

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Supplementary Agenda

Date: Thursday, 4th June, 2020

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting

7. **2019/20 Outturn** (Pages 3 - 90)

To consider a report from the Executive Director of Corporate Services (to follow).

9. **Corporate Peer Challenge** (Pages 91 - 120)

To receive an oral update from the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

For any apologies or requests for further information, or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

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Key Decision: N

Date First
Published: N/A

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 09 June 2020

Report Title: 2019/20 Financial Outturn

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Amanda Stott – Finance, IT and Communication

Report Author: Alex Thompson – Director of Finance & Customer Services
(Section 151 Officer)

Senior Officer: Jane Burns – Executive Director of Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines how the Council has managed its resources to provide value for money services during the 2019/20 financial year. The report includes a revenue outturn summary and detail on financial performance for the year within service areas and central budgets.
- 1.2. The financial outturn for Cheshire East Council is balanced for 2019/20, in that gross income is matched to gross expenditure with the appropriate use of earmarked reserves. General Reserves will remain unchanged at £10.3m. 2019/20 presented a challenging year for the Council, in common with other local authorities across the UK, as revenue budgets came under severe pressure due to the combined effects of rising inflation, increased demand for services and continuing reductions in government funding as well as facing rising costs associated with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3. The Covid-19 emergency started to impact on the Council's finances in March 2020, resulting in an increase in costs of £1m. Central Government has provided emergency grant funding; the first instalment being paid on 27th March. This has therefore been used to fund the impact in 2019/20 so that the identified expenditure has not affected the Council's outturn or

reserves position, although for transparency it is shown under the relevant Directorates.

- 1.4. At the third quarter, reported to Cabinet on 4th February 2020, the Council was forecasting a potential overspend of up to £6.8m compared to the 2019/20 Budget. Mitigating actions were proposed to minimise the impact of this forecast. These actions included the application of capital receipts from sale of shares (c.£2.4m) and the re-alignment of and appropriate use of earmarked reserves to support General Reserve balances (c.£4.4m).
- 1.5. The outturn position for 2019/20 is reported at £6.043m, which increases to £7.096m with the inclusion of the additional spending on Covid-19. The outturn position of £6.043m presents a positive comparison to the third quarter forecast of £6.832m and actually indicates a small improvement. Further detail is provided in the following table and Appendix 1.

Table 1: Total Net Budget has been overspent by £7.096m, which includes Covid-19 expenditure of £1.053m

Directorate	Budget £000	Outturn (excluding Covid 19) £000	Covid 19 Expenditure £000	Outturn £000	Over/(Under spend) £000
People	170,434	176,587	648	177,235	6,801
Place	73,120	72,750	387	73,137	17
Corporate	30,369	31,990	18	32,008	1,639
Total Services	273,923	281,327	1,053	282,380	8,457
Central Budgets	8,266	6,905	-	6,905	(1,361)
Total Net Budget	282,189	288,232	1,053	289,285	7,096
Funding	(282,189)	(282,398)	(1,053)	(283,451)	(1,262)
Additional use of Reserves	-	(5,834)	-	(5,834)	(5,834)
Funding Position	-	-	-	-	-

- 1.6. When the position was reported at third quarter overspending was identified as occurring due to demand led pressures in the People Directorate, past service pension costs and delays associated with efficiency savings included within service budgets. These identified pressures remained at year-end although the financial impact of past service pension costs reduced from £1m to £0.4m based on revised valuations.
- 1.7. Financial pressures in the People Directorate have increased by £1.9m since the third quarter review. This is mainly due to Covid-19 expenditure (£0.6m), an increase in the bad debt provision for Adult Social Care (£0.4m), which recognises an up to date and appropriate level of financial risk from possible non-collection of debt; increased transport costs (£0.4m)

and additional staffing pressures in the Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) team.

- 1.8. The Place Directorate is reporting an improved outturn position compared to third quarter. The Outturn position of £73.1m includes Covid-19 expenditure of £0.4m and the creation of new earmarked reserves for Flood Recovery Works, Parking Studies and the Highways Winter Service.
- 1.9. Pressures in the Corporate Directorate increased by £0.4m since third quarter. Included in this figure is £0.7m of costs relating to revenue expenditure associated with the Best4Business project and MARS (Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme) payments that are to be covered by the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts. The underlying position for the Directorate after these have been accounted for centrally is an outturn of £0.9m over budget.
- 1.10. Outturn within Central Budgets has improved by £2.2m linked to the revised forecasts for pension liabilities; the Apprenticeship Levy and the additional use of Capital Receipts. A reduction has been applied to the bad debt provision following a review of the policy in line with IFRS9.
- 1.11. A drawdown of reserves will be required to fund gross expenditure in the year. This was previously recognised at third quarter as part of the mitigating actions and is set out in Appendix 1 (Net Position). This also takes account of the application of the capital receipts from sale of shares (£2.4m), as this amount has been taken from the financing reserve as an alternative.
- 1.12. Expenditure on the capital programme is £123.4m against a forecast spend of £132.7m at third quarter. The underspends will be carried forward to 2020/21 and budgets will be re-profiled as part of the outturn reporting. Capital receipts in year amounted to £10.5m against a forecast of £7.2m.
- 1.13. The Council's wholly owned companies produced a positive outturn for the year, with an overall operating profit of £494,000 for the Group.
- 1.14. A summary of the Council's achievements since May 2019 has been collated. This includes information on how the Council has responded positively to a number of major incidents during the year, including a short summary of the COVID-19 response. The Appendix also includes nominations for awards.
- 1.15. The attached Appendices set out details of the Council's financial and non-financial performance in 2019/20:

Appendix 1 – Revenue Outturn Summary 2019/20 – Provides the final revenue outturn position for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

Appendix 2 – Grants – includes details of capital and revenue grants received during 2019/20.

