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy and informs the development of other Council strategies. A competitive local economy contributes to health and wellbeing, and objectives to effect the transformation to a low carbon economy form part of the Economic Development Strategy.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 Costs associated with the development of the EDS will be constrained within existing budgets. Individual aspects of underpinning programmes of delivery will be progressed through the Cabinet and Scrutiny process, as appropriate, and reflect any additional resource requirements.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 The development of an Economic Development Strategy (EDS) is not a statutory function. However the EDS will be underpinned by a Local Economic Assessment (LEA). The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 places a duty on the Council to carry out an LEA.

- 8.2 The following Acts provide the main legislative background and powers available in developing an EDS for Cheshire East.

i) The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

- 8.3 In particular Section 19 contains wide powers enabling local authorities to provide, such recreational facilities as they think fit. These powers are supplemented by Sections 144 and 145 Local Government Act 1972 which empowers local authorities to provide such facilities as conference venues, exhibition fairs etc with a view to encouraging visitors and the provision of entertainment respectively.

ii) The Local Government Act 1999 (Best Value)

- 8.4 Places a general duty on the council to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

iii) The Local Government Act 2000 (Well- being Power)

- 8.5 Part I of the Act gives Local Authorities power to take any steps which they consider are likely to promote the well being of their area or its inhabitants. The provisions of the Act are intended to give Councils increased opportunities to improve the quality of life of their local communities.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The Council's economic aims, priorities and policies need articulating in a strategy document to ensure that other service areas take account of these in developing their strategies. It is possible that there will be insufficient detail in some emerging/government policy areas to fully comprehend the implications at the

local level and as a consequence there is a risk that the strategy will lack clarity in some areas.

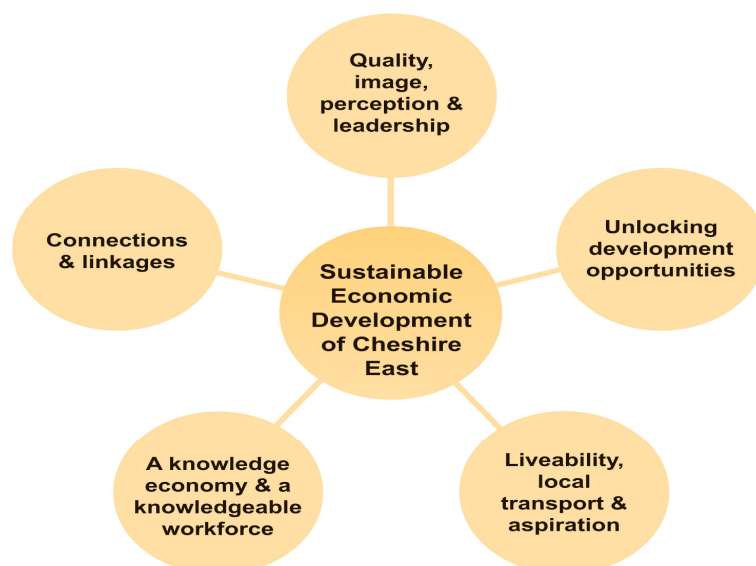
10.0 Background and Options

10.1 The Economic Development Strategy provides the overarching framework for our new sub-regional Local Enterprise Partnership and several other strategies and plans, which are supported by delivery plans that are more regularly updated – a necessity in the changing policy, funding and organisational environment. A summary of delivery plan activity is provided in Annex 3 of the report, as a means of providing some clarity on how the strategy is currently being implemented.

10.2 This strategy sets out our **understanding of the current state of the economy of Cheshire East**, and identifies in particular its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This draft analyses a wide range of information sources that are currently available, including the challenges emerging from the draft Local Economic Assessment (LEA) – a statutory requirement - which will provide additional intelligence to help inform the implementation of this strategy. Key headlines identify that:

- Cheshire East as a whole is performing better on indicators than the regional and national averages, especially in skill levels, business start-ups and knowledge based employment. However this masks significant variations at the local level with the Crewe economy in particular performing well below the Cheshire East average.
- In terms of key sectors, the Pharmaceuticals share of employment is significantly above the GB average. Motor Vehicles, Computing services, Financial Services, Logistics and Advanced Engineering are other key sectors contributing significantly to high productivity/GVA.
- Macclesfield and Crewe are large net importers of labour whereas in the Congleton area there is currently a relative shortage of local jobs and a large outflow of labour. The rural character of the Borough is reflected in an Agriculture sector employing 5,300, twice the England average.

10.3 The strategy also identifies **strategic economic development objectives** and underpinning priorities for the borough. These are summarised below.



- 10.4 The strategy **provides the strategic policy context**. The development of this strategy comes at a key time. It is critical that it relates closely to the wider policy and strategy framework, particularly in terms of the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership and the 'localism' agenda, as well as closely related strategies at the local level (e.g. Local Transport Plan, Housing Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy). It is particularly key that this strategy contributes to the delivery of the overarching Sustainable Communities Strategy for Cheshire East and the preparation of the Local Development Framework's Core Spatial Strategy.
- 10.5 The revised version of the strategy document (Appendix 1) incorporates changes as a result of:
- Extensive consultation with key stakeholders in the local community, including businesses, developers, investors and internal stakeholders within Cheshire East Council.
 - Changes in the policy context, in particular October 2010's White Paper: *Local growth* which identifies the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The Cheshire and Warrington LEP has now been established, but its operational structure and responsibilities are still emerging. Given these changes, this Economic Development Strategy plays a key role in providing a clearer context for future delivery.
 - The Local Economic Assessment, which is a statutory requirement that considers the economic, social and environmental components of the Borough and its linkages with neighbouring areas. This has been informed by a Business Survey of 1500 companies across Cheshire & Warrington (500 in Cheshire East).

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Jez Goodman
Designation: Economic Development Manager
Tel No: 01270 685906
Email: jez.goodman@cheshireeast.gov.uk



Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East

Final Draft

May 2011



Contents

	Executive Summary	3
1	Introduction	5
2	The Policy Context	6
	<i>Sub-National issues</i>	7
3	The State of Our Economy	8
	<i>National and Global Trends</i>	8
	<i>The Cheshire East Economy</i>	9
	<i>Moving from Recession to Recovery</i>	13
4	Cheshire East's Strategic Objectives And Priorities	14
	Thematic objectives	14
	<i>A Knowledge economy and knowledgeable workforce</i>	15
	<i>Connections & Linkages</i>	15
	<i>Quality image, perception and leadership</i>	15
	<i>Unlocking development opportunities</i>	16
	<i>Liveability, local transport and aspiration</i>	16
	Delivery of Priorities	16
	<i>Spatial objectives</i>	17
	<i>Crewe</i>	17
	<i>Macclesfield</i>	18
	<i>Sustainable Towns and Rural Areas</i>	18

Annex 1: Cheshire East Economic SWOT Summary

Annex 2: Local Economic Assessment Headlines

Annex 3: Summary of Delivery Plan activity 2011-12

Executive Summary

- (i) This document builds on the Draft Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East that was published for consultation last summer. It:
- incorporates key responses submitted during that consultation process which was carried out over August – September 2010.
 - reflects more recent changes to the policy context and landscape for economic development nationally, regionally and locally.
 - features more evidence that continues to feed into our economic intelligence through our work on undertaking a Local Economic Assessment.



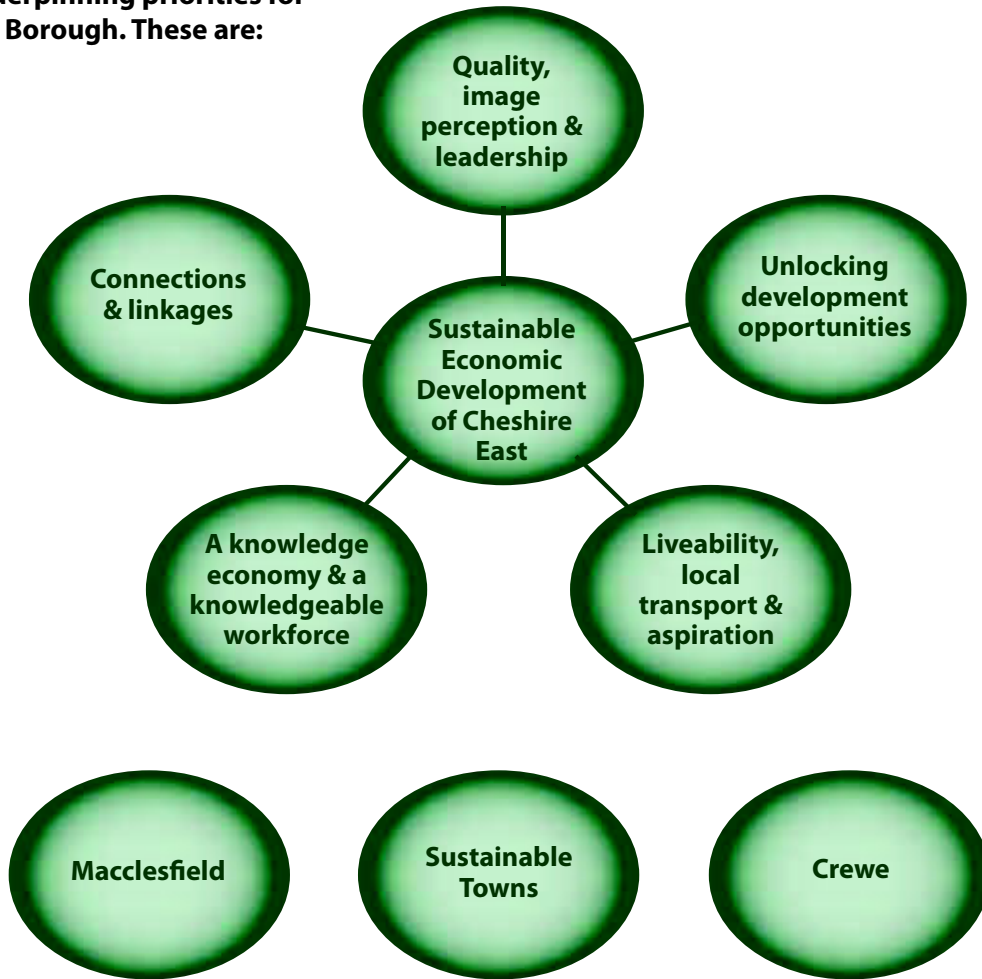
- (ii) The strategy sets out objectives and priorities for the next 15 years.
- (iii) Whilst Cheshire East Council is responsible for leading on its formulation, the overall approach to its development and implementation is one that must be shared with other stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sector. In particular, the Strategy and underpinning actions will need to form the basis of our new sub-regional Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership.
- (iv) This document is strategic in nature, and sets out objectives, priorities and direction, but it will not provide detailed actions. Shorter-term delivery plans have been, or in the process of being developed that will translate the objectives into actions. Some of these are spatial in context (e.g. All Change for Crewe, Macclesfield Economic Masterplan),

whilst others are more thematic (e.g. Business Engagement Framework).

- (v) This strategy:
- (a) **sets out our understanding of the current state of the economy of Cheshire East**, and identifies in particular its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This draft analyses a wide range of information sources that are currently available, including the challenges emerging from the draft Local Economic Assessment (LEA) which will provide additional intelligence to help inform the implementation of this strategy. Key headlines identify that:
- Cheshire East as a whole is performing better on indicators than the regional and national averages, especially in skill levels, business start-ups and knowledge based employment. However this masks significant variations at the local level with the Crewe economy in particular performing well below the Cheshire East average.
 - In terms of key sectors, the Pharmaceuticals share of employment is significantly above the GB average. Motor Vehicles, Computing services, Financial Services, Logistics and Advanced Engineering are other key sectors contributing significantly to high productivity/GVA.
 - Macclesfield and Crewe are large net importers of labour whereas in the Congleton area there is currently a relative shortage of local jobs and a large outflow of labour. The rural character of the Borough is reflected in an Agriculture sector employing 5,300, twice the England average.



- (b) **identifies strategic economic development objectives and underpinning priorities for the Borough. These are:**



- (c) **provides the strategic policy context:** the development of this strategy comes at a key time. It is critical that it relates closely to the wider policy and strategy framework, particularly in terms of the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership and the 'localism' agenda, as well as closely related strategies at the local level (e.g. Local Transport Plan, Housing Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy). It is particularly key that this strategy contributes to the delivery of the overarching Sustainable Communities Strategy for Cheshire East and the preparation of the Local Development Framework's Core Spatial Strategy.

- (vi) The strategy has been informed by consultation with stakeholders.
- (vii) The implementation of this strategy and related plans for delivery require:
- A clearer and more focused

understanding of the still emerging changes to the strategic and local context.

- further analysis of the state of the Cheshire East economy informed by the Local Economic Assessment, including the Business Survey.
- priorities from other on-going localised plans to be incorporated.
- cross-fertilisation with other key strategies, including the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Development Framework, Local Transport Plan and Visitor Economy Strategy.
- Strong engagement with key stakeholders in the local community, including businesses, developers, investors and internal stakeholders within Cheshire East Council.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document builds on the Draft Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East that was published for consultation in August 2010. It:
 - incorporates key responses submitted during that consultation process which was carried out over August – September 2010.
 - reflects more recent changes to the policy context and landscape for economic development nationally, regionally and locally.
 - features more evidence that continues to feed into our economic intelligence through our work on undertaking a Local Economic Assessment.
- 1.2 Recent legislation places a stronger duty on local authorities to lead in analysing the local economy, and develop policies and actions that respond accordingly in promoting the local economic well-being of their areas.
- 1.3 However, this approach must be a shared one, which engages with partners from elsewhere in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and captures their ambitions and plans.
- 1.4 Collectively, we need to ensure that we set out clear objectives and priorities that both take account of, and influence, national and sub-regional policy developments, especially since there is a renewed focus by Government on the role of local government and local partners in the delivery of economic development.
- 1.5 The importance of strong leadership from Cheshire East Council and our public, private and voluntary sector partners in promoting and delivering on our economic development priorities cannot be over-emphasised if the ambitions for the area are to be realised. The Council will adopt a strategic leadership role and promote partnership coherence, ensuring that our voice is heard, our interests are represented and we play a full and active role at the sub-regional and national level in making the case for economic development and investment in Cheshire East.
- 1.6 Cheshire East needs an economic policy framework that informs, and is informed by, other current and emerging strategies, including the Cheshire East Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, the Local Transport Plan (LTP3), Housing Strategy, Visitor Economy Strategy, Child Poverty Strategy, as well as the Council's strategic commissioning role for 16-19 Learning.
- 1.7 Critically, we need to develop a strategy that takes into account the recent and emerging economic challenges faced by the borough. The local economy has weathered the recession relatively well compared to other parts of the North West but the transition to recovery will bring new opportunities and threats. Whilst some indicators provide comfort on how the local economy is progressing, there are others that indicate that other priorities are emerging, which require stronger collaborative approaches within the Council and with external partners such as the new Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), neighbouring authorities, other public, private and voluntary bodies, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and other stakeholders.
- 1.8 The scope of these collaborations and delivery mechanisms will emerge as government policy is clarified over the months ahead. In addition two key pieces of work will underpin policy development and business support initiatives: the Local Economic Assessment (LEA) and – as a subset of this – the Business Survey which, together, will provide a comprehensive evidence base for policies and actions.
- 1.9 The Draft Economic Development Strategy was issued for consultation through the Council's website for a 6 week period ending 30 September 2010. Where appropriate, suggested changes resulting from the consultation have been incorporated into this document.
- 1.10 This document is strategic in its nature and sets out objectives, priorities and direction, but it will not provide detailed actions. Shorter-term delivery plans have been, or in the process of being developed that will translate the EDS objectives into actions. Some of these are spatial in context (e.g. All Change for Crewe, Macclesfield Economic Masterplan), whilst others are more thematic (e.g. Business Engagement Framework).

2 The Policy Context

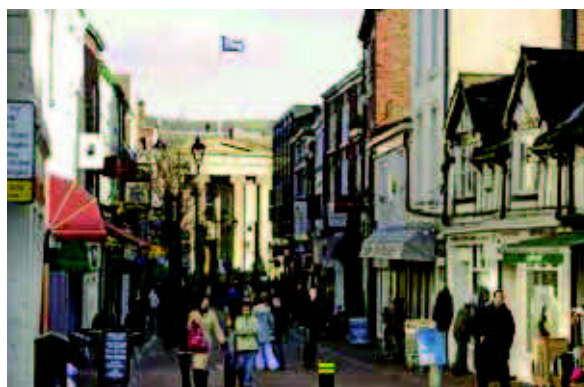
- 2.1 In developing an Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East, there is a need to consider the wider strategic context. This is undergoing significant change as the new government sets out its commitment to the devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local councils and communities.
- 2.2 To date the government has announced the following changes which are particularly relevant to the development of this strategy:
- The White Paper for Local Growth seeks to facilitate the conditions locally that will help business and stimulate private sector led employment growth to offset the reductions in public sector employees.
 - The abolition of the Regional Development Agencies and the establishment of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and new competitive Regional Growth Fund represents a shift from regional to sub national economic development and seeks to deliver private sector led growth.
 - The reform of the Further Education and Skills system seeks a shared responsibility for skills between the individual and the employer. New Apprenticeships are at the heart of developing skills for growth.
 - Reform of employment support with the introduction of the new Work Programme initiative in April 2011 will give greater flexibility and incentives to the private and voluntary sectors to work with partners and help people back to work.
 - The changes are set against substantial funding reductions for business support networks particularly Business Link, which will become a web based network supported by a national call centre. There will no longer be regional business support and it is unclear whether the gap will be filled by the Local Enterprise Partnership.
 - The Localism Bill contains a number of measures in relation to economic development: discretionary business rate discounts, business rate relief for small businesses, reform of the planning system, use and purpose of the Community Infrastructure Levy, replacement of the Infrastructure Planning Commission by an Infrastructure Planning Unit within the Planning Inspectorate, a National Planning Framework setting out economic, environmental and social priorities.
- 2.3 It is expected that firmer details and guidance will emerge in the next few months which will feed into the development and delivery of detailed action plans.
- 2.4 This document, as part of a hierarchy of strategies, provides the policy background explaining the implications and opportunities of different spatial and thematic strategies. It also identifies strategic economic development priorities for the Borough and refers to specific Action Plans where delivery of priorities is being taken forward. These will also support and guide the authority in the development and implementation of its other key strategies:
- Local Development Framework (LDF)
An issues and options paper on the LDF Core Strategy has recently been through public consultation. Technical work on employment, housing, retailing and infrastructure is underway.
 - Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) – The draft EDS has informed the development of the SCS.
 - Local Transport Plan (LTP3) – The third round of LTP recently completed its public consultation stage and is expected to be finalised by April 2011.
- 2.5 Through helping to inform the LEP, the EDS will seek to secure, where possible, a consistent approach on issues within the sub-region.
- 2.6 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are engaging Local Authorities through Local Investment Plans, covering housing, infrastructure,

regeneration and community activities, to connect local ambition and priorities with national aims and policies.

- 2.7 Whilst developing a Cheshire East approach to the Strategy, the Council and its partners will need to demonstrate the development of appropriate relationships on cross-border issues including:
- within the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region.
 - to the north with Greater Manchester.
 - with our other neighbours in North Staffordshire, Shropshire and the High Peak area of North Derbyshire.
- 2.8 Cheshire East Council and our partners have already commenced the development of key plans for its three spatial priorities: Crewe, Macclesfield and its market towns. Whilst at an early stage, current progress is set out in this document.
- 2.9 From April 2010 the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act gave a new statutory duty to local authorities that strengthens their role in promoting and delivering economic development and in assessing local economic conditions. There is an explicit requirement for Cheshire East Council (CEC) to lead in undertaking, with partners, a Local Economic Assessment (LEA) that informs the development of this strategy and other local strategies. The evidence base and challenges emerging from the LEA have also been bolstered by the findings of the Business Survey.

Sub-National issues

- 2.10 The private sector led Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership will be operational from April 2011. Although the scope of its operation and resourcing is still uncertain, it could encompass business growth, strategic planning, housing, transport and infrastructure functions as well as supporting enterprise and business start ups. The EDS, together with the LEA/Business Survey, will inform the development of sub regional priorities, which in turn will influence the development of Action Plans to deliver the EDS.



3 The State of Our Economy

- 3.1 This section provides a summary analysis of both national and global economic trends and the recent and forecast performance of the Cheshire East economy in particular.

National and Global Trends

- 3.2 While it is impossible to accurately predict future trends with any certainty we need to make some assumptions. These trends are likely to have an impact on productivity and competitiveness, on how we develop our future infrastructure needs, and on how and where we invest scarce resources.