Appendix 3 – Debt Management

Appendix 4 – Reserves

Appendix 5 – Achievements and Awards

The Capital Outturn and Treasury Management position will be reported in a subsequent Cabinet report.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 2.1. Note that gross expenditure has been balanced to gross income with the appropriate allocation of reserves.
- 2.2. Note the financial impact of the COVID-19 emergency on the 2019/20 budget and the use of the emergency funding to cover this cost.
- 2.3. Note the debt management position.
- 2.4. Note the reserves position.
- 2.5. Note the achievements during the year.
- 2.6. Approve the supplementary revenue estimate of £790,265 relating to the increase in Public Health grant received. This is additional to the estimated amount approved in the budget report.
- 2.7. Recommend to Council to approve:
 - 2.7.1. fully funded supplementary revenue estimate above £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in (**Appendix 2 Table 1**).

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Council monitors in-year performance through a reporting cycle, which includes outturn reporting at year-end. Reports during the year reflect financial and operational performance and provide the opportunity for members to note, approve or recommend changes in line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
- 3.2. The overall process for managing the Council's resources focuses on value for money and good governance and stewardship. Financial changes that become necessary during the year are properly authorised and this report sets out those areas where any further approvals are now required.

- 3.3. This report provides strong links between the Council's statutory reporting requirements and the in-year monitoring processes for financial and non-financial management of resources.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable

5. Background

- 5.1. Monitoring performance is essential to the achievement of outcomes within the Corporate Plan. This is especially important in evidencing the achievement of value for money across an organisation the size of Cheshire East Council. The Council is the third largest in the Northwest of England, responsible for over 500 services, supporting over 375,000 local people. Gross annual spending is over £770m, with a balanced net revenue budget for 2019/20 of £282.2m.
- 5.2. The management structure of the Council is organised in to three directorates, People, Place and Corporate. The Council's reporting structure provides forecasts of a potential year-end outturn within each directorate during the year, as well as highlighting activity carried out in support of each outcome contained within the Corporate Plan.
- 5.3. At final outturn, the Council's reserves strategy remains effective with a zero net variance against the budgeted position, as forecast at the third quarter review. Capital Expenditure for the year was £123m.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. The legal implications surrounding the process of setting the 2019 to 2022 medium term financial strategy were dealt with in the reports relating to that process. The purpose of this paper is to provide a progress report at the final outturn stage of 2019/20. That is done as a matter of prudential good practice, notwithstanding the abolition of centrally imposed reporting requirements under the former National Indicator Set.
- 6.1.2. Legal implications that arise when activities funded from the budgets that this report deals with are undertaken, but those implications will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records that relate.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and

communities. Monitoring and managing performance helps to ensure that resources are used effectively and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.

6.2.2. The Council's Audit & Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing and analysing the Council's financial position at year-end. The final accounts will be approved by 30th November 2020 following external auditing and associated recommendations to the Committee.

6.2.3. Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council.

6.2.4. The forecast outturn for 2019/20, as reported at quarter three, was used to inform the budget setting process for 2020/21. Analysis of the final outturn helps to inform the Council of potential issues arising for the 2020/21 budget, or highlights potential underlying issues that can be managed in future budget setting cycles

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. This report is a backward look at Council activities during the final quarter.

6.3.2. Performance management supports delivery of all Council policies. The final outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2021/24 medium term financial strategy.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. Any equality implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. This report is a backward look at Council activities at outturn and states the year end position. Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. Performance and risk management are part of the management processes of the Authority. Risks are captured both in terms of the risk of underperforming and risks to the Council in not delivering its

objectives for its residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders. Risks identified in this report are used to inform the overall financial control risk contained in the Corporate Risk Register.

6.6.2. Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if and when required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2019/20 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2020/21 financial scenario, budget and reserves strategy.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. The report provides details of service provision across the borough.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People / Cared for Children

6.8.1. The report provides details of service provision across the borough, acknowledges the ofsted report and notes the overspend on Children in Care.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. This report is a backward look at Council activities at the fourth quarter and provides the year end position. Any public health implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. As part of the budget setting process the Pre-Budget Report 2019/20 provided an opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the Council's Budget proposals. The budget proposals described in the consultation document were Council wide proposals and that consultation was invited on the broad budget proposals. Where the implications of individual proposals were much wider for individuals affected by each proposal, further full and proper consultation was undertaken with people who would potentially be affected by individual budget proposals.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The following are links to key background documents:

[Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22](#)

[Mid Year Review of Performance 2019/20](#)

[Third Quarter Review of Performance 2019/20](#)

[Statement of Accounts 2019/20](#)

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Alex Thompson

Job Title: Director of Finance & Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)

Email: alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk

2019/20 Final Outturn**People Directorate**

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3r)	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
People								
Directorate	883	720		720	-163	-614	451	451
Children's Social Care	36,995	40,656	9	40,665	3,670	3,837	-167	-176
Education & 14-19 Skills	14,471	15,104	212	15,316	845	27	818	606
Prevention & Early Help	8,221	7,717		7,717	-504	-321	-183	-183
Adult Social Care Operations	24,743	26,226	427	26,653	1,910	1,568	342	-85
Commissioning	85,121	86,164		86,164	1,043	428	615	615
Public Health	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
	170,434	176,587	648	177,235	6,801	4,925	1,876	1,228

The overspend for Children and Families (C&F) for 2019/20 is £3.8m. The main driver for this figure is the pressure on the agency placements budget within Children's Social Care.

The number of cared for children stood at 533 at 31st March 2020 reflecting an increase of 49 during the financial year. That is broken down into 182 admissions and 133 children leaving care. While care budgets were uplifted for 2019/20, this increase in numbers continues to place a strain on existing budgets of £3.7m.

The service is actively engaged in reducing the pressure on the agency placements budget through a combination of measures including:

- Increasing the number of foster carers.
- Working as part of a regional adoption collaboration to increase adopters.
- Opening up a number of smaller children's residential homes to meet need and provide value for money.
- Regular reviews of placements to ensure needs are met at the appropriate cost and improved gatekeeping.
- Trialling different methods of providing care which have benefitted from Government investment in previous years.
- Further projects being planned for 2020/21 to move to a "bespoke" service offer and undertake further challenge of costs.

Other key pressures include:

Transport (£0.4m pressure) – this is provided through the Council owned company Transport Service Solutions Ltd (TSS). The C&F Directorate and TSS staff have been working for several years to make significant savings to the management fee. This is continuing to prove a challenge as options are limited without impacting on service delivery.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) staffing (£0.7m pressure) where the service is using agency staff to fill permanent roles and catch up on Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) production.

The SEND service has seen a significant rise in activity levels and there is a pressure on the grant used to provide funding for children with SEND in various settings. This has led to a £4.2m overspend against the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant. The Council has a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Reserve balance of £1.6m at April 2019. Throughout the year the pressure on that budget of £4.2m has taken that to a £2.6m credit reserve

This is a result of pressures on the high needs budget from additional volumes and complexity of cases of children with EHCPs and more expensive independent provision. A significant number of measures to address this are being taken forward including:

- Restructuring the SEND team and increasing capacity.
- Using new systems to improve monitoring and forecasting.
- Updating an analysis of SEN Need across the borough.
- Expanding local SEND provision and opening new facilities to reduce the need for expensive placements. This is taking time to deliver.
- Piloting a new banding system for funding pupils with SEND to give schools greater flexibility on how the funding is used.

The Adult Social Care (Operations and Commissioning) and Public Health budgets remains under continued pressure across the country. The pressure here in Cheshire East comes from a combination of factors, which have been building over a number of years, and relate to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents and this has been recognised in the 2019/20 budget where growth has been allocated. Adult Social Care Commissioning have responded to this challenge by commissioning the care at home and care with accommodation market to ensure there is a better offer to service users and more certainly for providers. In addition to this the Adult Social Care Commissioners have also introduced an Early Help Framework to support better outcomes in the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors. Additional costs at the end of the year linked to the Covid-19 Pandemic have created additional pressure for the Adults service budget.

The final outturn position is £2.95m overspent in 2019/20, the main large variances contributing to this pressure are-

£1.93m of Care4CE overspend due to the unachievable savings targets, these have been removed in the MTFs so will not be a pressure in 2020/21.

£594k of costs that are shown in the service position in line with reporting requirements, these are funded centrally (£427k of Personal Protection Equipment due to Covid-19 and £165k of C Co (Cipfa consultancy) costs linked to the Care4CE review).

£598k contribution to the bad debt provision which reflects some debt tipping over into the 6 month old + category. Most of this change relates to client contribution debt (non-

deferred). Debt levels are reviewed quarterly and the provision is adjusted to reflect fluctuations in numbers of new invoices raised and debts settled or written off. As the value of care costs have increased due to demand and complexity, client contributions and corresponding debt also increases.

The temporary funding used in 2019/20 includes £1.45m of Winter Pressures and £7m of Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF).

Place Directorate

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3m)	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Place								
Directorate	654	551		551	-103	0	-103	-103
Environment & Neighbourhood Services	39,607	39,490	278	39,768	161	163	-2	-280
Growth & Enterprise	20,547	20,286	17	20,303	-244	-395	151	134
Highways and Infrastructure	12,312	12,423	92	12,515	203	151	52	-40
	73,120	72,750	387	73,137	17	-81	98	-289

The Place Directorate net expenditure outturn of £72.4m is £0.7m lower than budget.

Included in this number are £0.4m of costs and loss of income related to Covid-19 and £0.5m of costs covered by flexible capital receipts. The underlying position for Place after these have been accounted for centrally is an outturn £1.5m lower than budget.

Place Directorate £0.1m underspend

The Council's corporate spending freeze led to savings across a number of areas. In addition, contributions to the Constellation Partnership were not needed in 2019/20.

Environment & Neighbourhood Services £0.2m pressure

Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) and Covid-19 costs account for the pressure of £0.2m, excluding these the service would achieve a balanced position.

There has been a large fall in the amount of planning income received in year. Pressures also exist for reduced recycling income and the revenue costs of rolling out food waste recycling. These have been mitigated by staffing vacancies across the majority of services and savings made under the Council's spending freeze, particularly in Libraries. Some of the Local Plan work has moved into 2020/21 thereby creating an underspend which hasn't been carried forward.

Growth & Enterprise £0.2m underspend

Costs covered by flexible capital receipts and Covid-19 costs total £0.5m within Growth & Enterprise. The underlying position excluding these is an underspend of £0.7m

There are staffing vacancies across the majority of the services, rental income has increased from Farms and the Council has received reimbursement of a subsidy paid to Skills and Growth to operate Fairer Power from prior years. Savings have been made from bringing Skills and Growth and Engine of the North back in-house.