- i) There will be increasing competition for investment in jobs from the rest of the region and our neighbours, making it all the more essential that Cheshire East makes the most of a highly skilled work force and growth in knowledge-based industries.
- ii) As the economy changes new sectors will emerge. There is a need to identify and build on those with the strongest growth potential. These include Energy, Environmental technology, Creative, Digital and Information Technology, and Life sciences/ Biotechnology.
- iii) There will be a reduction in public spending in the short to medium term with less public sector employment and spending and reduced capital investment. Changes in global markets and competition will lead to continued pressures in many sectors and the most vulnerable will see restructuring, downsizing or closures.
- iv) As the costs of travel and movement of goods increase, there will be a corresponding increase in the importance of digital connectivity allied to innovation and technological improvements. There are opportunities to build on the assets and activity already taking place in digital industries and ensure we exploit linkages to the Manchester city region.
- v) The proportion of older people in the population will increase, resulting in a

smaller working-age population and fewer younger people. One of the consequences is that people will be economically active past traditional retirement ages leading to a growth in the “grey” economy and a need to respond to it. A smaller proportion of younger workers may result in skill shortages which may hold back economic growth. Demographic changes in Cheshire East are expected to increase the number of those over 65 year of age by 50 percent (nearly 34,000) between 2006 and 2026. There will be a significant impact on services including hospitals and other health services, care services, public transport, leisure and cultural services, including libraries and sports centres.

- vi) There will be further changes to patterns of working (flexible/home-based working, etc), and increased leisure time as the economy evolves to cope with changing circumstances.
- vii) The demand for housing will increase, driven by the declining size of households and, with it, the expectations of higher quality homes and living environments. The amount, type and location of existing and future housing and its relationship with employment provision is a key issue for the LDF. The growth potential of the area and its contribution to the Manchester City Region’s aspirations has to be balanced with environmental safeguards to maintain and protect our Green Belt, countryside, heritage and other assets.
- viii) With anticipated higher temperatures and more unpredictable weather patterns, climate change will mean more effort is needed on adaptation, as well as efforts to reduce our use of fossil fuels. Energy costs will rise and the economy will need to move towards a low-carbon solution.
- ix) Increased demand for, and pressures on natural resources needs to be taken into account in deciding where growth should take place, to ensure that this does not compromise environmental capacity.
- x) Agriculture in the EU is undergoing some key adjustments and restructuring, partly influenced by CAP reforms. Farm diversification including tourism,

environmental technologies, renewable energy, retailing, is one of the key options available to help sustain farm enterprise and business activity, making rural areas more sustainable.

- xi) New development opportunities will arise in the green economy and in particular there will be new economic activity related to climate change.
- xii) The cost of travel and the movement of goods will increase, so there will be a need to develop more sustainable travel patterns and a more efficient transport infrastructure. Accessibility between homes and jobs is crucial, and there is a need for investment and employment to be focused on locations with the best public transport connectivity. There is therefore a need to ensure public transport links to areas of future growth potential are improved (especially to Manchester and London).



The Cheshire East Economy

- 3.3 As the third largest 'unitary' area in the North West, Cheshire East has the potential to play a significant role in generating economic activity for the region as a whole. Its economy makes two major contributions to the region:
- Its businesses generate over 6.9% of the North West's economic output.
 - Its people make up a significant proportion of the 'knowledge economy' workforce that drives the city regions, especially Manchester.

3.4 The headline indicators in Table 1 demonstrate that Cheshire East as a whole is performing better on indicators than the regional and national averages, especially in skill levels, business start ups and knowledge based employment.

3.5 However this masks significant variations at the local level with the Crewe economy in particular performing below the Cheshire East average. Particular areas of concern are low levels of NVQ4+ skills (26.7%), business registrations per 10,000 population (49) and workforce employed in knowledge based employment (6% in Crewe outer).

3.6 Productivity is particularly high in the Macclesfield area, which has been achieved with little job growth over the last decade. Crewe has seen particularly high GVA growth along with significant job growth, but this is reflected in a low growth rate for GVA per job (below CE average) and productivity (GVA per employee) was below the regional and Cheshire East average. The Congleton area has been characterised by weak GVA growth and productivity below the regional average over the last decade.

3.7 Table 2 provides a summary analysis of the key sectors of the Cheshire East economy. Pharmaceutical's share of employment is significantly above the GB average, with particular concentrations in the Macclesfield area. Motor Vehicles (Crewe), Computing services (Macclesfield), Financial Services (Macclesfield) and Logistics (Crewe/Middlewich) are other key sectors contributing significantly to high productivity/GVA. Advanced engineering is a small but significant sector mainly in the Crewe area. Macclesfield and Crewe are large net importers of labour whereas in the Congleton area there is a relative shortage of local jobs and a large outflow of labour. The rural character of the Borough is reflected in an Agriculture sector employing 5,300, twice the England average.

Table 1: Headline Analysis			
	Cheshire East	North West	England
Population (2009)	362, 700	6.9m	51.8m
Working Age Population (2009)	215, 200	4.2m	32.1m
VA (2007 prices)	£7.8b	£116.4b	£1,045.3b
GVA per job (2007 prices)	£47.2k	£38.5k	£45.7k
Employment (% of the WAP 2009)	75.8	70.3	73.0
Unemployment (JSA claimants per 100 WAP, July 2010)	2.6	4.0	3.6
Skills – NVQ4+ (% of the WAP, 2009)	36.1	27.0	29.9
Skills – no quals (% of the WAP, 2009)	9.9	13.8	12.3
Business registrations (VAT regs/10,000 WAP , 2008)	67.8	49.6	57.2
Employment in Knowledge Intensive Businesses, 2008	14%	10%	11%
Earnings (workplace-based, 2009)	£24, 200	£24,000	£26,100

- 3.8 Manufacturing employment has declined sharply over the last decade, following major redundancies at key employers in the area as global restructuring and recessionary forces take effect. The dependency on large employers is a weakness and illustrates the need to diversify and encourage entrepreneurialism.



Table 2: Sectoral analysis

Key Sectors	Characteristics / key employers
Pharmaceuticals	The share of employment is more than 6 times the GB average. Concentrated in the Macclesfield area where Astra Zeneca employ c.7000 and alone contributes 13.2% of Cheshire East's GVA. Sanofi Aventis based at Holmes Chapel also a key employer. Global cost pressures are generating job cuts and outsourcing to the Far East.
Automotive	Concentrated at Crewe where Bentley Motors employs around 3,500 and accounts for 3.3% of Cheshire East's GVA. Current economic climate has reduced demand for cars and led to job losses. Provides a reservoir of advanced engineering skills in Crewe area, along with Bombardier (rail transport). Airbags International, based at Congleton, is a key supplier to the automotive industry.
Financial Services	Mainly concentrated in the Macclesfield area with key employers such as Barclays Bank IT Centre (c.3,000 employees), Royal London (c.800), Cheshire Building Society (now Nationwide owned). The credit crunch demonstrated the vulnerability of the sector which has suffered job losses/rationalisations and off-shoring of operations.
Creative, Digital, Media	Employed 8,900 in 2007, up 22% on 2003, compared to a 3% national growth rate. Particular concentration in Macclesfield area where number of advertising/publishing companies located in Bollington/Macclesfield area e.g. McCann Erikson, Ten Aps Publishing. Media City development may present a major opportunity to establish linkages, supply chains, etc.
Computing/IT	Likely to see continuing growth due to innovation and increased take up of ICT in other sectors. GVA expected to grow by 5.5% p.a. to 2020.
Public Health/Social Work	Employed 13,500 in 2007. Leighton and Macclesfield area Hospitals employ c.3000 and 2000 respectively. Demographic change (ageing population and technological change should continue demand for healthcare). Public sector cutbacks may have an impact on employment levels.
Visitor Economy	The visitor economy is worth £653m to the Cheshire East economy and around 10,000 jobs are associated with the industry.
Logistics	Crewe and Middlewich are the focus for the Borough's Logistics sector.
Agriculture	Around 5,300 employed in agriculture, twice the average for England.

- 3.9 The high quality of life enjoyed by communities in Cheshire East, particularly in the Macclesfield/Congleton areas, is a significant factor in contributing to the economic success of these areas. In contrast parts of Cheshire East, particularly some wards in Crewe, are characterised by poorer quality environments and negative images together with relatively high levels of worklessness, ill health and poverty, constraining people's ability to improve their life chances. Pockets of deprivation can also be found close to areas of affluence (particularly in north east Cheshire) emphasising wealth polarities, and in the more isolated rural parts of the Borough where access to services, facilities, public transport and affordable housing is a major problem.
- 3.10 The 'SWOT' analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats, Appendix 1) provides a breakdown of the current evidence base and provides the rationale behind the strategic approach detailed later on in the economic development strategy. Whilst it is evident that the recession has compounded some existing weaknesses and threats, there are major strengths and opportunities to build on:
- i) a range of high-productivity and technologically advanced international businesses in key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, automotive, financial and business services, ICT, energy and nuclear and creative industries.
 - ii) a dynamic community of small businesses and start-ups, including many in new technologies and services, building on the skills and wealth of the local population.
 - iii) strong GVA growth expected in Communications, Pharmaceuticals, Other Business Services, Health & Social Work, and Banking and Finance. The impact of Media City in Salford is likely to boost opportunities in the creative, digital and media sectors in NE Cheshire.
 - iv) a population which is more highly skilled and more entrepreneurial than the regional average, with the strongest concentrations in the Macclesfield and Congleton area.
 - v) the presence of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), and three OfStEd 'Outstanding' Further Education Colleges (South Cheshire, Reaseheath and Macclesfield), and the close proximity and relationships with Keele and Manchester Universities, is a major asset in terms of skills development and knowledge transfer.
 - vi) regionally significant employment sites at Basford and Alderley Park.
 - vii) a generally attractive living environment with attractive landscapes, market towns and villages, and homes which cater for not only local needs but meet the aspirations of highly skilled workers across the Manchester city region.
 - viii) a location which provides strong links by road and rail to Greater Manchester, Chester & Cheshire West, and the Potteries, as well as to national and international markets, with particularly good connections to Manchester International Airport, the West Midlands, London and the South East.
 - ix) Manchester Airport is a significant generator of wealth for the region and Cheshire East gains significant economic benefits from its location on its northern boundary. It plays a key role in supporting the knowledge economy, the visitor economy, and in opening up new markets in emerging economies.
 - x) a large proportion of people with high level skills and median earnings well above the NW average (as well as good accessibility to skilled workers in surrounding areas of Greater Manchester, the rest of the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region, and the Potteries).
 - xi) since EU enlargement, inflows of East European migrants, particularly to the Crewe area, have helped to bridge the gap between local labour demand and supply.
 - xii) a quality of place which enables the sub-region to attract businesses and act also as a leisure and tourism destination for the region's residents and visitors from outside the region. Major visitor attractions including the Peak District, Tatton Park, Stately Homes/Gardens, Jodrell Bank, the river/canal network, and proximity to Manchester's cultural/leisure facilities.
 - xiii) as part of Cheshire East's continuing

role in providing for local and regional leisure demands, through developing and implementing sound strategies we will need to keep the visitor economy attractive and competitive, whilst better exploiting the area's natural advantages and existing assets.

- xiv) a strong agricultural and food sector which offers opportunities to foster local food production, reducing food miles to a minimum and contributing to food security, and increasingly adopts an environmental custodian role.

3.12 However these strengths are balanced by a number of threats and problems:

- i) economic success and high quality of life have come hand-in-hand with high house prices and affordability issues for the less well-off (although not in Crewe). This also impacts on the availability of key workers and lower paid service sector employees.
- ii) an ageing population will increase the burden on public services and will be supported by decreasing numbers of working age people. The decline in young working age people will make it harder for employers to fill vacancies. Affordable housing will be needed to enable recruitment and retention of employees in the care sector, which are forecast to increase due to the ageing population.
- iii) the influx of EU migrants has put additional pressure on housing, public services and social cohesion. The recession has reduced inflows considerably but future growth in the local economy could see further inflows and a need to improve integration.
- iv) in parts of Cheshire East, the economy and productivity are now growing more slowly than other parts of the region.
- v) there remain significant pockets in the Borough which have high levels of deprivation, poorer educational attainment and low levels of enterprise, particularly in the Crewe and Nantwich area.
- vi) there is, in many parts of Cheshire East, poor connectivity between the places where people live and where they work, especially by public transport.

- vii) the Borough produces higher than average levels of CO2 emissions in homes, workplaces and on the roads.

- viii) a significant number of both jobs and productivity depend on a relatively small number of large employers which may be prone to economic shocks.

- ix) a high proportion of existing employment land allocations are not immediately available, with significant amounts of investment needed to overcome constraints and bring them forward for development. Cheshire East's Strategic Employment Land Assessment (under way as part of the LDF preparatory work) will provide detailed information on supply, demand and deliverability issues. The Congleton area in particular has low employment land take-up rates, and investors perceive a lack of opportunity within the existing mix of land supply.

- x) Cheshire East is particularly strong in several key sectors including automotive, financial/professional, pharmaceutical/biotechnology and creative industries. Unfortunately, we are over-reliant on these and on a small number of major global companies that could be vulnerable in the future. We therefore need to support existing investment in these sectors to find ways both of nurturing existing investors and diversifying and exploiting their presence.

- xi) The agriculture sector is vulnerable to the effects of changes in subsidies. Efforts to diversify can be frustrated by environmental /planning considerations.

Moving from Recession to Recovery

3.13 Whilst unemployment rose significantly (in percentage terms) during 2008-10, the Cheshire East economy has weathered the recession well in comparison with other parts of the North West. This has been supported and facilitated by the Council's Recession Mitigation Task Group which has taken a cross-cutting approach to delivery of Council services to business and the community, with a programme of counter recessionary measures in partnership with other business support agencies. The focus for 2010/11 shifted to economic recovery measures.

4 Cheshire East's Strategic Objectives and Priorities

Thematic objectives

- 4.1 To develop an Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East, we need to step back and take a broad overview as to the key determinants of economic growth. The following **thematic** summary analysis has been undertaken in the development of the Crewe Vision by consultants SQW, but it would usefully apply to the whole of Cheshire East.
- 4.2 These strategic themes do not work in isolation. They are mutually dependent – no one theme can be successful without the others, but there are also inherent conflicts and contradictions.



A Knowledge economy and knowledgeable workforce

- 4.3 Our first objective is to ensure that Cheshire East maintains and enhances its role as a 'knowledge economy', through innovation in its businesses and skills development in its workforce. To achieve this objective, our main priorities will include:
- promote economic diversification across a range of business sectors, with a focus on future growth sectors.
 - retain and grow existing businesses already in the area, including those in the advanced manufacturing sector.
 - stimulate the formation of new businesses and support for existing small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs).
 - attract new investment in growth sectors, including building upon innovation in the activities of existing businesses.
 - engage employers to develop their leadership and management skills and increase their commitment to raising the skills of their workforce.
 - increase the resilience of the local economy by developing stronger links between economic priorities and further/higher education and by ensuring that businesses have easy access to effective business support and high quality skills provision.
 - improve graduate retention in the area through enhanced links with universities and employers, and addressing the needs and aspirations of graduates in terms of housing and other quality of life issues.
 - provide employment opportunities for local people and adopt good employment and skills practices.
 - make young people and adults work ready, addressing employability skills.
 - improve the coordination, quality of, and access to employment and skills activities in the sub-region.

Connections and linkages

- 4.4 Our second objective is to provide a better connected economy, through enhancing our existing transport connections to other areas, making the most of strategic location and assets.
- 4.5 At the same time, moving to a low carbon economy means we need to give people more choices about how, when and where they travel. Enhanced digital connectivity can reduce the need to travel, improve access to services (particularly in rural areas), and improve business productivity.
- 4.6 To achieve this objective, our main priorities include:
- actively seek and promote opportunities to implement next generation broadband speeds across Cheshire East.
 - improve public transport and locate jobs closer to homes in order to reduce carbon emissions, although it is recognised that there are significant challenges due to the rural nature of much of the Borough. Promoting sustainable access to, and between, our visitor attractions should also be considered.
 - prioritised improvement of all railway stations, services and infrastructure and development of improved transport links and integration with the cities of Manchester and Liverpool.

Quality image, perception and leadership

- 4.7 Our third objective is to actively raise the profile of Cheshire East and 'sell' the undoubted assets and opportunities of the area, particularly to external investors, influencers, decision-makers and visitors. To achieve this objective, our main priorities include:
- raise the ambition and aspirations of local people who live or work in Cheshire East.
 - highlight our heritage as an asset that can stimulate future economic growth.
 - capture the drive of the leaders across

our communities - across all sectors - to promote the area to people outside the area, changing their perceptions of it as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

- ensure that the 'Cheshire East' products, such as its commercial sites, transport infrastructure and visitor attractions, are developed with a view to improving external perceptions, attracting new investors and visitor spend, which will benefit the local workforce and businesses.

Unlocking development opportunities

4.8 Our fourth objective is to facilitate economic growth through progressing schemes that will create jobs and improve the attractiveness of the area as a place to invest, live and visit. To achieve this objective, our main priorities include:

- stimulate regeneration in our town centres, recognising their retail, leisure and employment role, both in terms of economic development and cohesive communities.
- promote high quality development to enhance the attractiveness of the area.
- actively work to bring forward and promote the availability of strategic employment sites that are commercially attractive to investors, developers and occupiers.
- support development of smaller employment sites in appropriate locations.
- challenge loss of existing employment sites for other uses through the planning process.
- ensure availability of a range of workspace for start-up and micro businesses that meets their needs in terms of location, cost, quality and flexibility.

Liveability, local transport and aspiration

4.9 Our fifth objective is to enable a first-class quality of life for all our communities. Confidence in an area makes a huge

difference as both workers and businesses, particularly in the knowledge economy, look for environments that can offer a good quality of life. We need to ensure that Cheshire East will be known as a great place to live and work, with vibrant towns and villages, balanced, inclusive and sustainable communities, and enviable cultural, recreational and environmental assets.

4.10 To achieve this objective, our main priorities include:

- inspire young people, raising their expectations and ambitions
- tackle localised deprivation.
- improve areas of poor educational attainment.
- reduce congestion and improving transport links between the towns in Cheshire East and rural settlements
- build on the educational assets of the area, including most of our schools and FE Colleges, and sharing good practice within Cheshire East.
- build on the individual cultural, heritage and wider assets of all our towns that make the area an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- respond to the challenge of climate change, through mitigation and adaptation, but also seizing the economic opportunities that arise from it.
- ensure an appropriate range and mix of housing is available to meet the needs of different parts of the existing and future labour market, whilst making sure our communities are sustainable and cohesive.

Delivery of Priorities

4.11 The above priorities need to be translated into specific delivery/action plans and frameworks/actions which can be implemented. How these actions are prioritised into short, medium and long term will depend on the level of resources available, the scope of the interventions

and resourcing of the sub regional LEP, and the evolution of other partnership working in the context of the wider strategic and local changes to the planning and delivery of economic development initiatives.

4.12 Delivery of spatial priorities are identified below, but a key thematic priority is the development of a draft Business Engagement Framework for Cheshire East which details the Council's approach to supporting businesses through:

- Targeted business engagement, for example through a key account management approach of those businesses that are of most strategic importance or the greatest capacity to grow.
- Pro-active support, e.g. specific events and initiatives.
- Responsive services.

Spatial priorities

4.13 Reflecting an ambition to start delivering against local economic priorities, Cheshire East Council and our partners have already commenced the development of key plans for three spatial priorities: Crewe, Macclesfield and our market towns.

4.14 This approach will work in an integrated way with our thematic objectives and priorities, reflecting local assets and opportunities. In particular, consideration will be given to the role that Cheshire East Council and other public bodies can play in promoting economic growth, through use of their own landholdings.

4.15 In adopting this approach, we need to demonstrate the development of appropriate relationships on cross-border issues, particularly within the context of other towns in the sub-region, but also in relation to the economies of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, North Staffordshire, Shropshire and North Derbyshire.

a) Crewe

4.16 Crewe and its immediate hinterland of South Cheshire represent a nationally

significant growth opportunity, in its role as a strategic gateway to the rest of the North West and to North Wales. The Crewe Vision strategic framework and priorities had been finalised and endorsed by a wide range of public and private sector partners and the "All Change for Crewe" delivery plan sets out ambitious plans for Crewe's growth, seeking to make it a nationally significant economic centre by 2031. This:

- identifies the role that the town should play in delivering economic growth for the local, sub-regional and regional economies.
- sets out its own strategic framework and key actions in the short, medium and long-term as to how economic growth – and specifically population, jobs and GVA growth – will be delivered over the next 20 years.