Additional expenditure has arisen from emergency repairs within Facilities Management, but this has been offset by a reduction in planned maintenance. Costs have also been incurred from aborted housing schemes.

Highways & Infrastructure £0.5m underspend

Costs covered by flexible capital receipts and Covid-19 costs total £0.2m within Highways & Infrastructure. The underlying position excluding these is an under spend of £0.7m.

There are staffing vacancies across the service, with the shortfall predominantly on Civil Enforcement Officers within Parking. There has been lower spend than expected on Parking studies and concessionary fares. Higher income has been received for Highways licences, traffic regulation orders and s38 developer fees. Recharges to capital have also been higher than budget levels.

These have been partially offset by the revenue costs of the flooding which totalled £1.4m.

Earmarked reserve requests have been made to complete the parking studies, for the flood recovery work linked to gully emptying and drainage works and to cover the winter maintenance pressures as a result of the recent Scrutiny call in.

Corporate Directorate

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3r)	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate								
Directorate	778	596		596	-182	-234	52	52
Finance and Customer Services	7,550	9,185		9,185	1,635	574	1,061	1,061
Governance and Compliance	9,994	9,753		9,753	-241	385	-626	-626
Services								
Transformation	12,047	12,456	18	12,474	427	463	-36	-54
	30,369	31,990	18	32,008	1,639	1,188	451	433

The Corporate Services Directorate net expenditure outturn of £32.0m is £1.6m more than the budget available, which is a £0.4m shift from the £1.2m overspend forecast at Third Quarter Review (TQR). Included in this figure is £0.7m of costs relating to additional Best4Business (B4B) costs and MARS payments that are to be covered by Flexible Capital Receipts (FCR). The underlying position for the Directorate after these have been accounted for centrally is an outturn £0.9m over budget.

Directorate (-£0.2m)

The Corporate Services Directorate area includes the cost of the Chief Executive and associated budgets, and the Executive Director of Corporate Services, along with the temporary three year £280,000 Corporate Services growth. The outturn is due to a £91,000 saving relating to the Admin Review, that is meant to be eliminated by savings achieved through the Corporate Services restructure, being offset by Corporate Services temporary growth budget that will be moved to services once the Corporate Services restructuring has been completed.

Finance & Customer Services (+1.6m)

The overall forecast for Finance and Customer Services (F&CS) is a £1.6m overspend which is a £1.0m increase compared to the £0.6m forecast at Third Quarter. Flexible Capital Receipts will be applied to fund revenue costs associated with the B4B project (£0.6m) and MARS payments (£48,000), so the underlying position for F&CS is a £1.0m overspend against the revenue budget. The majority of the over spend is attributable to digital project savings of £0.8m which are unachievable, and the base budget has been reset for 2020/21 and opportunities to relaunch the project will be considered in the future. There has also been an under-recovery of £0.5m on the Benefits Payments centre, and £0.2m savings linked to delays in implementing the Best4Business System. These pressures are partially offset by in-year staffing underspends within Finance and Procurement, and Customer Services.

The B4B project was paused during 2019/20 to enable the project to be re-set and for the capital project budget to be re-based and consequently increased. Staff costs incurred from that point were required to be met from revenue causing an over spend of £0.6m as no budget was available in revenue. The £0.6m of additional costs were incurred on business change work and the equalised costs of staff working on the B4B project employed by both Cheshire East and Cheshire West Councils. These costs cannot be capitalised, as they do not meet the criteria to be charged to the capital project. However, they can be funded by the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts as they still meet the criteria of transformational spend. A revenue budget funded by the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts will be available in 2020/21 to meet any further costs arising from the project that cannot be capitalised.

Transformation (+0.4m)

In line with the TQR forecast, Transformation overspent by £0.4m. Costs relating to additional MARS payments (£44,000) are to be covered by FCR so will slightly reduce the underlying position.

Human Resources (HR) which includes the cross council MARS saving of £0.3m, part of savings linked to implementing the Best4Business System £0.3m and the shared Transactional Services (TSC) hosted by Cheshire West & Chester (CWaC), was break-even however the CEC HR budget significantly underspent on departmental employee budgets due to secondments, vacancies, maternity leave, and recruitment awaiting a restructure. This is offset by unachieved in-year MARS and Best4Business savings, and TSC overspending by £0.1m. Business Change overspent by £0.3m due to unfunded posts, reduced DSG funding, and a large unachievable income target within Project Management Office. ICT Strategy overspent by £85,000 due to an increase in spend on third-party contracts and an increased number of licences being partially offset by higher than expected project income recovery, ICT Service Delivery overspent by £20,000.

Governance & Compliance (-£0.2m)

Governance & Compliance underspent by £0.2m which was a £0.6m positive shift from the £0.4m overspend forecast at TQR. Costs relating to additional MARS payments (£49,000) are to be covered by FCR so will slightly increase the underlying underspend. Legal Services overspent by £0.4m compared to the £0.7m forecast at third quarter, due to cost pressures of unbudgeted posts being partially offset by an over-achievement in income. The Director of Governance & Compliance (DoG&C), overspent by £0.1m due to a shortfall in the budget for the DoG&C post. These pressures were offset by underspends in Governance & Democratic Services, and Audit & Risk.