4.17 The key objective is for Crewe to significantly increase its economic productivity. To realise this will require a more highly skilled workforce, an entrepreneurial business community and an improved infrastructure to underpin them. Most critically, it will need to be the focus for nationally significant levels of growth, building on its key assets including:

- its strategic rail and road connections.
- its advanced engineering/manufacturing skills base.
- its scope for growth in terms of development land.

4.18 Endorsement has been given to the development of a Partnership Board which will be tasked with providing additional private sector stimulus and leadership to the regeneration of Crewe and the delivery of the key priorities and projects identified in All Change for Crewe. However given the considerable uncertainties that exist around public sector finances, changes to partnership working at the sub regional level, and the private sector recovery, the Action Plans will need to adapt and evolve. In addition they will need to feed directly into the emerging sub-regional priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnership for Cheshire & Warrington.

b) Macclesfield

- 4.19 As the main town in North East Cheshire, its economy is closely intertwined with that of South Manchester. However, its growth – and that of its neighbouring towns - has slowed and is tightly constrained by the Green Belt.
- 4.20 Our objective is that Macclesfield and its hinterland sustain their current position as one of the most successful parts of the regional economy. Through the development of high quality public transport links it will expand its role as part of the Manchester City Region by improving accessibility to jobs and homes.
- 4.21 An Economic Masterplan for Macclesfield was adopted by the Council in December 2010, which sets out to identify the role of the town within a regional, sub-regional and local context. In particular it sets out two Action Plans covering the Town Centre, and the South Macclesfield Development Area. These will:
- help inform the development of the town centre, including revisions to the proposed Wilson Bowden scheme. Equally, the Masterplan identifies a need to improve the quality of the town centre environment, and a need to more effectively promote the town.
 - identify the planning, funding and delivery routes to implementing development options for the South Macclesfield Development Area, as well as scoping other opportunities for physical development and economic development initiatives in the town that can stimulate economic growth.
- 4.22 An 'Economic Forum' for the town is proposed as a means of bringing together local partners to help to deliver the aspirations and actions of the Masterplan. It is also critical that the Masterplan informs LEP priorities, which may open up other funding opportunities.

c) Sustainable Towns and Rural Areas

- 4.23 Cheshire East's smaller towns and communities play an important role in the

local economy as employment locations, as visitor attractors and as local service centres. Whilst individually, they lack the scale and economic strength to have a major impact at the regional level, through integrated economic development with larger towns as well as their rural hinterland, there is the potential to build on common strengths and their individuality to stimulate economic growth, and overcome disadvantage for the benefit of Cheshire East and the wider area. The hierarchy of towns and service centres will be defined in the LDF Core Strategy.

- 4.24 Many of our smaller towns and their rural hinterlands enjoy a relatively vibrant economy built upon distinctive local assets. But their viability continues to be threatened by poorly integrated development, lack of affordable housing, increasing levels of out-commuting and relatively poor access to amenities and services.
- 4.25 Cheshire East Council and its partners in the market towns have developed a 'Sustainable Towns Framework' which aims to be a catalyst in promoting renewed sustainable economic growth in these towns. The emphasis, however, is less on the Framework and more on the underpinning Issues and Action Plans that are being developed for each of the 14 towns. Part of the initial focus has been on establishing a robust evidence base, utilising local knowledge and through benchmarking all of the towns so that we have comparable data and evidence to allow us to prioritise action and measure progress on initiatives. Local Partnerships are thriving in many of our towns and larger villages and, over recent years, have done much in developing plans and delivering projects with tangible benefits. We aim to build upon these partnerships and their capacity, with Cheshire East Council as a facilitator where appropriate. This approach represents 'localism' in action, and the drive and knowledge of those working for our towns will need to be harnessed and supported to make the most of limited resources and best practice in driving forward coordinated initiatives.
- 4.26 There is no presumption in this strategy that any of our smaller towns should just become 'dormitory towns', and further consideration of their role will be given in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Annex 1: Cheshire East Economic SWOT Summary

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong GVA and employment growth in Crewe & Nantwich area • High productivity in Macclesfield area • Sectoral strengths: Pharmaceuticals (AstraZeneca), Motor Vehicles (Bentley), Computing Services, Financial Services, Logistics • Expertise in advanced engineering • Major employment sites: Alderley Park, Basford • Local residents very well-qualified (particularly in Macclesfield area) and skills gaps less prevalent in CE than elsewhere • Local colleges (Macclesfield, Reaseheath, South Cheshire) and MMU, and proximity of other institutions (Manchester universities and Keele) • Level of entrepreneurship: high business birth rates and densities in CE generally and Macclesfield area in particular. • High quality of life, particularly in Congleton and Macclesfield area • A strong visitor economy, in terms of brand and attractions that include: Tatton Park, Peak District, Weaver Valley, gardens, Jodrell Bank, canals • Transport links: Crewe Station, M6/M56 motorways, Manchester Airport • Strong environmental credentials e.g. Crewe Business Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of jobs in Congleton area • Decline in manufacturing base and major redundancies (AZ, Bentley, Bombardier) • Pockets of deprivation and worklessness, particularly in Crewe (but also Congleton, Macclesfield and Handforth) • Qualification levels relatively low in Crewe & Nantwich area • Negative image of Crewe and lack of quality housing (deters investors, businesses and visitors) • Business birth rates and densities below regional average in Crewe & Nantwich area • Lack of cultural facilities particularly compared to Manchester • Housing relatively unaffordable, particularly in Congleton and Macclesfield area • Housing and services relatively inaccessible in some (generally more rural) neighbourhoods • CO₂ emissions per head are high in Congleton and Macclesfield area • Availability/quality of employment land in Congleton and Macclesfield area • Road and broadband infrastructure in need of improvement, and public transport provision is limited in some parts of the authority
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth in South Manchester and potential of Media City • Strong GVA growth expected in Communications, Pharmaceuticals, Health/ Social Work and Banking & Finance • Growth potential of home based/micro businesses and contribution to emissions reduction • Growth potential of visitor economy • Contribution of the voluntary sector, including social enterprises, to economic development • Relocation of AstraZeneca's Charnwood operations to Macclesfield area • Regeneration of Crewe and Macclesfield, particularly Basford, Crewe Station, University Quadrant and town centres • Rural economic growth – diversification opportunities. • Innovation/ collaboration between businesses, FE/HE institutions, Jodrell Bank • Further potential of Middlewich, Sandbach & Crewe as sites for industrial and distribution sector activity • Development of green economy and green technology (and use of advanced engineering skills in renewable energy schemes) • Manchester Airport is a global gateway for the area and is vital to the growth of the knowledge economy, attracting investors and visitors. Supply chains / support for globally connected companies could be a growth opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow economic recovery or another downturn • Continued downsizing of major high value-added sectors • Future growth being over-reliant on low-value added sectors (e.g. retail) • Continued weak GVA growth of Stoke acting as brake on SE Cheshire economy • Growth constrained by capacity (supply of adequate commercial land/premises and supply of a range of housing) • Increasing pressure on transport network because of lack of recent investment and trend towards greater car usage • Youth unemployment and NEET rates remain high and more young people become economically and socially disengaged • Likely constraints on public sector funding for regeneration of Crewe • Climate change and energy costs • Changes to farming subsidies

Annex 2

Local Economic Assessment for Cheshire East

Headline findings

May 2011

Business & Enterprise

- The diversity and historical development of the economy needs to be recognised in strategy and policy development, building on traditional strengths where relevant and focusing on how these can be adapted to the future economic needs of the area; different approaches are required for different parts of the Borough, such as delivering the spatial priorities or Crewe and Macclesfield.
- Increasing global competition will increase the potential for international companies to outsource jobs and/or shift production to lower cost locations. This suggests Cheshire East needs to further enhance the sectors in which it holds a comparative advantage and diversify into new high value added growth sectors.
- Cheshire East's businesses need to be in a position to embrace and exploit opportunities presented by new technology – high speed broadband is likely to have the most impact.
- The former Borough of Macclesfield is an important economic driver for the south Manchester area, with a high level of employment in knowledge industries. To avoid over-dependence on a few larger businesses there is a need to encourage a more diverse economy/higher value jobs, including creative, digital and IT industries to take advantage of a location close to MediaCityUK in Salford Quays.
- Crewe has a low skilled workforce in comparison to other parts of Cheshire East, and increasing school attainment levels and aligning further and higher education provision to the needs of growth sectors is central to raising the aspirations of the area and attracting knowledge based industries. However to reposition the town as a focus for development and growth also needs a major uplift in the profile and image of the area and development of key sites. The 'All Change for Crewe' initiative will address these issues.
- Congleton has witnessed a marked reduction in manufacturing employment but it is still over-represented compared

to the UK average. However banking, finance and insurance and other knowledge sector employment is under represented, hence the significant commuter flows to the Macclesfield area. How to foster a more sustainable local economy is a major issue for the town. Business birth rates and stock suggest an entrepreneurial culture and supporting this could be key to sustainable growth.

- There is a need to support the agriculture sector and rural enterprises and communities. Farm diversification is one of the key options available to help sustain farm enterprise and business activity, making rural areas more sustainable. There is a need to encourage farm businesses to develop and grow a secondary income stream by diversifying into a range of activities eg retailing and manufacturing, tourism, environmental technologies and renewable energy. The provision of superfast broadband would make them more attractive for business start-ups and home working opportunities.



- The Business Needs Survey of employers suggested 33% of businesses reported an increase in turnover in the last 12 months, against 26% who reported a decrease. Over the next 12 months, a roughly equal balance of businesses expect the business climate to improve (27%)/get worse (26%).
- Information and Communications is the most optimistic sector about business prospects over the next 12 months, followed by the Accommodation & Food Services activities sector. Construction is the most pessimistic sector.
- Barriers to growth exist for all but a minority of businesses – the most frequently mentioned were tax rates, transport costs and over-regulation/red/tape.

Economic Geography

- Shopping and leisure patterns suggest a need to bolster town centre investment particularly in Crewe and Macclesfield to claw back leakage of expenditure to other areas.
- As well as Manchester Metropolitan University and successful local FE Colleges, Manchester, Keele and Chester universities represent a strong opportunity for Cheshire East's businesses and the public sector organisations to develop greater links with the HE sector, share knowledge and resources, and encourage graduate retention.
- Strategies pursuing a growth agenda in the Crewe area may have repercussions for urban regeneration efforts in North Staffordshire and rural regeneration in North Shropshire.



Environmental Sustainability

- Cheshire East's natural environment is both an asset and a constraint to future economic growth, suggesting a need to maintain a balance between protecting the environment and promoting economic development, recognising that parts of the area need growth to support viable communities and regenerate areas in decline.
- The co-location of new employment and housing is vital to minimise the need to travel. Digital connectivity also has the potential to contribute to low carbon economic growth by encouraging home working and reducing traffic movements.
- Cheshire East Council has developed a Local Air Quality Strategy which intends to outline high level, broad commitments across the Council aimed at improving Air Quality. The Strategy is aligned to the Local Transport Plan and will help to ensure that complimentary initiatives identified with the Air Quality Action Plan, Climate Change Action Plan and Local Transport Plan are delivered in a coordinated way.
- Cooperation with partners in adjacent authorities is needed on carbon management, especially in relation to climate change adaptation to mitigate the risks to communities and businesses of changing weather patterns.
- The pressure from demand for resources will create major new opportunities for growth. In energy, the need to diversify away from fossil fuels will continue, creating new opportunities for renewables and micro generation. The first big wave of electric vehicles is upon us as government looks to cut emissions and make public and private transport greener and cleaner.
- Many local firms and employees have advanced engineering skills which will be valuable in developing renewable energy schemes and other green technology. Some new employment land developments also present an opportunity for creating areas of expertise in green technology.

- Realising renewable energy installations through location on strategic sites could contribute to a greater awareness and therefore acceptance of the potential for renewable energy technologies.
- The Business Needs Survey showed a significant proportion of businesses across Cheshire & Warrington (41%) had already taken action to reduce CO2 emissions, and significant proportions had acted on recycling, energy saving, waste reduction and the development of environmentally friendly products.

People and Communities

- People in Cheshire East generally have high earnings and qualification levels; education standards are higher and unemployment and other measures of deprivation are lower than national levels. However the demographics of the area are changing with an ageing population and a working age population that is decreasing in absolute terms. The Borough must attract the most highly qualified and skilled young people to retain a competitive local economy and continue to generate business growth opportunities.
- An ageing population will have serious implications for the provision of public services. However in terms of growth opportunities this group will look for new healthcare products - eg diagnostics to predict and prevent illness, new financial products to access equity and cash more easily for later life, and more opportunities for travel and tourism.
- Future job growth will be largely generated by those sectors that demand the highest skill requirements. This will disadvantage areas where there are significant levels of deprivation such as Crewe, where lower-skilled occupations are currently sought (issues of low ambition and attainment) - however, the decline of traditional industries has resulted in a reduction in the number of these employment opportunities. This emphasises the need to provide a step change in the educational aspirations of residents in these areas, together with the improvements to the infrastructure

and physical environment necessary to attract higher skilled employers.

- The Business Needs Survey suggested that within Cheshire East the size of employer's workforces are more likely to have contracted (19%) than grown (16%) over the past 12 months. The proportion expecting vacancies over the next 12 months is also lower than the proportion that have recruited in the past 12 months. This suggests growth in employment levels over the next 12 months looks unlikely.
- Two thirds of employers report skill needs or gaps within their workforces - the proportion increases with larger employers, and is significantly higher in the Information and Communication Sector. Sales & Marketing is the most frequently mentioned skill area needing improvement.
- Businesses in Cheshire East are less likely than those in Warrington and Cheshire West & Chester to have a training plan or budget perhaps reflecting the generally smaller size of businesses in the area. As a rule the propensity to undertake training increases with the size of employer, with multi site employers, and with exporters.
- Just 4% of employers in Cheshire East employ migrant workers. This increases significantly with the size of employer and within the Accommodation and Food Service sector. Nearly half of those employing migrant workers employ people from Poland.

Regeneration

- Crewe has major opportunities to build on its transport connectivity, considerable development land opportunities and proximity to some of the most affluent areas of the region. Macclesfield is also the subject of some potential major regeneration schemes. Both town centres require investment to improve their image and vitality, at a time of reducing public expenditure.
- New or emerging sites, such as Basford, may face a challenge in attracting businesses and creating jobs, because of competition from existing sites (and indeed from each

other). Some regeneration projects may not now be realised, while others may proceed, but not on the scale originally envisaged. The Infrastructure Plan being prepared to support the LDF will need to consider how the Community Infrastructure Levy can be used to help facilitate development.

- As for the regeneration of smaller towns and rural areas, key opportunities are to build on local partnership activity and deliver growth programmes that focus on providing sustainable communities and a sense of place.



- The development of universal next generation broadband infrastructure is critical to the economic growth potential of the area and may need complementary action with neighbouring authorities and partner organisations. Levels of internet and broadband access are high across businesses of all sizes but those using superfast broadband are in a minority (18%).
- While recognising its contribution to the wider economy, the expansion of the Airport will require a balance to be struck between the wider economic benefits and the ongoing mitigation of its local environmental impacts.



- Only 14% of Cheshire East businesses reported that their business is likely to relocate in the next five years. Smaller firms are more likely to consider relocation, and businesses in the Information and Communications sector are most confident about the likelihood of relocation.
- The overall attractiveness of the area, followed by access to transport links, are seen by businesses as the main advantages in operating within Cheshire East. Key disadvantages are barriers to access – parking and congestion difficulties – although at least half of businesses cannot think of any disadvantages to their location.

Transport and connectivity

- There is a need to tackle the high number of commuter trips by encouraging modal switch where possible and by locating new employment sites in locations accessible by non car means, together with improving facilities for cycling and walking.

Annex 3

Cheshire East Council Economic Development Strategy

Summary of Delivery Plan activity 2011-12

This document is intended as a summary of how Cheshire East Council's new Economic Development Strategy will be implemented in 2011-12. This will be undertaken principally by the Council's Economic Development team and wider Regeneration Service, but will critically require the support and collaboration of other Council services, and our partners in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors.

An overarching requirement is for this delivery plan to be used by the new Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership to inform its plans, which will – in turn – be supported by Cheshire East Council.

Spatial Priorities

As identified in the Economic Development Strategy, our principal focus is in three spatial priorities relating to Crewe, Macclesfield and our Sustainable Towns programme supporting our other market towns and their rural hinterland. Headline activity in 2011-12 includes:

Crewe: Build upon our recent work on the 'All Change for Crewe' programme, by increasing focus on key economic regeneration projects that include Crewe Green Link Road, Basford, Rail Gateway and town centre redevelopment. Also giving more attention to shorter-term projects and broadening ownership of the programme to incorporate initiatives that play a key part of enhancing the town's economy and community. To facilitate this, plans are underway to form a Partnership Board for Crewe, which will be supported by our recently appointed Delivery Executive.

Macclesfield: Whilst developing an Economic Masterplan for the town centre and South Macclesfield Development Area (SMDA) in 2010, there was an increased level of interest and participation in key underpinning initiatives, such as developing a new brand

identity and local events, such as the Barnaby Festival and Treacle Market. To capture this capacity, an Economic Forum has recently been established which will be developed further during 2011-12 to instill ownership of the Masterplan implementation, with CEC's close involvement. Key projects include developing proposals with development partner Wilson Bowden on a revised town centre scheme, and developing a delivery strategy for SMDA.

Sustainable Towns: Over 2011-12, CEC and representatives from each of the 14 Sustainable Towns will build on the pilot approach developed with Congleton, to produce Issues and Actions logs, identifying the key economic priorities for the town and how these can be supported on a collaborative basis. Reflecting the fact that each town is unique in terms of its own structures, capacity and ambition, the Sustainable Towns Network will collaborate to share best practice with the intention of increasing the economic performance of our market towns and their rural hinterland, for example through tailored training sessions on issues such as external funding and bid writing. Within some of these towns such as Congleton and Wilmslow, there are major potential projects in train that relate to regeneration of their town centres.

Thematic Priorities

Our thematic priorities apply across all of the borough of Cheshire East. In 2011-12 these will include:

- Supporting the establishment of, and promoting the work of our new **Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership**, including development of its work programme and maximising new opportunities emerging from the coalition Government in terms of their benefits for our economy.
- Support our existing businesses, foster new business start-ups and stimulate new inward investment through the Implementation of our **Business Engagement Framework** which sets out our approach in terms of targeted business engagement, pro-active support for businesses and responsive business services.
- Build up our capacity in terms of

investment promotion – develop stronger investment products and propositions and fit-for-purpose strategies for raising awareness of these right through from the local to the international level.

- Promoting the role of our **town centres**, through tailored approaches that reflect local needs and opportunities that recognise the key role that they have in terms of a focus for local economic and community activity.
- Supporting the formulation of the **Local Development Framework**, by identifying and promoting opportunities which enhance economic prosperity.
- Working collaboratively to identify how Cheshire East Council's **assets** can contribute to shared economic development and regeneration priorities, including exploration of a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV).
- Rolling out delivery plans related to other strategies that have a direct contribution to the economy of our borough, including the **Local Transport Plan** and **Visitor Economy Strategy**.
- Collaborating to promote the roll-out of **Superfast Broadband** (SFB) across all our communities, and stimulating increased take-up to ensure our businesses are in a advantageous position to compete.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 6 June 2011

Report of: Strategic Director – Places

Subject/Title: Transformation of Highways Services

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rod Menlove / Cllr Jamie Macrae / Cllr Peter Mason

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the procurement process, and recommends a decision to appoint a Highways Services Contractor to start on 6th October 2011. It sets out rationale for change as well as the key provisions of the new Highways Services Contract.
- 1.2 The procurement of the Highways Services Contract is a key work stream within the Total Transport Transformation Programme, which is one of six major transformation projects supported by the Council.
- 1.3 Our roads are a corporate priority. User demand combined with the effects of increasing periods of prolonged severe weather conditions have accelerated deterioration such that existing funding is unable to maintain the steady state of our highway network. Consultation has also confirmed that most stakeholders recognise that the highway network should be a priority for the Council.
- 1.4 The new arrangement will reduce back-office costs and generate efficiencies of more than £1 million per annum and will enable the Council to maximise the output from its existing budgets, ensuring that any future decline is reduced significantly.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 To approve the evaluation process used to determine the Preferred Bidder for the Highway Services Contract.
- 2.2 To award Preferred Bidder to the company which received the highest score, in accordance with the tender evaluation process, and enter into the Highways Services Contract.
- 2.3 To delegate final contract negotiations with the preferred bidder to the Borough Solicitor, Borough Treasurer and Strategic Director, Places in consultation with Members of the Highways Sub-Committee.