Central Budgets

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3r	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
CENTRAL BUDGETS								
Capital Financing	12,000	12,000		12,000	0	0	0	0
Transfer from/to Earmarked Reserves	-1,897	-1,897		-1,897	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund Management Reserve	-1,000	-1,000		-1,000	0	0	0	0
Other income/Expenditure		-326		-326	-326	-200	-126	-126
Past Service Pensions	163	580		580	417	1,000	-583	-583
NHB Community Fund	1,000	1,000		1,000	0	0	0	0
Income from Use of Capital Receipts	-2,000	-2,834		-2,834	-834	0	-834	-834
Apprenticeship Levy		-618		-618	-618	0	-618	-618
Total Central Budgets	8,266	6,905	0	6,905	-1,361	800	-2,161	-2,161

Outturn within Central Budgets has improved by £2.2m linked to revised forecasts for pension liabilities, the Apprenticeship Levy, increased use of Capital Receipts and a reduction in the bad debt provision following a review of the policy in line with accounting standard IFRS9.

Funding

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3r	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
FUNDING								
Business Rates Retention Scheme	-47,977	-47,977		-47,977	0	0	0	0
Specific Grants	-15,873	-16,082	-1,053	-17,135	-1,262	0	-1,262	-209
Council Tax	-216,243	-216,243		-216,243	0	0	0	0
Sourced from Collection Fund	-2,096	-2,096		-2,096	0	0	0	0
CENTRAL BUDGETS FUNDING	-282,189	-282,398	-1,053	-283,451	-1,262	0	-1,262	-209

The favourable variance on grants mainly relates to the additional covid-19 emergency funding grant. This offsets the additional costs experienced within the services. The remainder of this grant has been carried forward in a reserve to meet further costs expected next year.

Net Position

FINAL OUTTURN (GROSS Revenue Budget £646.3r	Revised Budget (NET)	Outturn Excluding Covid-19 Expenditure	Covid-19 Expenditure	OUTTURN		CHANGE FROM TQR		
				OUTTURN	NET Over / (Underspend)	TQR Forecast Over / (Underspend)	Change from TQR (net outturn)	Change from TQR (net outturn excluding covid-19 Expenditure)
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
People Directorate	170,434	176,587	648	177,235	6,801	4,925	1,876	1,228
Place Directorate	73,120	72,750	387	73,137	17	-81	98	-289
Corporate Directorate	30,369	31,990	18	32,008	1,639	1,188	451	433
Total Central Budgets	8,266	6,905	0	6,905	-1,361	800	-2,161	-2,161
Funding	-282,189	-282,398	-1,053	-283,451	-1,262	0	-1,262	-209
FUNDING POSITION	0	5,834	0	5,834	5,834	6,832	-998	-998
RELEASE OF RESERVE TO MITIGATE								
Release from Capital Finance Reserve				-2,370	-2,370			
Release from MTFS Reserve				-1,700	-1,700			
Release from Trading Reserve				-1,317	-1,317			
Release from Other Reserves				-447	-447			
RELEASE OF RESERVE TO MITIGATE	0	0	0	-5,834	-5,834			
NET POSITION					0			

The outturn position will return to a balanced position with the release of reserves.

Appendix 2

Corporate Grants Register

Government Grant Funding of Local Expenditure

1. Cheshire East Council receives two main types of Government grants; specific use grants and general purpose grants. The overall total of Government grant budgeted for in 2019/20 was £264.6m.
2. In 2019/20 Cheshire East Council's specific use grants held within the services was budgeted to be £249.7m based on Government announcements to February 2019. At mid-year, this figure was revised down to £244.9m, and then down again at third quarter to £237.0m.
3. The last quarter has seen a decrease in specific use grant of £1.6m. In the People Directorate, the majority of the difference relates to Academy conversions, whilst in the Corporate Directorate, there has been a further reduction in Housing Benefit Subsidy.
4. Spending in relation to specific use grants must be in line with the purpose for which it is provided.
5. General purpose grants were budgeted to be £14.9m. This reduced by £0.3m during the year as the Tackling Troubled Families budget was transferred to the service. Further in-year grant announcements have increased the amount received to £30.2m.
6. Where additional non-ringfenced grant funding is received, services wishing to increase their expenditure budgets are required by Finance Procedure Rules to seek approval to use this additional funding. Additional general purpose grants totalling £6.1m were received during the final quarter of 2019/20.
7. Services are seeking approval for use of £73,351 of this additional funding (**Table 1**) in 2019/20 to match expenditure that has occurred during the year. This relates to COVID-19 Bus Support Services and Neighbourhood Planning.
8. Services are seeking approval to use £157,381 of this additional funding (**Table 1**) in 2020/21 and this has been transferred to an earmarked reserve.
9. These grants were received too late in 2019/20 to spend in year and therefore this report seeks approval to service requests to incur expenditure of £157,381 in 2020/21, fully funded by the additional grants.
10. There are also service requests relating to 2020/21. The requests relate to Public Health and Rough Sleeping Initiative grants. These requests increase budget expenditure in People Directorate by £790,265 and Place Directorate by £438,329.
11. During the quarter service budgets have been increased by £133,332 as a result of an officer decision record. This related to an Environmental Service Feasibility Study (NW Local Energy Hub) funding that was received, and expenditure budget required, during 2019/20.

12. COVID-19 Emergency Funding of £9.1m was also received during the final quarter. Of this, £1.0m has been applied in 2019/20 with the remaining £8.1m going forward in to 2020/21.
13. Business Rates Tax Loss Compensation grants of £8.4m have also been received during 2019/20 to reimburse billing authorities for the extra discounts offered to businesses as announced in the Autumn Statements. £3.6m of these grants have been utilised to support the revenue budget.