- 2.4 To note that the award of the Highways Services Contract will trigger the automatic application of the TUPE Regulations which will effect a transfer of a number of existing Council Highways Service staff and BAM Nuttall term maintenance operatives currently providing highway services to the Council, to the Preferred Bidder.
- 2.5 To receive the detailed recommendation on the day of the meeting (6th June 2011), specifying the Bidder with the highest score and therefore the successful Preferred Bidder.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Final Tenders from Bidders have now been fully evaluated by the Council and its advisers in accordance with the timetable for the procurement.
- 3.2 The Council needs to have a new Contractor in place by 6th October 2011 (when the present contract with BAM Nuttall comes to an end) in order to be able to continue the delivery of the Highways Services.
- 3.3 The final recommendation cannot be provided until the day of the meeting (6th June 2011), as the evaluation process will be ongoing until that date. In order to meet the programme identified above and maximise the time for mobilisation the timetable for evaluation runs until 3rd June.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards are affected by the proposal.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All Ward Members are affected by the proposal.

6.0 Policy Implications including – Carbon Reduction

- 6.1 The contract requires that the Preferred Bidder carries out the Services in a manner that achieves greater value for money for Council, year on year, by reducing costs and delivering the Services more efficiently whilst seeking to maximise the achievement of the our Strategic Objectives throughout the contract period. Our Strategic Objectives include “limiting carbon emissions”, which ensures that the Preferred Bidder will be required to demonstrate that they are achieving this. Additionally, in support of this, the Preferred Bidder must also maximise the “achievement of the objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan”. The local Transport Plan includes Priority Policies that work towards carbon reduction, through for example, minimising the future need to travel and through encouraging technological development in transport services in partnership with operators.
- 6.2 The Preferred Bidder has put forward proposals to reduce emissions through use of carbon efficient vehicles and reducing fuel use through route

optimisation. Additionally, they have proposed the use of energy saving technology for street lighting and energy saving tools and techniques for all of their operational activities.

- 6.3 The Preferred Bidder will be required to measure performance in this area with challenging targets established for energy reduction.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 The services which are included within the scope of works for the Highways Services Contract as core services are set out in Appendix 1 and have a current annual value of around £15 million (capital and revenue), which the Council will commit to the new arrangement (subject to the reductions outlined below) during the contract period.
- 7.2 The new contract will deliver savings in excess of £7 million over the contract period when compared to existing Highway Service costs. This is achieved by a stepped budget reduction of £1million; in year 1 of the contract, combined with a further year on year reduction of 3% per annum associated with innovation and efficiency gains.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 Having taken the appropriate steps to terminate the existing term maintenance contract with BAM Nuttall with effect from 6th October 2011, the Council needs to enter into the Highways Services Contract in order to ensure continuity in the provision of highways services, including the discharge of the Council's statutory obligations referred to below.
- 8.2 The Council, as Highway Authority for the Cheshire East area, has numerous powers and duties under the Highways Act 1980 to carry out maintenance, improvement and repair work on the highway network. None of the duties discharged by the provider on behalf of the Council relieves the Council of those powers and duties. However, the Council is likely to have potential remedies against the Preferred Bidder in respect of many of its obligations if breach of any of these obligations results from the non-performance by the Preferred Bidder under the Highways Services Contract.
- 8.3 The Highways Services Contract sets out very clearly the statutory obligations of the Council which are delegated to the Preferred Bidder and the protocol for the discharge of other statutory obligations of the Council.
- 8.4 Any claims against the Council as the Highway Authority, even if they relate to matters within the proposed contract, will still remain the ultimate responsibility of the Council.
- 8.5 The procurement is subject to the EU Procurement Regulations and, as such, could lead to the Council being challenged by a Bidder on the grounds that it has been conducted unlawfully or unfairly. External legal advisers (Bevan Brittan) have been engaged and have provided clear

advice on the procurement of the new arrangements using the competitive dialogue procedure with a view to minimising the potential risk of procurement challenge. Whilst the risk of a procurement challenge can never be ruled out, it can be said that the Council has acted throughout the procurement process in a manner designed to minimise that risk.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 The potential risks to the Council of a procurement challenge are dealt with in paragraph 8.5 above.

9.2 The Council's objectives for the present procurement are to achieve greater value for money from the provision of its highways services, improving the customer perception of highways services and modernising the provision of the service to meet the flexibility of operational needs). The Council is happy that having been through numerous meetings with Bidders and having refined their proposals, the proposal put forward by the Preferred Bidder will enable the Council to best meet its objectives for this procurement. However, as with any contractual arrangement, the Council will need to continue to work with the Preferred Bidder to ensure the Highways Services Contract delivers the intended objectives.

9.3 The Highways Services Contract is based on the Preferred Bidder taking the lead in developing a revolving Three Year Plan and Annual Plan to meet the asset management needs of the highways network but also the Council's highways policy objectives. The Council has to sign off the Annual Plan via a Strategic Board comprising senior representatives of the Council and Preferred Bidder. This ensures that the Annual Plan reflects the wider social need of Cheshire East as well as the strict asset management needs of the highways network. The Preferred Bidder takes the primary risk of delivery of each Annual Plan within the agreed target cost. The successful outcome of the Contract will depend on the parties working together as a genuine partnership focused on the needs of Cheshire East ratepayers. Therefore, the on-going quality and effectiveness of the relationship between the Council and Preferred Bidder will be at the heart of the effectiveness of the Contract.

10.0 Background and Options

Highway Network & Existing Arrangements

10.1 The Adopted Highway is the Council's largest asset and is maintained to a safe standard through the identification of works required and the implementation of these. The Council's highway network has a replacement value of £2.2bn with a current annual budget provision of around £15 million (revenue and capital) spent annually on its maintenance and improvement.

10.2 Cheshire County Council appointed Edmund Nuttall Limited (now BAM Nuttall Limited) as Highways Term Maintenance Contractor in 2004. The contract will end on 5th October 2011. An extension of the current contract (for another year, which would have represented the maximum extension to the original term) was considered at the commencement of the procurement process. However, there are significant drivers to securing improvements in service delivery that it was considered could not be achieved under the current service delivery model. They are:

- the present and future projected reductions in the capital funding allocation;
- the major backlog of works necessary to stop the deterioration, and achieve the restoration, of the highway network;
- the priority our communities have given to highways when consulted;
- the important effects of the highway service on customer perception; and
- the need to direct as much resource as possible into front-line delivery and investment into the highway network.

The New Contract

10.3 An Options Appraisal was carried out in the first half of 2010, prior to the current procurement process being started. The result of the Options Appraisal recommended that the Council procured an integrated service for highways. This would result in some Council staff, along with many of the existing contractor's staff transferring to a new contractor in October 2011.

10.4 The new contract covers highways management, design and maintenance services including street lighting. Verge maintenance and development management are currently excluded from the scope (see Appendix 1 for full schedule).

10.5 The term of the Contract is 5 years with the opportunity to extend for a further 2 years (depending on performance and at the Council's ultimate discretion).

Member Engagement

10.6 At a very early stage in the procurement process, the Procurement Team took the advice of the Scrutiny Panel with respect to increased Member involvement. This was addressed by the creation of the Overview Group and on-going involvement of the Transformation of Highways Sub-Committee. A series of meetings have been held with the two groups and the programme was amended to ensure the Overview Group and Sub-Committee's timely involvement.

10.7 The groups inputted into the performance framework and the criteria for evaluating the dialogue sessions and Final Tender stages.

- 10.8 The Bidders also came and presented to the Highways Sub Committee members on how they would meet the objectives of the Council. The Members were able to stress those objectives that they considered a priority for the Council.
- 10.9 The Procurement Team also attended the Environment and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on the 8th February and discussed progress made and took feedback on the Performance Indicators.
- 10.10 In addition, two Member presentations have been held in which all Members were invited. The purpose was to give a comprehensive review of the status of the procurement and to allow Members the opportunity to raise questions on the process. These took place on the 29th July 2010 and 8th April 2011.

Payment and Performance Framework

- 10.11 In each Financial Year, the Council and Preferred Bidder agree annual target costs (in respect of capital and revenue expenditure respectively) based on the estimated cost of providing the relevant services. Payment is on an open book basis, which means the Council gets to see exactly what is spent in relation to different elements of the highways services. Over the life of the contract, this will allow potential savings to be identified and secured. Once the actual costs of providing services become clear, the process of agreeing target costs should become much easier. This approach also allows changing budgets to be managed without having to pay compensation to the Preferred Bidder. It means that the Council will pay the actual cost plus a fee for services.
- 10.12 The Preferred Bidder's performance is measured against the performance indicators that are included in the Highways Services Contract. Failure to achieve stated levels of Performance will put at risk the Preferred Bidder's entitlement to the whole of its profit element included in its "Fee", will prevent any sharing in any savings below a target cost and will prevent entitlement to extensions to the contract period.
- 10.13 The set of indicators link to the objectives of the Highways Services Contract and this procurement to ensure that those issues of most concern to the Council are monitored. The indicators can be changed over time to reflect changing priorities.
- 10.14 At an early stage in the procurement process the Scrutiny Working Group identified three key priorities for the new highways service: Addressing Localism; Innovation and Efficiency; and Staff Engagement.

Key Priorities - Addressing Localism

- 10.15 This is a key objective of the Council and considerable focus has been given to ensuring that the Preferred Bidder's solutions address localism. Examples of themes and solutions provided by the bidders include:

- a strong focus on the use of locally-based area stewards drawn from existing workforce and up-skilled; where possible area stewards will live local to “their patch” and will be an accessible single point of contact for all stakeholder issues;
- engagement of the existing Local Area Partnerships to form part of the decision making process;
- the potential to identify parts of the annual revenue budget to address local issues;
- improved collection and assessment of customer feedback through centralised management centre;
- local recruitment of subcontractors and suppliers to support the local economy; and
- the employment of local SMEs.

Key Priorities - Innovation & Efficiencies

10.16 A key focus under the Highways Services Contract is to improve the efficiency of the provision of highways services. The Preferred Bidder has produced a schedule of the potential efficiencies they could achieve and has confirmed that they will be able to make the required £1 million saving in the first year.

10.17 The Preferred Bidder operates similar contracts across the UK, providing an opportunity to bring their knowledge and innovation from elsewhere to benefit Cheshire East. Some examples of efficiencies and innovations that have been discussed are:

- the implementation of a “LEAN” review of highway services and processes (i.e. looking at all the steps in present processes and seeking to strip-out those that add no value to better meet intended outcomes at less cost);
- real time job allocation and feedback by hand-held computers;
- waste reduction through diverting waste from landfill;
- innovative waste reduction from gully cleansing by cleaning the “grey water” so as to allow it to be returned to the natural water system;
- drying out of solid waste and recycling;
- improved co-ordination of works, across Cheshire East;
- “Walk and Build” approach whereby simple works are designed on site rather than having to wait for a central design resource to provide the design input;
- Employee incentive schemes to develop ideas to improve the service;
- drainage:
 - combined jetting/ emptying;
 - needs-based cleansing;
- street lighting maintenance carried out on a needs based approach;
- quicker and more appropriate response to incidents through use of vehicle mounted cameras; and

- the ability to draw on experience elsewhere for innovation.

Key Priorities - Staff Engagement

- 10.18 A Staff Stakeholder Group was created in October 2010 to keep all Highways staff informed of the progress of the procurement process and also as an opportunity for representatives and union colleagues to air their issues and concerns on behalf of the wider staff.
- 10.19 The group consists of 15 dedicated and engaged representatives from across the service; including Union representatives and HR support. They attend the meetings and cascade information to the wider staff. Meetings have been held regularly throughout the tender process.
- 10.20 Key issues and concerns raised from these meetings have been:
- Pension issues – will the Preferred Bidder go into Local Government Pensions Scheme;
 - TUPE issues, when will information be released to staff;
 - depot strategy – ‘Where will I be based’;
 - programme – timeline of events; and
 - harmonisation issues;
- 10.21 As part of the detailed solutions stage in February 2011, the Staff Stakeholder Group visited each of the three bidders at their own sites on similar contracts. This was set up as an opportunity for the group to not only to meet the bid team and senior staff but to meet and talk to staff in similar roles that have transferred into the organisation.
- 10.22 These visits received very positive feedback from the group, highlighting the importance of being engaged with the bidders prior to transfer and generally left staff feeling that this could be a positive experience and could lead to more opportunities. In light of this success, a further meeting between the bidders and the stakeholder group was arranged for 4th May 2011. This was arranged as another opportunity with key members of each bid team to discuss concerns regarding the upcoming transfer. At this session it was agreed that the stakeholder group would continue to meet throughout the mobilisation period.
- 10.23 The first issue of the Highway Services Procurement Staff Newsletter was sent out in March 2011. Being aimed at transferring employees. It covers areas such as project timeline, update on progress and events, and frequently asked questions. It is a monthly newsletter; the second issue was released in April 2011. It will continue into the mobilisation process to keep staff informed of key issues.
- 10.24 Team talk is a weekly newsletter issued to all staff at Cheshire East Council. It gives staff an update regarding the different directorates of the council. We have submitted information to this newsletter on a regular basis to update all employees on the progress of the procurement process.

Final Tender Evaluation

10.25 Final Tender evaluation was completed in May 2011. The evaluation was conducted by a number of Cheshire East Council officers, each evaluating specific quality method statements and financial submissions received from the bidders. At the end of the evaluation process, consensus meetings were held to finalise the outcome.

10.26 The proportion of marks allocated for each area of the submission is as follows;

Final Tender Stage	Score
Approach to service delivery	50%
Financial	35%
Legal and Commercial	10%
Integrity and deliverability of proposals	5%

Mobilisation & Contract Commencement

10.27 The Preferred Bidder will start work on mobilisation at their own risk, in early June in order to maximise the mobilisation period. It can be expected that work done at risk will not include any capital investment and this is likely to commence in July when contracts have been finalised.

10.28 The Preferred Bidder has proposed a mobilisation team populated with staff dedicated to mobilisation activities combined with staff who will remain dedicated to the contract in key roles.

10.29 There are a number of key work streams that will be commenced during mobilisation, they include:

- Staff Engagement - Dealing with people issues, including one to one meetings, group presentations, defining roles in the new organisation, culture change management;
- Operational issues, plan and action the accommodation strategies including physical works, relocation of stock and equipment, installation of ICT lines and equipment;
- Prepare for winter service;
- Establish and engage supply chain partners; and
- Implement ICT strategy.

10.30 All mobilisation activities are programmed to achieve Contract commencement on the 6th October 2011, when all services will be fully operational.

11.0 Access to information.

11.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Kevin Melling

Designation: Highway Manager

Tel No: 01270 686 083

Email: Kevin.melling@Cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Scope of Works – Core Activities

Cheshire East Borough Council is seeking a contractor to assist it in the delivery of its Highway Services which include the following core activities.

Highways Services:

1. General Management including control centre, emergency and out of hours response, statutory notices, legal claims investigation and support etc.
2. Asset management including safety inspections, surveys and planning;
3. Civil and structural Engineering - routine and reactive maintenance (including carriageway, footway, structural repairs and surfacing); capital schemes.
4. Traffic signals, street lighting and signs - routine and reactive maintenance; capital schemes.
5. Winter service including fleet management and contract management of rock salt provision and related monitoring services contracts.
6. Professional services (traffic engineering, bridge management and design, road safety engineering, design and project management and contract management services).

The Preferred Bidder will be expected to work with the Council to improve and integrate the highways information management systems and other related ICT systems.

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	6 June 2011
Report of:	Borough Solicitor
Subject/Title:	Outside Organisations – Appointments 2011-2015
Portfolio Holder	Leader of the Council

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report gives details of the list of Category 1 outside organisations to which Cabinet is required to make appointments.
- 1.2 Cabinet is also invited to consider adopting a casual vacancies procedure to deal with vacancies which occur between appointments. The procedure is in line with the practice adopted when casual vacancies occur on Council Committees.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That
 - (a) appointments be made to the Category 1 list of organisations until such time as representation is reviewed following the elections of the new Council in 2015;
 - (b) appointments take immediate effect;
 - (c) notwithstanding (a) above, the Cabinet retains the right to review the representation on any outside organisation, at any time; and
 - (d) the casual vacancies procedure be adopted.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 It is important for the Council to appoint to outside organisations to ensure that it continues to represent the interests of both the Authority and the wider community.
- 3.2 The revision to the Casual Vacancies Procedure has been designed to give maximum efficiency when casual vacancies occur between appointments. The procedure is in line with the practice adopted when casual vacancies occur on Council Committees.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 None identified.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 None identified.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Whilst membership of outside bodies carries with it the potential for personal liability for elected Members undertaking such roles as ancillary to their status as a Councillor, particularly in respect of trusteeships, Cheshire East Borough Council has already resolved to put in place for elected Members the maximum indemnity which is allowed by law.

9.0 Risk Management

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to appoint Members to outside organisations could have a direct or indirect impact on the outside organisations.	The operation of a procedure for making timely appointments to outside organisations.
Cheshire East Council is unable to influence key stakeholders.	Operation of a satisfactory scheme of appointment to ensure Council representation.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 On 3 March 2009, Cabinet made appointments to the list of Category 1 outside organisations. Members were appointed to serve until the end of the Municipal Year 2011.

10.2 Since that time there have been a number of changes in representation, and some of the organisations themselves have either ceased to exist, or representation is no longer required.

10.3 For urgency reasons, appointments to the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority and the Cheshire Police Appointments

Committee were dealt with at Annual Council. These organisations are included on the schedule for completeness.

Group Whips have been consulted and nominations **will be submitted under separate cover/be tabled at the meeting.**

Cabinet is asked to consider the nominations and make appointments until such time as representation is reviewed following the elections of the new Council in 2015.

10.4 Political Proportionality

When making appointments to outside organisations, there is no requirement to adopt the rules of proportionality.

For information the political proportionality for Cheshire East Council, following the elections on 5 May 2011, has been established as follows, taking into account that there are currently 80 seats only with 2 vacancies on the Council –

Conservative	52 Council seats	65.00%
Liberal Democrats	4 seats	5.00%
Labour	14 seats	17.50%
Independents	<u>10 seats</u>	<u>12.50%</u>
	80 seats	100.00%

10.4 Term of Office

As noted above, appointments made in 2009 were for a term of office terminating in May 2011. As a general rule, the term of office should be commensurate with the requirements of the organisation to which a Member is appointed. However, continuity of representation can be important to outside organisations. If Members are appointed for a 12-month period only, any expertise and experience will be a loss to that organisation.

It is suggested that this round of appointments be made until such time as representation is reviewed following the elections of the new Council in 2015. This will avoid a hiatus when representation on outside bodies ceases between the elections and the first meeting of the new Cabinet. Any casual vacancies can be dealt with under the proposed Casual Vacancies Procedure.

10.5 Casual Vacancies Procedure

On 9 March 2010, the former Governance and Constitution Committee approved a Procedure for Dealing with Casual Vacancies in respect of the Category 2 outside organisations.

Cabinet may wish to adopt such a procedure for application to the Category 1 organisations.

When a casual vacancy occurs between appointments, it is for Cabinet, or the appropriate Portfolio Holder to approve replacements, giving the required notice under Access to Information Rules. This can cause unnecessary delays. The following procedure follows the practice adopted for dealing with casual vacancies on Council Committees and avoids the need to refer the matter formally to Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder each time a vacancy occurs.

- (i) When a place becomes vacant, the Democratic Services Manager, as the appropriate Officer, would be notified.
- (ii) The appropriate Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Group Whip(s) would be invited to nominate a replacement.
- (iii) The replacement Councillor would take up the vacancy; the outside organisation would be notified of the change; the outside bodies list would be updated on the website; and Cabinet would be notified, for information, at the next available meeting.
- (iv) In cases where a place is offered to a political group other than the ruling group, and that group is unable to make a nomination (or chooses not to appoint, for whatever reason), the Portfolio Holder will choose to offer the place to one of the other political groups or to retain it as a Conservative appointment.

Cabinet is asked to adopt the Casual Vacancies Procedure.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer. There are no specific background documents.

Name: Carol Jones
Designation: Democratic Services Officer
Tel No: 01270 686471
E-mail: carol.jones@cheshireeast.gov.uk

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	6 June 2011
Report of:	Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
Subject/Title:	Review of the Fostering Service
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report encloses the final report of the Task and Finish Group who conducted a Scrutiny Review of the Fostering Service.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report be received and the Children and Families Portfolio Holder undertake to come back to a future meeting of Cabinet with a formal response to each recommendation.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To progress the findings of the Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Group who reviewed the Fostering Services within Cheshire East.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 Not known at this stage

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Not known at this stage

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Not known at this stage

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 Not known at this stage

9.0 Background and Options

9.1 Following a previous Task and Finish Review which looked at Residential Provision in Cheshire East, a recommendation was made that –

“All Cared for Children should be placed within a family setting wherever possible and that sufficient resources are targeted at the fostering service to ensure sufficient capacity is available”

As a result, the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee at a mid-point meeting on the 16 November 2010 agreed that a review which looked in more detail at the resources and capacity of the fostering services would be appropriate. In a time of austerity and difficult decisions, the Committee felt it imperative that the Borough's most vulnerable are made a priority and that the services which support them are performing optimally. The Task and Finish Group, its Membership, Chairmanship and terms of reference were all agreed and ratified at the Committee meeting on 7 December 2010.