14. Net additional general purpose grant of £15.3m has been received during the year, with £1.1m being allocated direct to services. After allowing for the transfer of £13.1m to earmarked reserves, the net outturn variance is a £1.1m improvement against budget.
15. **Table 2** below provides a summary of the updated budget position for grants in 2019/20 by type and service. Further details of grants are shown in the Statement of Accounts.

Table 1 – Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding

Service	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Place	Neighbourhood Planning Grant for Local Planning Authorities (General Purpose)	23	The conditions of grant mean that this funding could be used across the wider Spatial Planning area.
Place	Covid-19 Bus Support Services (Ring-fenced)	50	Additional support for bus services that have been affected by, or need to be adjusted because of, the impact of COVID-19. Conditions apply and any underspend will need to be returned to DfT.
Total Allocation 2019/20 for use in 2019/20		73	
Place	Neighbourhood Planning Grant for Local Planning Authorities (General Purpose)	37	The conditions of grant mean that this funding could be used across the wider Spatial Planning area.

Service	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Place	Private Rented Sector Innovation and Enforcement (General Purpose)	75	This grant is to be used to raise the standard of properties in the Private Rented Sector by supporting projects that will help local authorities to carry out their duties and use their existing budgets more effectively.
Place	Custom Build (General Purpose)	15	The funding is designed to off-set the new responsibilities imposed by the the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. The Act requires authorities to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the authority's area and, unless exempt, to grant sufficient development permissions to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding.
Place	Brownfield Register & Payments In Principle (General Purpose)	2	New legislation requires local planning authorities to prepare and maintain registers of previously developed land suitable for housing (brownfield land registers) and allow for the granting of permission in principle for sites allocated for housing-led development. Local planning authorities are receiving new burdens grant payments to fulfil the new requirements.
Corporate – Customer Operations	Blue Badge: New Criteria Implementation (General Purpose)	15	The Government is providing revenue funding towards the additional administration costs that have arisen because of the changes to the eligibility criteria for Blue Badges to include non-visible disabilities which came into force on 30 th August 2019.
Corporate	Local Government Transparency Code - New Burdens (General Purpose)	13	New burdens in relation to the Council's obligation to publish information in line with the Government's Transparency Code 2014.
Total Allocation 2019/20 for use in 2020/21		157	

Service	Type of Grant	£000	Details
People	Public Health (Ring-fenced)	790	The public health grant is ring-fenced for use on public health functions exclusively for all ages. This request is in addition to the amount included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report.
Place	Rough Sleeping Initiative (Ring-fenced)	438	The Rough Sleepers Initiative provides local support for those living on the streets, making an immediate impact on the rising levels of rough sleeping. This request is in addition to the amount included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report.
Total Allocation 2020/21		1,228	
Central Budgets	Covid-19 Emergency Funding	1,053 8,098	The Covid-19 Emergency Funding is additional grant received due to the rising costs caused by the pandemic. Use of Emergency Funding to cover additional expenditure relating Covid-19 during 2019/20. Remaining Emergency Funding carried forward in a reserve to meet additional costs during 2020/21
Total Covid-19 Funding		9,151	

Table 2 – Corporate Grants Register

	Original Budget	Revised Forecast TQR	Final Outturn	Change from TQR
	2019/20 £m	2019/20 £m	2019/20 £m	2019/20 £000
SPECIFIC USE				
Held within Services	249.7	237.0	235.4	(1.6)
GENERAL PURPOSE				
<u>Service Funding</u>				
People - Childrens & Families	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0
People - Adult Social Care and Health	3.7	3.7	3.7	0.0
Place	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.3
Corporate - Customer Operations	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.0
Corporate	9.3	9.7	19.0	9.3
Central Items	0.0	8.6	5.0	(3.6)
TOTAL GENERAL PURPOSE	14.9	24.1	30.2	6.1
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING	264.6	261.1	265.6	4.5

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Corporate Grants Register (Detail)

Corporate Grants Register 2019/20		Original Budget	Revised Forecast TQR	Final Outturn	Change from TQR
	Note	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000
SPECIFIC USE (Held within Services)					
PEOPLE					
Schools	1	149,481	144,800	143,795	(1,005)
Children & Families		1,732	2,340	2,349	10
Adult Social Care		12,675	12,690	12,686	(4)
Public Health		15,967	15,967	15,967	0
Public Sector Transformation		0	410	410	0
Total		179,855	176,206	175,207	(999)
PLACE					
Growth and Regeneration		652	652	651	(1)
Planning and Sustainable Development		220	0	0	(0)
Directorate		787	819	819	0
Total		1,659	1,471	1,470	(1)
CORPORATE					
Finance and Customer Services		68,211	59,329	58,736	(593)
Total		68,211	59,329	58,736	(593)
TOTAL SPECIFIC USE		249,725	237,006	235,413	(1,593)

Corporate Grants Register 2019/20	Original Budget	Revised Forecast TQR	Final Outturn	Change from TQR
<i>Note</i>	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000	2019/20 £000
SPECIFIC USE (Held within Services)				
GENERAL PURPOSE (Held Corporately)				
PEOPLE				
Children and Families	195	368	368	0
Adult Social Care and Health	3,679	3,702	3,702	0
PLACE				
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	0	83	294	211
Growth and Enterprise	47	47	122	75
Highways and Infrastructure	16	16	67	50
CORPORATE				
Finance and Customer Services	1,598	1,607	1,644	37
Governance and Compliance	0	352	365	13
CENTRAL ITEMS				
Central	9,328	9,328	18,621	9,293
Collection Fund	0	8,577	5,001	(3,575)
Total Service Funding	14,863	24,079	30,184	6,105
TOTAL GENERAL PURPOSE	14,863	24,079	30,184	6,105
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING	264,588	261,086	265,597	4,511

Notes

- The Dedicated Schools Grant, Pupil Premium Grant, Sixth Form Grant and Other School Specific Grant from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) figures are based on actual anticipated allocations. Changes are for in-year increases/decreases to allocations by the DfE and conversions to academy status.