9.2 The final report of the Task and Finish Group is now attached for Cabinets consideration.

10.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Mark Grimshaw
Designation: Scrutiny Officer
Tel No: 01270 685680
Email: mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk

December 2010 – April 2011

Overview and Scrutiny Review

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

Fostering Services Review

For further information, please contact
Mark Grimshaw, Overview and Scrutiny
(01270) 685680
mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk

1.0 Foreword

Councillor D Flude – Chairman of the Task and Finish Group

- 1.1 Any child coming into the care system is obviously an undesirable outcome. Evidence from this and other reviews suggest the least worst result is that, where appropriate, a child be placed in a family environment – most notably in a foster placement. Considering this, this review has endeavoured to investigate whether all is being done to make sure that every Cheshire East cared for child has the opportunity to go to a Cheshire East foster placement.
- 1.2 From the onset of this review it became abundantly clear that we have some excellent staff doing some innovative work, particularly in relieving Cheshire East of some cumbersome legacy policies from Cheshire County Council which no longer are fit for purpose. However, with any service in transition there is going to be room for improvement. We hope that our recommendations can be taken on board to make these improvements, particularly around systems, processes and performance monitoring and of course, making our foster carers feel valued.
- 1.3 It must be noted that this has been a somewhat difficult review. It is a complex, multifaceted area and we only had some very short time scales for completion. With this in mind, some of the recommendations from this review suggest that further reviews 'branch off' in order to investigate important issues that this Group uncovered but did not have the time to pursue. Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to my fellow Councillors and the officers of the fostering service who often gave up their time at very short notice to make sure that this vital review was completed on time. A full list of those involved can be found in the main body of this report.
- 1.4 We commend the report to the Cabinet and request that it be given full and fair consideration.

2 Acknowledgements

- 2.1 The group members would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review. A full list of witnesses is given in the body of the report.
- 2.2 In particular, Members would like to thank Julie Lewis for the admirable way she guided the group through the review. Without her expertise the task would have been impossible.
- 2.4 The scrutiny support was provided by Mark Grimshaw from Overview and Scrutiny. Many thanks to Mark for his help in putting together the evidence and formatting the report.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 Following previous Task and Finish groups that had focused on cared for children, it had become increasingly clear that placing a vulnerable child in a family setting was the best outcome. This review set out to discover whether this was actually the case and whether all was being done to maximise the possibility of a cared for child having that opportunity.
- 3.2 Whilst the Group are now certainly sure of the former, it became apparent that there are some areas of improvement in terms of maximising the opportunity for a cared for child to have a stable Cheshire East foster placement. This is not to say that the Group did not find any examples of excellent practice. On the contrary, every officer and carer that the Group interviewed gave the overriding impression that they were doing everything they could to provide the best service possible for our cared for children. Having said this, as with all well performing services, there is always room for improvement and the Group feel that the recommendations outlined here will assist the service in making those improvements.
- 3.3 After designing a wide-ranging and comprehensive research programme the Group's findings fell naturally into the following main themes:
- Recruitment of foster carers – including improving choice by increasing the diversity and range of placements.
 - Retention of foster carers – including support, training and payment to improve placement stability
 - Educational attainment for those in foster care
 - The health and wellbeing of children and young people in foster care
 - The successful transition of young people leaving care
 - Systems and administrative processes with the Foster Care Service.
 - Link to early intervention agenda.
- 3.4 A number of these themes do not exist in isolation from each other. Indeed, they are all part of the same issue with a number of cross-cutting and recurrent themes. For instance, an increase in the amount of foster carers recruited would result in less pressure on existing carers, reducing placement disruption and improving retention. Similarly, the work of partners in health and education plays a big part in reducing disruption and resignations.
- 3.5 On the whole, the Group would like to draw attention to the importance of improving systems and administrative processes including a robust performance monitoring programme. This was highlighted during a site visit to Stoke-on-Trent City Council in which they attributed their rapid improvements to better systems, both with internal and external bodies.

- 3.6 Similarly, it is vital that Cheshire East do more to make our foster carers feel valued – from the moment they approach the service to when they eventually retire. They need to be seen as the professionals they are and treated as such.

The full list of recommendations is below:

Recommendations

- 3.7 That all staff involved in the Fostering & Adoption service be situated on a single site, where appropriate.
- 3.8 That in line with the corporate parenting strategy, all corporate policies must consider their impact on cared for children.
- 3.9 That consideration be given to a renewed focus on recruitment and assessment of mainstream foster carers in order to ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its sufficiency requirements.
- 3.10 That Cheshire East continues to provide support and resources for the recruitment of foster carers.
- 3.11 That the process from initial expression of interest to approval by panel be given a speedy, yet achievable timescale from which clear milestones are communicated to both prospective carers and staff throughout the development of the application.
- 3.12 That prospective carers moving through the application process be paired with an experienced carer as a mentor.
- 3.13 That an investigation be carried out to assess the viability of creating a budget to enable Cheshire East to pay commercial mortgage rates for home modifications in order to allow prospective carers take on their first or additional placements.
- 3.14 That the information from placement request forms in terms of demand in particular placements be made available to the recruitment officer to inform the marketing strategy.
- 3.15 That 'disruption meetings' along the lines of the Stoke-on-Trent model be held with foster placements that have been identified as being at risk of disruption.
- 3.16 That experienced foster carers be used in delivering training sessions or work shops to make best use of their professional skills.
- 3.17 That a budget be made available for the service to either purchase a small library of publications from the Safer Foster Carer Network for the use of foster carers or to explore web-based training opportunities.

- 3.18 That training be provided for the safe handling of Children in Care.
- 3.19 That financial support be maintained for carers attending training events.
- 3.20 That support and resources for the Cared For Children's Support Team be maintained.
- 3.21 That the possibility of making links with Cheshire East Leisure Facilities under the auspices of the Corporate Parenting Strategy be investigated to provide respite breaks using the same principles of the Dreamwall project. Within this, that the possibility of reciprocal relationships with adjacent authorities be explored in terms of respite facilities – particularly for Cheshire East children placed out-of-Borough.
- 3.22 That Cheshire East formalises the on-going support that foster carers provide for themselves in partnership with appropriate fostering networks.
- 3.23 That the possibility of links being made with the family support service to assist with out-of-hours support for foster carers be investigated. In addition, that the service explore the possibility of commissioning an out-of-hours support line.
- 3.24 That the awards night be continued, currently undertaken by the Cheshire Foster Carer Association, to recognise the achievements of our Children in Care and the contributions of our foster carers.
- 3.25 That foster carers be provided with the contact details of their local Councillors.
- 3.26 That a 'starter pack' be produced for each new placement which provides the requisite information about the child/young person with a small, flexible budget.
- 3.27 That support and resources for the Virtual School be maintained including the Personal Educational Allowance, Education Support Fund and educational psychologists.
- 3.28 That a comprehensive register of the appropriateness of out-of-Borough educational settings is compiled with a rigorous quality assurance programme put in place to monitor it.
- 3.29 That the Virtual School provides training to teachers so that they provide an appropriate level of support for Cared for Children and assist in any transitional processes between settings.
- 3.30 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the processes, systems and staffing issues around health and Cared for Children.

- 3.31 That a new electronic recording system be purchased to ensure seamless information sharing between children's and adult's services.
- 3.32 That links are made with Registered Social Landlords to secure decent housing for care leavers, particularly in the Macclesfield area.
- 3.33 That a fit-for-purpose facility be procured so to curtail the practice of 'sofa-surfing' and to assist in the training of young people as they prepare for independence.
- 3.34 That Cheshire East pays a retainer to Foster Carers for keeping open a placement for a young person at university.
- 3.35 That strong performance monitoring systems be put in place and embedded throughout the fostering service.
- 3.36 That exit interviews be conducted on all foster carers who resign from the service and the resulting information be analysed for trends.
- 3.37 That links are made, whenever possible, with the early intervention agenda – particularly with the SureStart programme.
- 3.38 That Cheshire East's payment rates be constantly tracked against and compared to our geographical and statistical neighbours
- 3.39 That a business case be commissioned which investigates the benefit cost ratio of investing in fostering services to reduce dependency on residential placements and IFAs.
- 3.40 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the 16 plus service for cared for children.

4.0 Outline of Review

4.1 Background

Following a previous Task and Finish Review which looked at Residential Provision in Cheshire East, a recommendation was made that –

“All Cared for Children should be placed within a family setting wherever possible and that sufficient resources are targeted at the fostering service to ensure sufficient capacity is available”

As a result, the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee at a mid-point meeting on the 16 November 2010 agreed that a review which looked in more detail at the resources and capacity of the fostering services would be appropriate. In a time of austerity and difficult decisions, the Committee felt it imperative that the Borough’s most vulnerable are made a priority and that the services which support them are performing optimally. The Task and Finish Group, its Membership, Chairmanship and terms of reference were all agreed and ratified at the Committee meeting on 7 December 2010.

4.2 Membership

The Members of the Task and Finish Group were:

Councillor Dorothy Flude (Chairman)
Councillor David Neilson
Councillor Andrew Kolker
Councillor Tony Ranfield
Councillor Gillian Merry
Councillor Bill Livesley

4.3 Terms of Reference

- To ensure that Cheshire East has a stable fostering service
- To ensure a good match between foster carer and child.
- To create a service which is able to recognise the different levels of fostering care and one that is able to deliver a ‘bespoke’ service based fundamentally on assessed need.
- To make sure that Cheshire East is doing everything it can to recruit and retain foster carers
- To ensure that foster carers are sufficiently supported emotionally and financially.
- To ensure that all foster carers are trained with the relevant and necessary skills
- To improve links with other authorities to assist in supporting foster carers.
- To ensure that the fostering service aligns itself with the wider early intervention agenda to ensure a holistic system of care is achieved.

- To improve the value for money of current residential provision by following the principle of 'invest to save' by re-directing budgets towards fostering services.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Witnesses:

Members met with the following people during the review:

- **Julie Lewis** – Principal Manager, Cared for Children
- **Judy Bell** – Group Manager, Fostering Services East, Cheshire Shared Services
- **Sue Ferguson** - Chair of Fostering Panel
- **Diane Grant** - Supervising Social Worker for Private Fostering
- **Sophie Almond** - Unit Co-ordinator, Fostering Duty Desk
- **Gail Holbrook** - Practice Consultant, Fostering Duty Desk
- **Stephen Kelly** - Recruitment Officer, Fostering & Adoption
- **Beverley Grainger** - Training Officer, Fostering & Adoption
- **Liz Lyne** - Practice Consultant, Panel Advisor
- **Phil Mellen** - Head of Virtual School
- **Berenice Astbury** - Designated Nurse for Cared for Children
- **Alison Mason** - Group Manager for Care Planning
- **Sheila Williams** - Designated Nurse for Cared for Children
- **Dawn Mack** - Sandbach Health Visitor
- **Karen Bowdler** - Accountant for Children's Services
- **James Treacy** - Independence Advisor, Young People
- **Colin Freeth** - Practice Consultant, Placement Team
- **Councillor Hilda Gaddum** – Portfolio Holder, Children and Family Services

5.2 Visits:

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Fostering Service – from being in special measures in 2007 to receiving an 'Outstanding report' in 2011.
- Park Foster Care (private agency)
- Children in Care Council
- Two foster homes (one experienced and one newly approved)

5.3 Timeline:

Date	Meeting / Site Visit
13/12/2010	Initial Meeting to define terms of reference
14/01/2011	Briefing session
25/01/2011	Meeting with Chair of the Fostering Panel
27/01/2011	Meeting with Fostering Duty Desk
28/01/2011	Meeting with Recruitment Officer, Training Officer and Practice Consultant, Panel Advisor
04/02/2011	Meeting with Head of Virtual School, Designated Nurse for Cared for Children and Group Manager for Cared for Planning
11/02/2011	Meeting with Designated Nurse for Cared for Children and Health Visitor for Sandbach
18/02/2011	Site Visit to Stoke-on-Trent City Council's fostering service
21/02/2011	Site Visit to Park Foster Care (Private Agency)
24/02/2011	Q&A session with the Children in Care Council
25/02/2011	Catch up session with Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services.
04/03/2011	Meeting with the accountant for Children and Family Services
14/03/2011	Meeting with Practice Consultant – Placement Team
09/03/2011	Site Visit to two foster care homes
18/03/2011	Meeting with Independence Advisor – Young People
22/03/2011	Meeting with Supervising Social Worker for Private Fostering
25/03/2011	Review of Draft Report
01/04/2011	Report to finalised for submission to Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
12/04/2011	Presented to Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

6.0 Jargon Busting¹

6.1 ‘Looked after children’/‘children in care’

- 6.1.1 The term children in care includes: all children being looked after by a local authority; those subject to a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (see below); and those looked after by a voluntary agreement with their parents under section 20 of that Act. They may be looked after by family members, foster carers or staff in a residential children’s home. Children and young people from overseas become ‘looked after’ if they have no one with parental responsibility in this country.

6.2 Children ‘at risk’ of harm

- 6.2.1 These are children about whom there are concerns that they are or may be at risk of suffering harm through abuse or neglect. Children considered ‘at risk’ have a Child Protection Plan which should be regularly reviewed.

6.3 ‘Children in need’

- 6.3.1 Children in need are a wider group of children and young people who have been assessed as needing the help of services to achieve a reasonable standard of health or development. They have a Child in Need Plan to address the difficulties identified in the assessment.

6.4 ‘Care leavers’

- 6.4.1 Care leavers are those who have been in public care for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 onwards and therefore qualify for services to support them once they leave. This may be at 16 or up until 24 if they remain in full-time education.

6.5 Care Order – Section 31 Children Act 1989

- 6.5.1 Care Orders are made by the court if a ‘threshold of significant’ harm is reached and there is no likelihood of improvement in the standard of care provided for a young person. The local authority then shares parental responsibility with the parent(s) and can make the decisions that a parent would normally make. A Care Order expires when the young person reaches 18 (or sometimes 19) years of age, or when an Adoption Order is made and the child is permanently adopted.

¹ Taken from ‘10 Questions to ask if you’re scrutinising services for looked after children’ LGI&D and CfPS

6.6 Interim Care Order – Section 38 Children Act 1989

- 6.6.1 If the local authority is concerned that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer 'significant harm', they can apply to the court for an Interim Care Order, which is a time-limited order renewed while care proceedings for the child continue through the courts and other authorities.

6.7 Emergency Protection Order Section 44 Children Act 1989

- 6.7.1 An Emergency Protection Order removes a child into accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority and is granted by the court if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant immediate harm.

6.8 Children in Care Councils

- 6.8.1 The Care Matters White Paper and the subsequent Act required local authorities to set up a Children in Care Council to enable regular, good quality dialogue and involvement in developing and delivering services. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members, such as the Director of Children's Services. The local Children in Care Council will be responsible for helping develop and monitor the implementation of the Pledge to children and young people about the care they receive.

6.9 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

6.10 Fostering Panel

- 6.11 The membership and functions of Fostering Panels are laid down in the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The role of the panel is to scrutinise the assessments and reports presented by the fostering service provider to ensure that they are thorough, fair, and transparent and that the conclusions and recommendations are properly evidenced. The panel also has a quality assurance role to evaluate the quality of reports, and to comment on any area of the service which they consider relevant.

7.0 Review Findings

7.1 Introduction

- 7.2.1 Children in Care of a local authority are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. At any one time around 60,000 children are looked after in England, a trend which continues to be on an upward curve with cases becoming ever more complex and resource intensive.
- 7.2.2 Whilst these children and young people are placed in various types of care, including residential care and specialist care placements, it is widely recognised that for many, foster care is the preferred option. As it is closest to a family environment, the outcomes for those placed in foster care can be more positive than for those in other types of care placement. Additionally, foster care placements cost substantially less than residential placements, a not inconsequential fact considering the difficult economic climate and ever increasing demand on social care resources. For these reasons, and in particular the former, the Group felt that foster care should be the preferred care option for most children, where deemed appropriate.
- 7.2.3 Considering this, Members partaking in the review felt that it was important to find out whether all was being done by Cheshire East to maximise its ability to meet the demand on foster placements. Realising that increasing the number, diversity and range of placements has a direct impact on reducing the dependency on residential placements and private foster agencies, we endeavoured to analyse the recruitment of foster carers and their subsequent retention. Evaluating the retention of foster carers led naturally to an interest in how they are supported, not only by the services within Cheshire East but also by partner authorities in education and health. Whilst obviously interested in how these services work for foster carers, it was also felt important to consider their impact on the children and young people themselves.
- 7.2.4 Prior to starting the research process and getting answers to these questions, it was deemed vital that we fully understood the situation and context in Cheshire East.

8.0 Foster Care in Cheshire East

8.1.1 In line with the national picture, the number of cared for children in Cheshire East peaked in October/November 2010 as a result of concerns following a number of national high profile and well documented child protection cases. Cheshire East has been able to stabilise the service and as a result, there has been a gradual decrease in the number of children in care, illustrated in the table below.

Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number	Month	Number
March 2009	352	September 2009	394	March 2010	440	September 2010	472	11/03/11	447
April 2009	350	October 2009	399	April 2010	437	October 2010	472		
May 2009	352	November 2009	413	May 2010	438	November 2010	453		
June 2009	362	December 2009	418	June 2010	442	December 2010	447		
July 2009	376	January 2010	432	July 2010	451	January 2011	443		
August 2009	390	February 2010	435	August 2010	456	February 2011	447		

8.1.2 These 447 children are placed in a variety of different settings, the majority of which are foster placements. The table below fully illustrates the placement type breakdown.

Placement Type	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+	Total	%
Relative/Friend	20	25	17	5	67	15
CE Foster Care	36	36	49	22	143	32
CW&C Foster Care	0	1	2	1	4	0.9
Independent Foster Care	32	32	20	13	97	22
CE Home	0	1	6	2	9	2
CW&C Home	0	0	0	0	0	0
Independent Home	0	1	11	10	22	4.9
Placed with parents	22	28	11	2	63	14
Independent living / Friends	0	0	0	7	7	1.6
NHS/health Trust	0	1	0	1	2	0.4
Residential School	0	0	5	2	7	1.6
Residential accommodation	0	0	0	4	4	0.9
Young offenders institute	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mum & Baby unit	5	0	0	0	5	1
Adoption	11	6	0	0	17	3.8
Woman's Refuge	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	126	131	121	69	447	100

8.1.3 Although not wholly within the remit of this review, attention was drawn to the relatively high number of children placed with parents (63). The Group were informed that increased attempts will be made in future practice to revoke care orders, where appropriate, in a more timely way. This will then free up further social work resources for other placement types, particularly foster care placements and help the service to reduce the number of cared for children back to pre September/October 2010 levels.

8.1.4 The following tables show Cheshire East 'Foster Carer Approvals' and 'Foster Carer Resignation and De-Registration' since April 2010.

Foster Carer Approvals – (n) denotes placement(s) created

	Respite	Family Friends and	Mainstream	Total
April 10	1(1)	1(1)	0	2(2)
May 10	0	2(3)	0	2(3)
Jun 10	0	3(4)	0	3(4)
Jul 10	0	4(6)	0	4(6)
Aug 10	0	2(5)	0	2(5)
Sept 10	0	0	3(5)	3(5)
Oct 10	0	0	0	0
Nov 10	(1)	2(2)	0	2(3)
Dec 10	2 (2)	1 (3)	1 (1)	4 (6)
Jan 11	1 (1)	1 (1)	0	2 (2)
Feb 11	0	2 (2)	0	2 (2)
Mar 11				
Total	4 (5)	18 (27)	4 (6)	26 (38)

Foster Carer Resignation and De-Registration Numbers and Reasons - (n) denotes placement(s) lost.

	Ill Health	Retirement	Personal Reasons	Change of Circumstance	Safeguarding Issues	Total
April 10	0	0	0	0	0	0
May 10	1(-3)	0	0	1(-1)	0	2(-4)
Jun 10	0	3(-10)	2(-5)	0	0	5(-15)
Jul 10	0	0	3(-4)	0	0	3(-4)
Aug 10	0	0	1(-2)	0	0	1(-2)
Sept 10	0	1(-3)	1(-1)	3(-3)	0	5(-7)
Oct 10	0	0	1(-1)	1(-2)	0	2(-3)
Nov 10			1(-4)			1(-4)
Dec 10	0	0	2 (-4)	2 (-4)	0	0
Jan 11	0	1 (-2)	2 (-5)	3 (-7)	0	1 (-2)
Feb 11	1 (-1)	2 (-5)	2 (-4)	5 (-10)	1 (-1)	2 (-5)
Mar 11						
Total	2 (-5)	10 (-15)	17(-40)	29(-60)	2 (-5)	10 (-15)

- 8.1.5 As can be seen there is a deficit between the number of mainstream carers being approved and the number resigning and de-registering. This can partly be explained by Cheshire County Council's legacy policy which was to concentrate on family and friends as carers rather than mainstream carers. Whilst this had been done for good reason, there is feeling that the efficacy of this should be examined, something that is discussed later in this review.
- 8.1.6 That is not the only reason however and as is congruent with the national picture, there is a real challenge for Cheshire East to reconcile a growing demand for placements in the face of a dwindling supply and competition.
- 8.1.7 The current budget for the fostering service is set out below. The fostering team's under spend can be explained by a number of staffing vacancies that have yet to be filled. Following the new restructure it is expected that this quota will be fulfilled and the service strengthened as a result. It can also be seen that in terms of fostering allowances, there has been a large overspend. This can be attributed to the fact that Cheshire East inherited a pay formula that was below the Fostering Network recommended amount and therefore had to be rectified. The budget has not yet been adjusted accordingly but it was noted that this was in the process of being evaluated.

Summary of Fostering Budget Forecast				
Centre Name	Budget for 2010-11	Projected Spend (£)	Protected Outturn (£)	Variance (£)
Fostering Team	1,889,545	1,290,117	-599,428	Under
Fostering Allowances	2,592,275	4,588,786	1,996,511	Over
Interagency Fees		86,141	86,141	Over
Fostering Service	4,481,820	5,965,044	1,483,224	Over

8.1.8 With this in mind, the table below highlights Cheshire East's current fostering allowances.

		0-4 Years		16+ years
Basic	(£125.09 x 52)	£6,504.68	(£215.74 x 52)	£11,218.48
Initial Clothing		£264.00		£538.00
Birthday		£125.09		£215.74
Holiday		£312.73		£539.35
Religious		£125.09		£215.74
		£7,331.59		£13,166.51
Disability Allowance	(£137.62 x 52)	£7,156.24	(£237.30 x 52)	£12,339.60
		£7,938.15		£13,166.51
Payment for Skills (per child)				
Band 1	(£62.44 x 52)	£10,578.47		£15,974.19
Band 2	(£93.66 x 52)	£12,201.91		£17,597.63
Band 3	(£156.10 x 52)	£15,448.79		£20,844.51
Salaried Carers	(£421 x 52)	£29,223.59		£34,619.31
Additional Costs paid: School Trips/Holidays School Uniform Ethnic, racial and cultural costs Travel, Telephone & Hospitality Rite of Passage gift - £100				

8.2 Following this brief, Members designed a wide-ranging and comprehensive research programme. After this process, the Review Group's findings fell naturally into the following main themes:

- Recruitment of foster carers – including improving choice by increasing the diversity and range of placements.
- Retention of foster carers – including support, training and payment to improve placement stability
- Educational attainment for those in foster care
- The health and wellbeing of children and young people in foster care
- The successful transition of young people leaving care
- Systems and administrative processes with the Foster Care Service.
- Link to early intervention agenda.

8.2.1 A number of these themes do not exist in isolation from each other. Indeed, they are all part of the same issue with a number of cross-cutting and recurrent themes. For instance, an increase in the amount

of foster carers recruited would result in less pressure on existing carers, reducing placement disruption and improving retention. Similarly, the work of partners in health and education plays a big part in reducing disruption and resignations. For the purpose of clarity, these issues have been put into respective themes with the main arguments outlined in the conclusion.

9.0 Themes

9.1 Recruitment of Foster Carers

9.1.2 There is a shortage of just over 10,000 foster families in the UK so Cheshire East is not alone in being unable to meet demand. This shortage means that Cheshire East is often forced to place children where there is a vacancy rather than where best meets children's needs. Mismatched foster placements are bad for children, their parents and their foster carers and are more likely to disrupt. Not having enough foster families means that children may be forced to change schools and move away from family and friends and for the Cheshire East; it means that we can be forced to place children with expensive private agencies and out of Borough families.

9.1.3 Foster carers who experience the disruption of placements also suffer. If their experiences are particularly negative, it is possible that they may leave the fostering service altogether – further exacerbating the shortage of foster families and the lack of choice of foster placements for children.

9.1.4 Nearly all of the experts that the Group spoke to argued that the larger the pool of foster families, the more likely it is that a good match can be found, in terms of location, culture, language, religion, background, lifestyle and even interests. It's about finding a foster home for a child that feels familiar to them, where they can feel comfortable whether they are there for two weeks, two months or two years.

9.1.5 With this in mind, it is important that Cheshire East reviews its current policy of focusing on recruiting carers from the child's friends and family. As previously mentioned, the Group were made aware that this had been done due to the advantages of keeping a child within their family environment. Whilst the Group would not argue against making attempts to keep a child within their family, there does need to be a step change in recruitment policy so that Cheshire East can offer fully comprehensive and wide ranging placement options. It is likely that a change in family legislation from 1 April 2011 will assist in addressing this.

9.1.6 Advertising and Marketing

9.1.7 Key to any recruitment strategy is how you market and advertise the services that you provide. This is a well versed maxim in the private sector and whilst it may seem inappropriate to be aligning the care of children with a private sector model, the Group are convinced that this is the best way forward in terms of a recruitment strategy, to get the very best outcomes for our cared for children.

9.1.8 In the site visit to Stoke-on-Trent City Council's (henceforth Stoke-on-Trent) fostering service, they outlined how they are running their fostering service recruitment strategy 'like a business' and they

continued to assert that this is the only way that local authorities will be able to *manage the market*.

- 9.1.9 The group were heartened to find that Cheshire East had a recruitment strategy that aligned with these findings. Indeed, since 2009 when there had been no one fulfilling a recruitment role, it was discovered that a new brand identity (FACE – Fostering & Adoption Cheshire East) has been established.
- 9.1.10 Under this brand identity, a lot of work has been done to strengthen the recruitment process for those interested in becoming foster carers or in adopting. For instance, a dedicated stand-alone website and dedicated fostering and adoption hotline have been purchased and a number of events have been organised and ran successfully. Additionally, it was discovered that every effort was being made to make sure that the FACE brand achieved as much coverage as possible in a number of publications and advertising spaces.
- 9.1.11 The group were made aware that all of these initiatives had combined to generate a 500% increase in enquiries in 12 months (running at 60 per month as compared to 2-10). The root of this success being to create ‘triggers’ for people who had been already considering fostering and adoption to contact the service.
- 9.1.12 The increase in enquiries outlined above is obviously very impressive and the Group would like to note their full support for the work being performed by the recruitment officer and the approach that has been adopted.
- 9.1.13 **Conversion Rates and timescales between initial expression of interest and final approval by panel**
- 9.1.14 The work being carried out by the recruitment team has seen a substantial increase in the number of enquiries from people interested in becoming foster carers. Whilst this is encouraging, what really is important is converting these enquiries into approved foster carers who can then provide Cheshire East with that wide pool which it so requires. The group were informed that research has shown that the optimum time for people to confirm their interest after an initial enquiry is two weeks. Noting this, the service has recently started to send a direct mail reminder if the person has not been in contact within the two weeks. It was reported that this initiative had brought in an additional 30% of interested potential carers.
- 9.1.15 The importance of keeping people involved and communicated with during the application process can be seen therefore. The Group are pleased that whilst work is being done to improve this, making foster carers feeling wanted and valued as soon as they make contact with the authority (and throughout the approval process and beyond) is absolutely vital and should be made a priority.

9.1.16 In the feedback provided from some newly approved foster carers, they explained how it had taken a considerable amount of time for them to be approved – over two years. It must be noted that they went through the approval process during local government reorganisation, however they anecdotally informed the group that they had friends who had recently chosen to foster with other authorities due to Cheshire East's reputation for taking a long time to approve. Whether this reputation is fair or not, and the Group feels that from other evidence collected it is probably a legacy from Cheshire County Council, improving the timescales for approval must be made a priority.

9.1.17 Indeed, on the whole, the process of approval appears overly complicated and drawn out and this is working to put off potential foster carers. An example of this can be seen with regard to the fostering panel process. Whilst there is some excellent work being performed by the panel, there might be the possibility of investigating whether the panel could be more flexible and more aligned to each case's progress to ensure the minimal of amount delay. In a climate where there is a significant shortage of carers, delay is something Cheshire East can ill afford. To rectify this issue, the Group suggests that lessons are learned from Stoke-on-Trent. To date Stoke-on-Trent have appointed 24 new carers since April 2010 and another 8 are scheduled for panel before the end of March 2011. They also have a 14% conversion rate from initial enquiry to panel approval – above the national average (8%) and Cheshire East (8%).

9.1.18 The key to this success has been due to their 16-week turnaround strategy for approving foster carers from the original expression of interest. This deadline is useful on three counts. Firstly, it prevents the relationship between the social worker and the applicant becoming collusive. Secondly, it reduces the number of drop-outs and lastly, it provides an end-point from which other key dates in the process can be tracked and analysed. For instance if people are dropping out at a particular stage, this can be analysed and rectified. Further to this, having the process set out with key dates earmarked would help prospective carers to see that they are moving forward with their application and hitting milestones. As an aside, it was noted that whilst Cheshire East do not currently measure or analyse the average approval time, this is something that will be done in the new structure. Anecdotally, the Group were informed that Cheshire East's average approval timescale could be significantly longer than 16 weeks.

9.1.19 Other methods to improve recruitment

9.1.20 When interviewed, the Chair of the Fostering Panel suggested that one thing that would help improve recruitment would be for Cheshire East to have the ability to pay for home alterations. One of the most common reasons why carers do not proceed with their initial expression of interest is due to their lack of space at home. It would be cost effective for

Cheshire East therefore, to pay the commercial mortgage rates for the modifications whilst the carer is in the employment of the authority as this would mean that we would not have to place a child in an IFA. Similarly, Cheshire East could pay for the modifications needed for a carer to look after a disabled child, negating the need for the authority to place them in an expensive and non-family orientated residential placement. This concept would also extend to existing carers who wish to take on another placement but again do not have the requisite space or wish to allow sibling group placements. This proposal mirrors similar schemes in other local authority fostering services. It should also be explored whether there is provision in the disabled facilities grant to assist with such a programme.

- 9.1.21 A number of people interviewed for this review felt that it would be very beneficial for carers in the approval process to be paired with an experienced foster carer who would act as a mentor. This would not only assist the new carer in their training and reduce drop-out rates, it would help experienced carers to feel like they are part of the professional service and that their skills are valued.
- 9.1.22 Foster Carer allowances are obviously a big issue in terms of recruitment, with some, although not all prospective carers choosing those authorities or IFAs with the most competitive rates. Indeed, from the evidence collected within this review it seems as though allowances become a bigger issue for carers once they already have children placed with them and the demands become clear. This is a complex and multi-faceted area and as a result it possibly best sits in the 'retention of carers' part of the report.

9.2 Retention of Foster Carers

9.2.1 Historically foster carers provided a safe, secure home without the expectation that they would provide therapeutic support. They are now however, increasingly expected to look after children with significant emotional and behavioural problems often arising from a lack of stimulation at birth. Indeed many children come from deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds with problems compounded by neglect, maltreatment and experience of domestic violence; challenges which they then often bring into their placements.

9.2.2 Challenging child behaviours and carers' lack of skill in dealing with them are the two most common reasons for placement disruption which can then in turn lead to the resignation of carers and poor outcomes for the child. It is imperative therefore that Cheshire East has the correct training and support systems in place to prevent this from happening.

9.2.3 Placements

9.2.4 Matching a child or young person with the correct and most appropriate foster placement is the first step in ensuring that the risk of placement disruption is reduced. If the placement is inappropriate then there is the risk that foster carers may become disillusioned with the service and that the child continues to move placements, damaging their self-esteem and ability to build familial attachments.

9.2.5 The Group found that there had been some difficulty for the service in always finding an appropriate placement, often forcing them to turn to IFAs. The most important change that can be made to improve this is to increase the depth and range of foster carers in Cheshire East, something that has been discussed in detail in the proceeding section.

9.2.6 In addition to this, there are other ways in which the placements process can be improved. The Group can see that the service has already taken significant steps to make improvements with a recent restructure creating a new placements unit. This unit will bring together three functions; payments, business support and placements, creating a much needed coherency between them. With regards to the latter, the Group learned that more robust matching procedures are being developed in which placement planning meetings would be held within three to five days of the placement being arranged. By explaining the situation to the foster carer, it is hoped that these will reduce the risk of disruption by adding clarity to the placement and its possible demands.

9.2.7 When a concern was raised over the current placement request form, it was noted that it is being re-developed, with a view to it providing all of the requisite information (age, place, gender etc.). It was suggested that attempts should be made to link the information in the request forms i.e. in terms of which placements are most required, to the marketing

strategy so that the most sought after placements can be sourced and provided.

- 9.2.8 In terms of preventing placement disruption, the Group were made aware of Stoke-on-Trent's practice of holding disruption meetings. Following their extensive monitoring and recording processes, senior managers are made aware of possible placement disruptions by social workers and steps are made to attempt to rectify the causes.

9.2.9 **Training**

- 9.2.10 Whether or not a carer is newly approved or has ten years experience, the training that Cheshire East provides is vital in making sure that they are fully prepared to cope with the myriad of demands that will be placed upon them.

- 9.2.11 The Group were made aware that since the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), training for foster carers had been a shared service until April 2010. The resulting disaggregation of resources left Cheshire West and Chester with a disproportionate amount of resources. As a result, Cheshire East has almost had to 'start from scratch' to construct its own training programme.

- 9.2.12 The first step in this process was to send out a questionnaire to foster carers to ask them what training they wanted or had found useful in the past. Following from this, aspects such as times, venues and content of events had been tailored in a bespoke manner to match that of the carers needs. It is this self-imposed practice of monitoring and evaluation that left the Group feeling confident that training will always be relevant and tailored to the individual and collective needs of carers. This approach is commended and should be continued.

- 9.2.13 Even considering this, there were a few issues regarding the training process that emerged from the evidence gathering process. Indeed, in speaking to the foster carers themselves, it seems that a common theme emerged around the appropriateness of training in terms of the level that it is pitched at. This is obviously a very difficult thing to get right when a course needs to cater for a wide demographic but it was noted that for more experienced carers a more workshop based programme would be useful. It was felt that they could be involved in delivering some training themselves, making best use of their experience and skills.

- 9.2.14 Additionally, it was noted that some foster carers interviewed felt that the portfolio that they had to complete during pre-approval training was somewhat cumbersome and repetitive. The Group are aware that this is a statutory document that requires completion but it is suggested that perhaps it could be streamlined or even made available to be completed online. Furthermore, if the document is a requirement, the importance of completing it should be communicated clearly to the carers.

9.2.15 Attention was drawn to the possibility for providing training for the safe handling of children and young people as carers do not feel appropriately equipped to do this at the current time.

9.2.16 As with all local authority budgets, money for resources is sparse. However, the Group felt that it would be greatly beneficial if a budget was made available so that the service can purchase a small library of publications from the Safer Caring Foster Network for the use of foster carers. This would compliment the training support and development standards (Children's Workforce Development Council) that foster carers have to meet.

9.2.17 As an aside, the Group would also want to outline the importance of maintaining financial support for those foster carers attending training events. Additionally, the Group would also like to see that Cheshire East are ensuring that foster carers have access to the internet as training resources move increasingly towards this medium.

9.2.18 **Support**

9.2.19 Supervising Social Workers

9.2.20 The biggest support mechanism for a foster carer is their relationship with their supervising social worker. On the whole, the evidence suggests that Cheshire East's foster carers have a good relationship with their social worker and that they highly value the time that they get to spend with them. The Group were also informed of situations in which foster carers had found it difficult to contact their social worker and that there had been some instances in which the child's social worker had been unable to fulfil their basic statutory visits. There is also the feeling that Cheshire East has become increasingly reliant on inexperienced social workers.

9.2.21 It appears as though there has been a high 'churn' of social workers which has resulted in a lack of consistency in planning, little knowledge of individual children and instances of poor communication with foster carers.

9.2.22 The Group are very aware of the pressure that social workers have been under since the formation of Cheshire East. With reference to the budget highlighted at the beginning of this review, it can be seen that there has been a significant staffing shortage, explaining the considerable under spend. When this is rectified, it is fully expected that the service will be strengthened naturally. Further to this, it was noted that Cheshire East are moving towards the Hackney 'Reclaiming Social Work' model which is expected to achieve a number of improvements by stabilising the workforce and creating efficiencies in work flow. With these changes afoot, the Group are confident that the requisite improvements will be achieved.

9.2.23 Cared for Children's Support Team

9.2.24 Even with this in mind, the Group would like to draw attention to the importance of the Cared for Children's Support Team (formerly known as the Multi Professional Support Team). They provide invaluable support to children and foster carers where there are behavioural and emotional problems that can be very difficult for foster carers to manage. They also have a very close relationship with the CAMHS service. Without their input, many placements would break down creating more instability for Cheshire East's children. Their assessments also contribute to making well matched placements for children thereby promoting stability. It is important to note that whilst this team are not performing a statutory duty, the role they play is vital in ensuring positive outcomes for Cared for Children. On the whole, they are very cost effective and all attempts should be made to support their work in light of potential budget cuts.

9.2.25 Respite

9.2.26 Respite can be vital in giving carers a break from the rigours of looking after cared for children. One carer interviewed said that they can 'get ground down very easily' and that a period of respite can make the difference between the placement breaking down or not or even the difference between the carer resigning or staying. The Group were made aware that it was difficult for carers to get respite, another symptom of the lack of carers in Cheshire East's pool. One option that could be explored is to use an organisation such as Dreamwall which provides 'time-out' breaks for foster carers and has reduced by 95 per cent the proportion of foster carers leaving fostering. The cost equated to £674.43 per child per year, and 182 children received the service. Using the social return on investment (SROI) method of calculating value and benefits as well as costs, there was a £1.63 return for every £1.00 invested in the project. One of the strongest elements of this programme is that they take the attitude that respite is not just for the carer but it should also be a positive experience for the child or young person. This reduces the feeling of rejection that some children in care feel when placed in respite.

9.2.27 Whilst not able to commission Dreamwall as they are based in Hampshire, there would be opportunity to investigate the possibility of links being made with Cheshire East's leisure facilities under the corporate parenting strategy to see if a similar programme could be implemented.

9.2.28 There is also certainly scope to formalise the on-going informal support that foster carers provide for themselves in terms of respite. This is a positive initiative as the children and young people often go to an environment which they are familiar with. This could be strengthened by pairing foster carers so to create further stability.

9.2.29 Out of Hours Support

9.2.30 One of the major themes to emerge from the feedback from foster carers is that they do not feel adequately supported in the hours beyond 9-5 as the emergency team in place, whilst helpful, do not have the appropriate knowledge of each individual case. The Group noted that Stoke-on-Trent had had similar feedback and as a result established a placement support team which operates from 8am to 9pm, 7 days a week. This works as a targeted resource with the extra support provided to those foster carers who are looking after children who have been identified by an earlier analysis of placement disruptions. The Group feels that lessons could be learned here. For instance, there could be an opportunity to make use of existing informal fostering care networks by further facilitating opportunities for carers to contact other carers who have had experience with a particular child. Indeed, the service might look to re-commission the out-of-hours support line from the Cheshire Foster Carer Association.

9.2.31 Payments

9.2.32 Whilst most foster carers do not enter the profession for financial remuneration, it is vital to make sure that they do not feel out-of-pocket as this can generate ill feeling. Indeed, in the feedback provided by the foster carers interviewed it wasn't so much the amount they are paid that causes issues but more the timing of the payments. It was suggested that there was little synergy between the PARIS system and the releasing of payments. When interviewing the newly established placements team, the Group were left confident that this would be rectified.

9.2.33 Whilst the amounts that Cheshire East pay foster carers did not arise as a major issue, there is certainly a need to track whether our payments are competitive with our geographical and statistical neighbours. If our payments fall significantly below these respective levels it only adds an incentive for foster carers to go to another authority. This can be particularly costly if Cheshire East has trained the respective carer.

9.2.34 Throughout this review, the argument has been made that by increasing resources to the fostering service, Cheshire East would actually save money by reducing the amount it pays out to Residential Provision placements. Indeed, whilst it is difficult to determine an average cost per child due to the range of weekly rates the following clearly demonstrates the saving that can be made.