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Appendix 3

Debt Management

1. Sundry debt includes all invoiced income due to the Council except for statutory taxes (Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates). The balance of outstanding debt has increased by £464,000 since third quarter.
2. Annually, the Council raises invoices with a total value of over £70m. Around a quarter of the Council's overall sundry debt portfolio relates to charges for Adult Social Care, the remainder being spread across a range of functions including Highways, Property Services, Licensing and Building Control.
3. The Council's standard collection terms require payment within 28 days of the invoice date, however, services receive immediate credit in their accounts for income due. The Council uses a combination of methods to ensure prompt payment of invoices. Recovery action against unpaid invoices may result in the use of debt collectors, court action or the securing of debts against property.
4. The Revenue Recovery team (using their experience gained in collecting Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates) engage with services to offer advice and assistance in all aspects of debt management, including facilitating access to debt collection/enforcement agent services (currently provided by Bristow & Sutor). In 2019/20 the team collected £3m on behalf of services.
5. After allowing for debt still within the payment terms, the amount of outstanding service debt at the end of March 2020 was £8.9m.

6. The total amount of service debt over six months old is £4.8m; provision of £5.5m has been made to cover doubtful debt in the event that it needs to be written off.

DEBT SUMMARY

	Outstanding Debt £000	Over 6 months old £000	Debt Provision £000
People			
Adults, Public Health and Communities	5,467	3,262	4,261
Children's Social Care (Incl. Directorate)	156	41	41
Education and 14-19 Skills	40	2	2
Prevention and Early Help	34	-	-
Schools	41	7	-
Place			
Highways and Infrastructure	1,554	1,024	1,024
Growth and Enterprise	585	211	211
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	356	280	280
Corporate			
Finance and Customer Services	6	4	4
Governance and Compliance	8	-	-
Transformation	663	1	1
Adjustment for IFRS 9			(288)
	8,910	4,832	5,536

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Appendix 4

Reserves

Management of Council Reserves

1. The Council's Reserves Strategy states that the Council will maintain reserves to protect against risk and support investment.
2. The opening balance at 1st April 2019 in the Council's General Reserves was £10.3m as published in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2018/19.
3. The updated Risk Assessment for 2019/20 provided for the Minimum Level to increase to £12.0m. The Reserves Strategy for 2019/20 set out a planned contribution from earmarked reserves of £1.7m to the general reserve in 2019/20.
4. Following an update to the Risk Assessment for 2020/21, the minimum level has been retained at £10.3m.
5. The Council also maintains Earmarked Revenue reserves for specific purposes. At 31 March 2020 balances on these reserves stood at £40.1m, excluding balances held by Schools.
6. At the end of 2018/19 a central contingency referred to as the MTFFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) Reserve was created to support in-year pressures against the 2019/20 revenue budget. Use of this earmarked reserve has been subject to approval of robust business cases.

7. **Table 1** shows the total reserves at the end of March 2019/20. Overall the Council remains in a strong financial position given the major challenges across the public sector.

Table 1 – Reserves Position

	£m
General Reserve	10.3
Earmarked Reserves (excluding Schools)	40.1
Total Reserves Balance at 31 March 2020	50.4

8. Further details of individual reserves are provided in Table 2.

Table 2 – Earmarked Reserves (excluding Schools)

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 31 March 2019	Transfers Out 2019/20	Transfers in 2019/20	Balance at 31 March 2020
	£000	£000	£000	£000
People:				
PFI Equalisation - Extra Care Housing	(2,373)	0	(131)	(2,504)
Public Health	(627)	1	(352)	(979)
Other Useable reserves (<£500,000 in value)	(539)	273	0	(266)
Place:				
Investment (Sustainability) & Place restructure	(705)	23	0	(683)
Royal Arcade Crewe	(500)	401	0	(99)
Spatial Planning	(730)	326	(234)	(638)
Investment Portfolio	0	0	(558)	(558)
Other Useable reserves (<£500,000 in value)	(1,760)	1,209	(1,038)	(1,589)
Corporate:				
Brighter Future Transformation Programme	(1,000)	90	0	(910)
Collection Fund Management	(5,009)	4,063	(5,138)	(6,084)
Financing Reserve	(11,539)	4,451	(1,991)	(9,079)
Insurance Reserve - Cheshire County Fund	(570)	734	(277)	(113)
Insurance Reserve - Cheshire East Fund	(4,506)	2,164	(1,432)	(3,774)
New Homes Bonus Community Fund	(1,000)	1,860	(1,000)	(140)
Other Useable reserves (<£500,000 in value)	(804)	329	(2)	(477)
Central:				
MTFS Reserve	(6,426)	3,987	(1,001)	(3,439)
Revenue Grants Transferred to Earmarked Reserves	(5,446)	5,577	(8,931)	(8,800)
Trading Reserve	(2,161)	2,205	(44)	(0)
Total General Fund Reserves	(45,697)	27,692	(22,128)	(40,133)



Working for a brighter future together

Awards and Achievements

A summary of Cheshire East Council's awards and achievements

May 2019 – March 2020

Introduction



Cllr Sam Corcoran

**Leader of Cheshire East
Council**

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear insight into the successes of Cheshire East Council over the period May 2019- March 2020, of which there are many. It gives the opportunity for us to celebrate all the excellent work that is going on across our Council. Following the local elections in May 2019, the Labour Group and the Independent Group formed the first joint administration in Cheshire East Council's history. The document covers each of the Cabinet's Portfolio Holders for ease of reference.