LAC Foster Care Weekly Cost Range (inc. IFAS): £ 516 - £1,656

LAC Residential Weekly Cost Range: £1,744 - £3,500

It is too difficult to separate out the amount we pay IFAS as compared to our own carers as each case can vary dramatically but as an

approximation the amount we pay IFAs is on average 3-4 times the amount that we pay our own carers. It is suggested therefore that a robust business case is compiled which investigates the benefit cost ratio of investing into fostering resources.

9.2.35 Making Foster Carers feel Valued

9.2.36 Something that was highlighted throughout this review by a number of witnesses is the need to make foster carers feel as though they are valued by the service. Most of the recommendations in this report whilst having strong 'invest to save' arguments underpinning them will have a cost implication. Ensuring foster carers feel as though they are part of the professional service is something that bears little cost but would result in generating a large amount of goodwill. For instance, the Group feel that small gestures would go along way to show that Cheshire East fully appreciates that the value that foster carers bring to the care of our most vulnerable children.

9.2.37 Cheshire County Council used to run an annual 'Welcome to Cheshire' conference in which newly approved foster carers would come and meet experienced carers, facilitating networking opportunities. It was suggested that a similar conference could be re-established, perhaps shared across the region, in which similar network opportunities would be made available. Within such a conference, provision could be made for awarding long service or outstanding achievement awards. The Cheshire Foster Carer Association have ran a similar meeting over the last few years and links could be made with this in future.

9.2.38 Further to these events, it would also be highly beneficial to induce a change of attitude within the service so that there is as little differentiation between practitioners and foster carers as possible. Whilst it is recognised that different roles have different demands, attempts should be made not to define these differences in a hierarchical fashion.

9.2.39 Along the same lines, it was thought that a simple change that could be made would be to ensure that Councillors, in their role as corporate parents, identify the Cheshire East carers that reside in their wards or private carers that look after Cheshire East Children. They would then offer their support and act as a link to the authority.

9.2.40 Improving the experience of new carers and new placements

9.2.41 As in any walk of life, first impressions can be vital in setting a relationship off on the right foot. It is key therefore that Cheshire East does all it can to fully welcome new carers into the service and to make sure that transitions into new placements go as smoothly as possible. Attention was drawn to the way that many carers feel that they receive a child without the appropriate background information. Additionally, it was noted that foster carers are often frustrated that their budget does not allow them to purchase items such a toys for the child when they are

placed, bearing in mind that children and young people often arrive with little to no possessions. With both of these points in mind, it was suggested that a 'starter pack' could be produced for each child with the requisite information and a small auxiliary, flexible budget provided.

9.2.42 Link with Education and Health

- 9.2.43 As placement demands become increasingly complex, foster carers will become increasingly reliant on the support of authorities and partners beyond the remit of social care. Two of the most important of these partners are in the health and education sectors – two areas in which cared for children statistically lag behind their peers.

9.3 Educational Attainment of those in Foster Care

- 9.3.1 In 2008, 14 per cent of looked after children achieved five A*-C grades at GCSE, compared to 65.3 per cent for all children. Ensuring that looked after children have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life, and that their school career is not disrupted by constant placement moves can make a big difference. They may well have lost out on education because of the circumstances which led them entering care and need help to catch up. A high proportion of looked after children see entering care as having been good for their education, a national trend mirrored in the findings of this review.
- 9.3.2 It is important to recognise therefore that raising the attainment of Cared for Children is a central responsibility of local authorities and their partners in children's trust arrangements and a vital part of narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. It requires local authorities to work effectively with their partners, in particular schools and health services, to support their learning and development and remove barriers to their education. As corporate parents, local authorities are under a specific duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.
- 9.3.3 With this in mind, the Group were highly encouraged by the work being carried out by the Virtual School and the Virtual Head and his team. After coming into existence on 1 September 2010, the Virtual School has continued to enable Cheshire East to take an overview of all of our Cared for Children and their progress. Within this, it also has a role to support and challenge schools and other agencies in how they work with our vulnerable children and young people. Important to highlight is the part the Virtual School plays in providing training, advice and support to foster carers, designated teachers and social workers, working to reduce the likelihood of placement disruption.
- 9.3.4 The Virtual School is also responsible for two funds which it uses to improve the outcomes for Cheshire East's Cared for Children. The first of these is the **Personal Educational Allowance (PEA)**. The origin of this fund is rooted in the white paper *Care Matters: Time for Change*, published in June 2007. This confirmed the Government's commitment to introduce an annual personal education allowance for all looked after children who are at risk of not reaching the national expected standards of attainment. They are intended to help local authorities support the wide range of learning needs of looked after children and give them access to additional learning and development activities. This support is tailored to their individual needs and children and young people should be actively involved in identifying barriers to their learning and in deciding what provision will help them overcome these challenges and make improved progress with their education.

- 9.3.5 Funding for personal educational allowance for Cared for Children comprises part of the local authority Area Based Grant (ABG), a non-ringfenced general grant. It is for local authorities to decide how best to use this funding to meet their duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. The Group would strongly suggest therefore that the Virtual Head is supported as much as possible to use this fund to improve the educational outcomes for our Cared for Children.
- 9.3.6 The Virtual School also has responsibility for the **Education Support Fund (ESF)**. This is one of the main tools of the Virtual School in our support of our Cared for Children's education. The flexibility of having finance that Cheshire East can put into schools to support Cared for Children in crisis has enabled the authority to maintain a large number of educational placements and has led to better outcomes for our children and young people. It also allows Cheshire East to be creative by combining funding for schools where there are higher numbers of Cared for Children. For example, in a Cheshire East Primary School, where there are currently 23 Cared for Children, the authority has funded a part time, temporary Learning Mentor who works specifically with Cared for Children. The mentor meets and greets the children on the playground and ensures a smooth start to the school day whilst also supporting them in lessons and providing them with a friendly face to go to at breaks and lunchtimes. The school has seen this initiative as helpful and successful although it is too early to measure the impact on individual attainment and progress.

Case study of successful use of ESF with individual children and young people

Names of the children have been changed to ensure anonymity

Peter – Year 3 Cheshire East Primary School (8 years old)

Peter is on an Interim Care Order following his adoption placement breakdown last year on 24 January 2010. Prior to this Peter's adoptive mother had sadly died. Peter along with his brother Joe (Year 5 – 10 years old) has had 3 placement breakdowns since this point. Peter and his brother lived with carers in an out-of-Borough area for a short while but the boys are currently living with a private agency foster carer in the North of the Borough but this placement is close to disruption also.

Peter and all his siblings have attended a Cheshire East Primary School which is close to where his adoptive family live. There have been ongoing safeguarding issues around the family because of disclosures made by various members of the sibling group and this has been a significant area of focus for Peter's school too. For instance, Peter finds it extremely difficult to trust adults.

Peter's scores at end of KS1

2c Reading

2c Writing

2b Maths

Peter has been eligible for help through the PEA and this has been mainly used for afternoon activities as he finds it difficult to remain on task throughout the whole school day. ESF has also been used to provide TA support for Peter for help with his concentration, his behaviour and his learning. Despite this additional support however, Peter remained in precarious situation.

Considering this, additional ESF was requested and this is being used to provide Peter with full-time support. His current timetable is:

- mornings – literacy/numeracy with TA support
- afternoons – various supported activities (visits to farm/riding/therapeutic horticulture – plus activities with an officer from the Virtual School for Cared for Children)

Peter's scores at end of Autumn Term

Reading - 2b (1 part move in term)

Writing - 2b (1 part move in term)

Maths - 3b (3 part move in term) - excellent progress and he is very keen to improve.

Without ESF Peter would not have been able to sustain his school place and the school would not have been able to provide the level of support he needs. Furthermore, Peter would not have been able to make the academic progress he has made since the end of KS1 and perhaps most importantly Peter would have experienced even more loss and lack of consistency in his short but already tragic life.

9.3.7 As can be seen from the example above, the ESF is achieving some impressive outcomes for our Cared for Children. It is also important to note that a high percentage of Cared for Children are at risk of exclusion. The cost of permanently excluding a child is hard to calculate but research by Fairbridge (2008) states that the average lifetime cost of crime of an excluded child is £15,527. It is also clear that the costs of pupils being educated via a Pupil Referral Unit or through out of borough educational provision is much higher than the cost of putting early support using ESF. The group would suggest therefore that ensuring that the ESF is kept as a resource will firstly improve the educational outcomes of Cared for Children and secondly that if kept it will save Cheshire East a considerable amount of money in the longer term.

- 9.3.8 During the evidence gathering process it became clear that there are other things that Cheshire East could do to improve the educational outcomes for Cared for Children beyond that of supporting the excellent work being carried out by the Virtual School.
- 9.3.9 Indeed, the Chair of the Fostering Panel drew attention to the importance of the resources that reside within the educational environment for the fostering service. In particular it was noted that the reports that the educational psychologists produce are very useful for the panel when they are reviewing a child's forward plan or when conducting a sibling assessment. The Group would suggest therefore that when resources are being allocated, due thought is given to the potential unintended consequences on placement disruption that a loss of educational psychologists or other specialists might cause.
- 9.3.10 One aspect that the Group uncovered was in respect to the educationalist settings in which we place our out of Borough children and young people. Indeed, it was made apparent that there is currently no way of knowing the quality of these placements and their value for money as we are relying on little more than word of mouth in assessing their appropriateness. As Cheshire East has a responsibility for the well being of these children and young people, it is vital that a comprehensive register of the appropriateness of these settings is compiled and that a rigorous quality assurance programme is put in place to monitor it. The newly appointed contracts officer should ensure that this is addressed.
- 9.3.11 In terms of the feedback from the young people in care, it was pleasing to note that on the whole they had a positive experience in their respective schools. Having said this, there was some feeling that they were being over-monitored by teachers and that this was singling them out in an unhelpful way. The Group recognise that it can be difficult to get the balance correct between providing appropriate support and not making the child or young person feel different. It was suggested that the Virtual School could provide some training for teachers to improve this situation.
- 9.3.12 The Group would also like to draw attention to the importance of maintaining placements nearby to the preferred education setting. This promotes placement stability and helps to reduce disruption. The new placements team will help to improve this.
- 9.3.13 If there is no way to maintain the educational setting then attempts must be made to make the transition as seamless as possible. There is a role for the designated teachers in each setting to play here with the support of the virtual school.

9.4 Health and Wellbeing of those in Foster Care

- 9.4.1 Looked after children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but they frequently enter care with a worse level of health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. Evidence suggests that looked after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children. Local authorities, primary care trusts (PCT) and strategic health authorities (SHA) must have regard to statutory guidance issued in November 2009 on promoting the health and well-being of Cared for Children, which requires children in care to have a personal health plan.
- 9.4.2 In reviewing the evidence in relation to health and Cared for Children, it became immediately apparent that there are a number of inherent systemic failings. Local authorities, PCTs and SHAs have a role to play in promoting the health and well-being of Cared for Children. Precisely what this role looks like for each authority is unclear and will continue to be so until the new structural changes to the NHS are consolidated. With this in mind, the Group feels that it would be germane to commission a Task and Finish Review to further consider the observations in this review when there is both more detail and clarity.
- 9.4.3 As is a recurrent theme throughout this review, issues around Cared for Children become increasingly complicated and difficult to handle when either a Cheshire East child is placed out of Borough or an out of Borough child is placed with a Cheshire East family/carer. Both the Designated Nurses for Cared for Children expressed a concern over how health information about a child often emerges in an ad hoc fashion and sometimes emerges with large gaps in their medical history. This is often a symptom of professionals being unclear as to whose responsibility it is to maintain records and then subsequently who is responsible for filing or passing them to the appropriate person when necessary. As Cared for Children often have both acute and chronic health problems this is a serious issue which could have potentially damaging consequences. It was suggested that in any new arrangement a system needs to be put in place that everyone involved in health and Cared for Children understands and complies with. As the administrative burdens are only going to increase on professionals as back office staff are reduced, it will become even more important to maintain efficiencies in work flow.
- 9.4.4 One of the key front line roles in terms of health and cared for children is that of the Designated Nurse. There are currently two Designated Nurses for Cared for Children in Cheshire East with one based in Nantwich and one based in Macclesfield. They have two administrative support staff (1FTE). Their primary role is to make sure that every cared for child has their health and development needs assessed and that their subsequent health plan is actioned. The Group were informed that both Designated Nurses are only contracted to work part-time but that to meet their work demands they often have to work up to and beyond full time hours. It was explained to the Group that there is a particular concern over the

16+ age group in terms of the relevant authorities not meeting their health needs due to under capacity. This has a number of knock on effects – particularly around teenage pregnancy. It was suggested that there is a strong need for a Designated Nurse or a youth worker for young people and care leavers. In order to improve work flow, communication and efficiencies, the Group would suggest that incorporating the Designated Nurses into the offices and if possible the management structures of the Fostering and Adoption teams would have beneficial consequences. It would be particularly useful if further liaison between the Designated Nurses and the Cared for Children Support team could be facilitated.

- 9.4.5 As a further improvement, the Designated Nurses highlighted that they would appreciate systems put in place that would enable them to self-audit and benchmark.
- 9.4.6 Whilst much of the evidence around health and Cared for Children centred on big strategic improvements which Cheshire East may or may not have the ability to implement following the public health restructures, there are also smaller but important changes that Cheshire East can make to improve the well being of Cared for Children right away.
- 9.4.7 Furthermore, in terms of their access to leisure facilities, it was noted that whilst Cheshire East provides very well in terms of discounts and passes, what is available for Cared for Children is perhaps not communicated as clearly as it could be.
- 9.4.8 As a final point, the Group would very much like to draw attention to the importance of the advocacy service that Barnardos offers to Cared for Children. They offer an excellent external point of contact and outlet for those who may wish to talk about the service they receive without talking to the person who provides it.

9.5 Successful transition for those leaving care

- 9.5.1 For many young people, leaving care can be daunting and confusing. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities' responsibility to help children leaving care develop a 'pathway plan' to independence, with the help of a personal adviser and other people who have had an impact on their life. While care can end at the age of 16, it continues until age 18 if the child remains at school. Continuing assistance with education or training continues to the end of the agreed programme, even if it takes some past the age of 21.
- 9.5.2 Care leavers are still over-represented in prison populations and the unemployed, demonstrating that the experience of being in – and leaving – care still does not prepare young people well for adult life. If looked after children followed the same paths as other children into further education, training and jobs, it could save the economy £50m each year.
- 9.5.3 It is also important to remember that although in some cases Cheshire East supports young people past the age of 21, this is only in rare cases. According to the Office of National Statistics more than a third of men and a fifth of women still live at home between the age of 20 and 34. Many cite the lack of affordable housing and increasing financial pressures as reasons for this. It seems unreasonable therefore for Cheshire East in its role as corporate parent to expect its care leavers who are already comparatively disadvantaged to be able to make an unassisted transition to adulthood.
- 9.5.4 The Group were informed that there is a 16 plus Service in place which helps young people to make the transition from care to self-dependence. Making up this team is the independence advisor for young people and an administration support officer. It was explained that key to the work of this team is their ability to liaise with adult services, particularly when they are dealing with a disabled young person, in order to achieve a seamless a transition as possible. Attention was drawn to the electronic recording systems for both children's and adult's services which are incompatible at the current time. This is causing difficulties in terms of information sharing and the Group would like to suggest that a new system is considered.
- 9.5.5 In terms of securing housing, the practice of young people leaving care going to hostels has been superseded by supported lodgings of which there are 12 in Cheshire East. When the young person is older than 18 they are no longer eligible for supported lodgings and therefore they have to access accommodation from housing associations. It was explained that this is often difficult for young people, particularly in Macclesfield and also in terms of securing single person accommodation. It can be seen therefore how important it is to get the corporate parenting strategy embedded as quickly as possible in Cheshire East so that officers in Housing can attempt to start improving this situation.

- 9.5.6 Youth employment is an issue for all young people regardless of background but it is particularly an issue for those young people leaving care. At the moment Cheshire East endeavours to get care leavers onto apprenticeship schemes and there are currently 5 young people on this programme. Attempts are being made to increase these numbers. The Care leaving service also work closely with Connexions which has proven a great success. Unfortunately due to increasing number of Cared for Children and decreasing numbers of staff, this work is getting more difficult. In terms of securing an extra resource, there could be an argument for employing the aforementioned (health section) 16+ youth worker to have a role that extends beyond just health but encompasses all elements of pastoral care, including employment and housing.
- 9.5.7 Having said this, there are also improvements that Cheshire East could make without any increase in capacity. In the feedback session with the Children in Care Council, the Group were informed how one young person had been offered a job but that they were unable to take it due to transport costs. However, Cheshire East now pay her transport costs to attend college despite it being further away and the young person having the preference to go into employment. It is suggested that more flexibility is sought in how we provide transport subsidies.
- 9.5.8 In addition to this, the session with the Children in Care Council also made the Group aware of the practice of 'sofa surfing'. This is where young people spend a night with a friend in the absence of more permanent accommodation. It was suggested that whilst this is not a desirable outcome, in the interim there could be provided a central facility to which young people can come and use a kitchen, bathroom and washing machine. Such a facility could also be used a place to 'train' young people in how to become independent as part of their pathway plan – something that was noted as being wanted by the Children in Care Council. It was explained that the current facilities at Bradshaw House and Sunnyside are not fit for purpose and that new accommodation would need to be sought.
- 9.5.9 In terms of assisting young people when they go to university, Cheshire East currently pays £90 per week for maintenance. Whilst this is obviously helpful, it is the time away from university, between terms, that can be problematic. Most young people return to the family home for what can be a considerable period and yet this option is obviously not available for young people still in care. When speaking to foster carers, it was suggested that Cheshire East could pay the carer a retainer whilst the placement becomes available as respite in the meantime. This would offer the young person some security for when they return home and reduce anxiety of another change.
- 9.5.10 Furthermore, the foster carers that were spoken to for this review, commented that they felt the service does not use them enough once the young person has left care. It was suggested that they could retain a mentoring role during a transition period.

9.6 Systems and Administrative processes within the Foster Care Service

- 9.6.1 One particular recurring theme of this review, of which there are many, is that there needs to be improvements made to the systems and administrative processes around the fostering service. Indeed, numerous examples have been cited throughout this review such as the placement team linking with marketing, resignations/disruptions being monitored so that this can be fed back to support mechanisms and a multitude of systems around health and cared for children. At the core of all of these is the practice of recording information and then subsequently sharing it in an easily accessible fashion.
- 9.6.2 It was this practice that was the key finding behind Stoke-on-Trent's recent success. Indeed, it was their development of clear and robust performance monitoring systems which allowed for trends to be tracked and provided evidence of success for Ofsted. The Group strongly believes that Cheshire East has some equally good practice which will only improve with the new structure. Therefore, it is vital that Cheshire East can demonstrate this so as to benefit from all the good work and outcomes achieved.
- 9.6.3 Beyond just getting the staff to start recording information more, Stoke-on-Trent facilitated their ability to share information in such a quick and timely way by making sure that all of their relevant staff are based in the same office, with as little hot desking as possible. This ensures that the service is flexible and is able to deal with requests quickly and with all the appropriate information. It also helps them to monitor trends and to plan strategies accordingly. The Group would strongly suggest that such a model is replicated in Cheshire East.
- 9.6.4 The point was also made during the site visit to Stoke-on-Trent, that the only way the Local Authorities can maximise their offer as opposed to IFAs is to make the most of the 'corporateness of the council'. In other words, as local authorities will always pay less than private agencies we must sell the value added by our close partnerships with other authorities such as education and health. Of course, the flip side of this is that Cheshire East must make sure that its partnerships are fully utilised to make good on this promise. The Corporate Parenting Strategy should go a long way to ensure this and the Group would like to add their support for this to be embedded as quickly as possible.
- 9.6.5 What has been mentioned above are some very general observations on how administrative systems and performance monitoring could be improved. During the evidence gathering process, the Group were also made aware of a number of specific examples which require attention.
- 9.6.6 Firstly, it was brought to our attention that there is a situation, known as private fostering in which an arrangement is made to look after a child who is under 16 years of age (under 18 if disabled) for more than 28

days, where the main carer is someone other than the child's parent, legal guardian, step- parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt or uncle.

- 9.6.7 What distinguishes a private fostering arrangement from a public care fostering arrangement is that it is not arranged by nor paid for by the Local Authority. Having said this, both the child's parents and the private foster carers have a duty to notify the Children and Families Service of their intention to place the child in private foster care no less than six weeks before and no more than 13 weeks before the arrangement is intended to start (unless it is an emergency, in which case we should be informed no more than 48 hours after the child has been placed).
- 9.6.8 It was reported that it is not always the case that service is notified that the child has been placed with private foster care. This obviously cause for concern as the Authority do not know where the children are. The service is aware of this and has launched a campaign to increase awareness. To go beyond this campaign however, a system needs to be embedded in which links are made with education and health professionals who then flag up concerns over what might be a private fostering situation.
- 9.6.9 Secondly, there was a concern expressed over the lack of communication between the out-of-hours duty desk and the 9-5 duty desk which has resulted in records not being kept as accurately as they could be. Attempts should be made to have both teams working on the same system. Additionally, having all teams in the same office would improve the ability to pass on information without continually depending on systems.
- 9.6.10 Lastly, considering the extent to which Cheshire East are losing Foster Carers due to resignation, it would be germane to conduct exit interviews so that trends could be monitored and analysed with specific areas for improvement then targeted.

9.7 Link with Early intervention Agenda

- 9.7.1 Any child coming into the care of a local authority is obviously an undesirable outcome. It is proven that a child develops best in a loving family environment. Further to this, as has been mentioned throughout this report, resources are becoming scarcer and therefore spread more thinly around an ever increasing cohort of Cared for Children.
- 9.7.2 Consequently, it is vital that the fostering service makes strong and purposeful links with the early intervention agenda. The better the service can identify families at risk, the quicker it can provide support and guidance resulting in less children entering care.
- 9.7.3 For instance, aligned to the corporate parenting agenda, if some parents had better quality housing, it is unlikely that their children would ever come into care. Similarly strong links should be made with the Homestart and SureStart programmes. There are a multitude of other examples of where Cheshire East, with its myriad of skills and abilities throughout the organisation can work to keep children out of care.

10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1 The genesis of this review came from the belief that if a child must be placed under the care of the local authority, the best place for that child, in most situations, is in a family setting. Following three months of careful and extensive research that belief still holds as strong, if not more so. The Group were heartened to find in all cases, professionals who clearly had Cheshire East's children as a priority and who were doing excellent work in continually improving their practice. Indeed, the Group strongly believes that the new structure currently being embedded throughout the service will yield some exciting results in the future months and years.
- 10.2 With this in mind, the Group would like to stress the importance of targeting resources towards the fostering service. Rather than being idealistic, this is a policy that has a strong invest to save business case behind it. Hopefully this review has adequately illustrated the savings available to Cheshire East in increasing its own fostering placements thereby reducing our dependency on expensive IFA and residential placements.
- 10.3 Whilst increasing payments to foster carers to make them as competitive as possible, is an important and central issue for increasing recruitment and retention and thereby making the aforementioned savings, the Group were made aware that Cheshire East will never be able to compete financially with IFAs. Therefore, it is vital that Cheshire East makes the most of its links with other agencies both internally and externally to provide as good a service as possible to its cared for children. Indeed, there is a real need to look at the systems and administrative processes around fostering to make sure we are making the most of our resources.
- 10.4 One issue that does not have a cost attached to it and yet is vital for improving retention is making sure that our Foster Carers feel appreciated and valued. Indeed, there seems in some respects, a tacit understanding of a hierarchical structure in place in which foster carers are seen as separate from other professionals. Whilst recognising that there are distinct differences in roles, the Group would like to see our carers explicitly stated as part of the professional service and indeed, Cheshire East going above and beyond in recognising the service they provide for our most vulnerable children.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That all staff involved in the Fostering & Adoption service be situated on a single site, where appropriate.
- 11.2 That in line with the corporate parenting strategy, all corporate policies must consider their impact on cared for children.
- 11.3 That consideration be given to a renewed focus on recruitment and assessment of mainstream foster carers in order to ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its sufficiency requirements.
- 11.4 That Cheshire East continues to provide support and resources for the recruitment of foster carers.
- 11.5 That the process from initial expression of interest to approval by panel be given a speedy, yet achievable timescale from which clear milestones are communicated to both prospective carers and staff throughout the development of the application.
- 11.6 That prospective carers moving through the application process be paired with an experienced carer as a mentor.
- 11.7 That an investigation be carried out to assess the viability of creating a budget to enable Cheshire East to pay commercial mortgage rates for home modifications in order to allow prospective carers take on their first or additional placements.
- 11.8 That the information from placement request forms in terms of demand in particular placements be made available to the recruitment officer to inform the marketing strategy.
- 11.9 That 'disruption meetings' along the lines of the Stoke-on-Trent model be held with foster placements that have been identified as being at risk of disruption.
- 11.10 That experienced foster carers be used in delivering training sessions or work shops to make best use of their professional skills.
- 11.11 That a budget be made available for the service to either purchase a small library of publications from the Safer Foster Carer Network for the use of foster carers or to explore web-based training opportunities.
- 11.12 That training be provided for the safe handling of Children in Care.
- 11.13 That financial support be maintained for carers attending training events.
- 11.14 That support and resources for the Cared For Children's Support Team be maintained.

- 11.15 That the possibility of making links with Cheshire East Leisure Facilities under the auspices of the Corporate Parenting Strategy be investigated to provide respite breaks using the same principles of the Dreamwall project. Within this, that the possibility of reciprocal relationships with adjacent authorities be explored in terms of respite facilities – particularly for Cheshire East children placed out-of-Borough.
- 11.16 That Cheshire East formalises the on-going support that foster carers provide for themselves in partnership with appropriate fostering networks.
- 11.17 That the possibility of links being made with the family support service to assist with out-of-hours support for foster carers be investigated. In addition, that the service explore the possibility of commissioning an out-of-hours support line.
- 11.18 That the awards night be continued, currently undertaken by the Cheshire Foster Carer Association, to recognise the achievements of our Children in Care and the contributions of our foster carers.
- 11.19 That foster carers be provided with the contact details of their local Councillors.
- 11.20 That a 'starter pack' be produced for each new placement which provides the requisite information about the child/young person with a small, flexible budget.
- 11.21 That support and resources for the Virtual School be maintained including the Personal Educational Allowance, Education Support Fund and educational psychologists.
- 11.22 That a comprehensive register of the appropriateness of out-of-Borough educational settings is compiled with a rigorous quality assurance programme put in place to monitor it.
- 11.23 That the Virtual School provides training to teachers so that they provide an appropriate level of support for Cared for Children and assist in any transitional processes between settings.
- 11.24 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the processes, systems and staffing issues around health and Cared for Children.
- 11.25 That a new electronic recording system be purchased to ensure seamless information sharing between children's and adult's services.
- 11.26 That links are made with Registered Social Landlords to secure decent housing for care leavers, particularly in the Macclesfield area.

- 11.27 That a fit-for-purpose facility be procured so to curtail the practice of 'sofa-surfing' and to assist in the training of young people as they prepare for independence.
- 11.28 That Cheshire East pays a retainer to Foster Carers for keeping open a placement for a young person at university.
- 11.29 That strong performance monitoring systems be put in place and embedded throughout the fostering service.
- 11.30 That exit interviews be conducted on all foster carers who resign from the service and the resulting information be analysed for trends.
- 11.31 That links are made, whenever possible, with the early intervention agenda – particularly with the SureStart programme.
- 11.32 That Cheshire East's payment rates be constantly tracked against and compared to our geographical and statistical neighbours
- 11.33 That a business case be commissioned which investigates the benefit cost ratio of investing in fostering services to reduce dependency on residential placements and IFAs.
- 11.34 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the 16 plus service for cared for children.

12.0 Background Information

12.1 For Background information relating to this report, please get in touch with the report author:

12.2 Mark Grimshaw, Overview and Scrutiny
(01270) 685680
mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 6th June 2011
Report of: Director of Children's Services
Subject/Title: Family Support Services Review

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This is a response to the report on the Review of Family Support Services presented by the Task and Finish Group of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee and considered by Cabinet on 20th December 2010.

2.0 Decisions Requested

- 2.1 That Members note the responses to the recommendations made to Cabinet in the report by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee entitled Review of Family Support Services on 20th December 2010.
- 2.2 That Members endorse the response to the Review of family Support services recommendations.
- 2.3 That the Director of Children's Services be charged with taking steps to secure the implementation of the recommendations to ensure early intervention and prevention services are delivered to best meet the needs of families in Cheshire East

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The implementation of an early intervention model for Family Support in Cheshire East will ensure families' needs are met at the earliest point possible which in turn will reduce the need for more complex, expensive interventions at a later stage.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The recent cross party government report Good Prevention, Great Kids, Better Citizens clearly sets out the argument that prevention is better than cure and provides a firm foundation on which to build effective early intervention family support services.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 The 2011-12 budget included a savings target of £450,000 for Family Support, which was to be achieved through the rationalisation of the Family Centres and a restructure within the Family Support service. The creation of the new Early Intervention and Prevention service and the appointment of the Head of that service has resulted in a wider review of the early intervention services provided by Cheshire East, including Family Support which will ensure these savings are realised.
- 7.2 Where costs are likely to be incurred in the responses to the recommendations in the Annex, these will all be met within existing Council resources.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications in respect of this report...

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Failure to build capacity to provide early intervention services will result in delays in families accessing services resulting in an increased risk of more complicated and severe problems arising at a later date.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 On the 20th September 2010 Cabinet considered a report by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee entitled "Review of Family Support Services". The report acknowledged that prevention is better than cure and it is widely recognised that early intervention works, both with regard to improved outcomes and greater efficiency of resources and services being delivered.
- 10.2 The report made 23 recommendations relating to future delivery of Family Support provision for children in Cheshire East. Responses to the 23 recommendations is attached as an annexe.
- 10.3 Cabinet received the report and endorsed the recommendation that the Children and Families Portfolio Holder report to a future meeting of the Cabinet with a formal response to each recommendation.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name:	Tony Crane
Designation:	Head of Service – Early Intervention and Prevention
Email:	tony.crane@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES – RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To ensure a more consistent and coordinated approach to the family support provision and in line with the proposals set out in the recently completed “Family Support Review” an integrated Family Support/Early Intervention Service should be development under a single principal manager.

This recommendation is endorsed, a new Early Intervention and Prevention Service was recently formed which encompasses a range of early intervention programmes; this includes Targeted Youth; Family Support and Parenting and Children Centres. The new service and the future approach will be of an early intervention model based on specific localities. Localities will be defined by a combination of an analysis of need and where the delivery of services makes sense to families

2. To ensure easier recognition of a quality service and access to the service, Family Support/Early Intervention be developed as a brand with an appropriate logo.

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. The new Early Intervention and Prevention Service is currently consulting on the new name. However, the need to link early intervention activity with that of the Children’s Trust arrangements will be important when considering a specific branding style. The generic nature of the name will hopefully provide some identity but at the same time allow other partner services to come under the same umbrella, thus making service access clearer and simpler to families.

3. That Early intervention be adopted as the prevailing philosophy with the service.

This recommendation is endorsed. The recent Allen report endorses this approach and the evidence behind this is being used to underpin development in Cheshire East such as the new Early intervention and Prevention Service. Much work will need to be undertaken to embed prevention and the understanding of both primary and secondary prevention

4. That under the brand heading a full directory of services be devised and widely distributed on the internet, in customer centres, GP surgeries, libraries, schools and other public places, it should also be made available to staff from other agencies that are likely to make referrals

This recommendation is endorsed. The recently nationally accredited Family Information Service in Cheshire East uses a range of mechanisms such as the intranet, facebook and twitter to publicise services as widely as possible to families and other professional. Work is underway to produce a compendium full offer of services across the area.

5. That street signage to Children's Centres should be critically examined for effectiveness and improved as appropriate. Over time the brand should feature on all signs.

This recommendation is endorsed. It is suggested that this be considered alongside recommendation 2 in order to consider how best this can be achieved. However the current signs for Children Centres meet prescribed Sure Start branding principles which contribute to the actions that must be taken to draw down the relevant grant. Hopefully this and the capital cost of changing signage will not be prohibitive.

6. That a monitoring framework should be established across the service, including commissioned services to monitor performance against demand across Cheshire East on a LAP area basis and to identify service gaps or over provision in a timely fashion. The framework should inform decisions relative to in-house provision and commissioned services

This recommendation is endorsed. It is suggested that this work could and should be part of the new Locality Panels which are multi agency in set up and as such should ensure that such information is gathered to identify service need. The Performance Management Framework will underpin developments in the newly formed Early Intervention and Prevention Service and will facilitate a needs led approach with the Commissioning Team to ensure gaps are identified and services are delivered effectively and efficiently

7. That the role of Children's Centres becomes more targeted. Universal services still need to be provided but the balance needs to shift in order to better support families in the greatest need. The collection of 'reach' statistics needs to be revised reflects this, moving from 'universal reach' statistics to 'targeted reach' statistics.

This recommendation is endorsed specifically around the principle of targeting our more hard to reach families. The service is already re-shaping to deliver more targeted services, for example work is on-going to re-design the information management system (eStart) to enable us to collect more refined data around reach, targeting and outcomes. Universal reach data is still required but this needs to better reflect the universal work of health partners. Furthermore improving access to those families at the targeted and complex level of need will shift the balance and by adopting a Think Family approach we will work with our most vulnerable families using a whole family approach. For example the newly formed Early Intervention and Prevention Services will ensure join up and for instance the new service specification for Youth Support is explicit in ensuring our vulnerable/hardest to reach young people access services.

8. Improve health workers and social workers knowledge of the role and importance of Children's Centres in order to improve the current referral rates.

This recommendation is endorsed. The publication of a core offer of available activities will improve knowledge. Also an increase in appropriate referrals will form part of the recently formed Locality Panels role and function. The Locality Panel will adopt a multi agency approach top case discussion and allocation. Further ongoing work includes regular attendance both internal and external partners' operational manager meetings such as Health which is raising awareness and is improving referral rates.

9. Make Children's Centres more user friendly for disabled children (with a particularly focus on the Early Support Model) to enhance equality and opportunity for disabled children and their families.

This recommendation is endorsed. All centres meet building regulation requirement for accessibility and Disability Discrimination Act compliance. The need to include access to early intervention programmes such as portage is one opportunity being explored and multi-agency Early Support training is being rolled out to support implementation of the programme. Such programmes will encourage health professionals to refer children to the Centres for targeted work.

10. Ensure Children's Centres are adequately services by interpreters and to mitigate possible funding problems engage with the health authority on a shared funding basis.

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. It is suggested that a scoping exercise is undertaken to review current service provision to the ethnic minority communities using the commissioning process that ensures such provision ensures equal access for all service users. This scoping work will take place across the wider partnership of the Children Trust partnership and the Council to ensure a critical mass of resource which will then make this provision more efficient

11. Recognising that early intervention does not automatically mean early year's intervention, ensure that adequate targeted support for families with older children is provided.

This recommendation is endorsed. The Locality Model will result in an area having a joined up set of resources across the age continuum of 0-19 and a specific Locality Manager. This role will enable a more joined up efficient response to early intervention by both need and age. Part of this role will to ensure an integrated approach to the Youth agenda for some of the councils more vulnerable young people; this includes those at high risk of offending, cared for children and young people with mental health difficulties

12. Ensure that all staff involved in Family Support Services are fully trained in the updated 'Common Core Skills and Knowledge' framework to enable them to work effectively with families.

This recommendation is endorsed. It is acknowledged that for effective and essential delivery of family support services, this requires staff to have core skills which should include knowledge and understanding of the ages and stages of child development. In addition it is equally essential that Family Support staff have a wide knowledge and understanding of the variety of parenting support programmes which can be offered/provided to families in need. A key element of family support work is the ability to engage parent's whilst remaining child focus in order to effect change. The new Early Intervention and Prevention Service will have a comprehensive set of evidence based tools, programmes and activities which will be underpinned by a clear staff development plan

13. That a detailed 'Parenting Strategy' be developed. This should include preferred parenting programmes to enable a range of options depending on a family's needs and capabilities.

This recommendation is endorsed. A strategy is in draft format and is due to be presented at the next Children's Trust meeting for endorsement and implementation.

14. That the current use of buildings be explored with a focus on the range of services to be delivered and the suitability of some current buildings. For instance the group are fully supportive of an initial conclusion that two of the four family centres are not fit for purpose and that services currently provided in these centres should be located in other existing buildings (possibly including schools)

This recommendation is endorsed. For Family support to be effective there requires a degree of flexibility in terms of how best this is delivered. Family Support Services ideally need to ensure that it meets the individual needs of the parent/carer at any given time. Family centres whilst playing a part in delivering intense parenting programmes should also ideally ensure that facilities reflect the need of the community. A clear example being community based mother and baby assessments which enable young mothers to remain within their community whilst being supported through an intense package of support to care for their baby with a safe and structured unit environment that offers realistic and practical life skills as a parent.

15. Recognise that many experienced family support workers in Family Centres are inappropriately being used in undertaking long term supervised contact and redeploy them into early intervention/family support and consider commissioning delivery of supervised contact services by the third sector. The choice of third sector provider will be critical.

This recommendation is endorsed. Work has begun through an action plan to address this situation and enable staff to be freed up to support the delivery of an effective family support service. It is suggested that a

scoping exercise looks at CAFCASS and their relationship with Contact Centres which provide supervised contact to families where there is parental conflict in private law proceedings be consider. In addition there is a need to consider better use of foster carers/residential staff where contact post court is still necessary to ensure the child's safety.

The need to continue to undertake supervised contact is essential where cases remain in the court arena, however such contact should be undertaken through a clear programme of Parenting Assessed Contact, the purpose being that the assessed contact forms part of the Local Authorities assessment within the court process. The possible commissioning of a third sector organisation to deliver some elements of service is being pursued and one we would like to make a reality

16. That Cheshire East Council works closely with Individual schools and EIPs to work more closely to integrate the Family Support and other services they provide with the mainstream provision provided by the Council.

This recommendation is endorsed. It is envisaged that such integration will be achieved through the Locality Panels and Early Intervention Model.

17. Closely monitor the effect of budget pressures/cuts on school provided family support and the possible counter effect of the pupil premium.

The Locality model will engage fully with schools and other partners to best mitigate the impact cuts have on services to families. Discussions regarding Pupil Premium will be ongoing as part of locality developments both in terms of how we maximise the allocation to Cheshire East and how this resource is best spent

18. Seek to find efficiency savings in the area of transport costs for both children and family members associated with supervised contact services.

This recommendation is endorsed. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the council have a duty to promote contact between a child and their family providing it is safe to do so. As outlined in the Children Act 1989. Improved practice guidance and the procurement of more cost effective transport services will also be pursued

19. Implement the windscreen method of illustrating the continuum of needs and services and the role of the CAF into the family support assessment process. This method is used extensively within the children's social care process and would likewise benefit the family support/early intervention process.

This recommendation is endorsed. Work has begun to effect such a proposal and is led by the CAF co-ordinator.

20. Those children with Child Protection Plans and those deemed vulnerable be systematically identified by the relevant agencies and the appropriate referrals be made to the Family Support Service. In the spirit of early intervention this needs to be done as early as possible to minimise subsequent costs but it also needs to be done systematically by setting child development benchmarks at appropriate ages.

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. However, where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan this will be as a result of clear safeguarding concerns within the family and as such would be seen as level 4 on the continuum of need. Such plans invariably will necessitate specialist family support provision as part of the Child protection plan. It would therefore be key to ensure that the Family Support Services are an active partner in such situation as part of their wider safeguarding duty.

Ideally the need to prevent through an early intervention programme and using the CAF assessment, should ensure that the Family Support Service is commissioned at an earlier stage thereby avoiding the need for statutory intervention through Child Protection/Cared for child

21. That a pilot programme of intensive family support/early intervention be devised and implemented in an area of known deprivation and where a significant number of families needing support are resident. The programme should be devised in conjunction with other council departments and others service providers to have maximum benefit. For example in conjunction with community development and council play schemes the fire services princes trust scheme and job centre plus, social housing providers etc.

This recommendation is endorsed. Work has begun in delivering such a pilot within the Crewe area of the authority. Such a pilot has a wide multi agency partnership committed to working with a targeted cohort of vulnerable families. The pilot which incorporates a number of agencies including the Third sector will be evaluated and finding used to inform future developments

22. That an annual conference for all sections of the Children and Families service be introduced to ensure that all sections of the service are coordinated and working towards the same vision.

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. However it is recognised that within the current economic climate that alternative options could and should be consider.

23. That an annual report of what has been achieved for Family Support and Early intervention be produced and submitted to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee and to the Cabinet. The report should cover all actions by all agencies in the Family Support field (including assessment of current state of data sharing amongst agencies) A specific example would be Health

sharing live birth data including the availability of management information relating to financial data.

This recommendation is endorsed. However it should be noted that with the current significant changes within the health as part of the NHS redesign moving away from PCT to GP consortia that data sharing is likely to be fragmented during this period.

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