It has been a challenging year for many services, some of whom have had to respond to major incidents such as the Beechmere Fire, Poynton Flooding and Middlewich Gas Leak.

More recently, we are all experiencing the impact of Covid 19, a global pandemic that has required us to demonstrate strong leadership and action to keep our staff and residents safe. This unprecedented situation continues to push us into new ways of working, for which we have many achievements and learning opportunities to capture and drive us on our journey of success.



Cllr Craig Browne

Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council

Portfolio Holder for Transport & Strategic Infrastructure

Procurement

- £600m highway design, maintenance and construction services contract awarded.
- £44m design and construction of A536 Congleton Link Road awarded.

HS2

- Following a formal petition against the phase 2a hybrid bill and subsequent negotiations with HS2 Ltd, the Council received a number of assurances to the bill.
- This included the availability of a new fund of up to £850,000 to the Council to support the identification of further local environmental and landscape enhancements within the administrative area of Cheshire East which are over and beyond that proposed in the Environmental Statement. This included £700,000 secured directly by the Council and a further £150,000 secured by Cheshire Wildlife Trust.
- The Council continues to work collaboratively with Government, Network Rail and HS2 to develop proposals for enhanced hub station options that support the Councils growth and regeneration ambitions for Crewe.
- The Council has worked with Transport for the North to ensure that the Crewe hub is reflected as a key priority in the proposals for Northern Powerhouse Rail. The Crewe north junction/connection, allowing direct high-speed services to run between Crewe and Manchester, is included as a key priority Strategic Outline Business Case which is to be submitted to Government in the coming months.

Strategic Infrastructure

- Congleton Link Road - Contractor procurement completed, contract awarded, land acquisition completed, and construction continues – CEC's largest ever capital project.

- Crewe Green Roundabout, opened at the end of November 2018, has won 2 awards – CIHT and also the Council shared the ‘best practice’ award with its contractors Balfour Beatty and Jacobs for the community engagement and communications work associated with the Crewe Green Roundabout scheme as well as being shortlisted at the MJ awards for Highways Management.
- Sydney Road Bridge opened at the end of June 2019.
- The Poynton Relief Road - Public inquiry completed, procurement process complete, contract awarded, land acquired for a July 2020 start and DfT funding of £16.4m approved.
- The Middlewich Eastern Bypass planning applications to Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils were successful and the scheme has received approval to proceed to acquisition of land required to deliver the scheme.

Highways Service Contract

Bid Submissions / Updates

- Successful bids submitted to Department for Transport Safer Road Funding for the A536 Congleton to Macclesfield and A537 Buxton Road, Macclesfield to County Boundary (Cat & Fiddle route) schemes. Funding for delivery to be provided by DfT from 2020/21.

Strategic Transport

- Local Transport Plan (LTP) – development of the borough wide transport strategy including public consultation leading to a final strategy being adopted at Council in November 2019.
- Launch of new flexible transport service (Flexilink) operated by TSS in August 2019. Customer satisfaction with new service at very high levels after first 6 months of operation.
- Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (SMOTS) – adopted and an implementation programme is being delivered annually through work with local schools.
- £1.7m Local Growth Fund bid successful to deliver strategic cycle route to serve Wilmslow and North West Crewe. Schemes to be constructed by April 2021.

Constellation Partnership

- Cheshire East continues to drive forward the Constellation Partnership providing the Chair, SRO and programme support.
- The CP HS2 Growth Strategy has been refined throughout quarters 1 and 2 this year. This provides the Partnership with a platform to engage more widely with key stakeholders and further raise awareness and profile of the Partnership and its vision, as set out in the Growth Strategy.

- Partners have been working together to develop the 10-year Delivery Plan through quarters 1, 2 and 3. The key objective is to demonstrate to Government that we have a credible, cohesive plan of what needs prioritising as a partnership over the next 10 years. This plan will be a key document supporting our HS2 Station delivery 'asks' by providing the confidence that the CP has a unified, credible plan to deliver the additional growth should those stations secure the levels of HS2 connectivity that we have been arguing for as a partnership. This plan is looking to the CP Leaders Board for approval.

	Category	Entry Details	Result
MJ Awards 2019	Highways Management	Crewe Green Roundabout – preparing for the arrival of HS2	Shortlisted
Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport NW Best Practice Awards	NW Best Practice Awards	Crewe Green Roundabout	Win
ASPE Service awards	Best Highways, Winter Maintenance & Street Lighting Service	Crewe Green Roundabout & Strategic Highways	Shortlisted
Institute of highways engineers (Mercia)	Large project of the year	Crewe Green Roundabout	Yes



Cllr Laura Jeuda

Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health

Adult Social Care

- Adult Social Care was selected as a National pilot site for the Strengths based practice framework with Manchester Metropolitan University. All frontline staff and their Practice Managers have been trained during the year. As part of this pilot the Professional Lead for Adults delivered a webinar with Professor Sam Baron for the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) and National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) to showcase how Cheshire East has implemented the strength-based approach across all adult teams.
- The Principal Social Worker for Adults and Professional Lead for Adults were invited to present at a series of national events in London to showcase strengths-based practice.
- We have worked with health partners to develop the IDT system which won an award at the HSJ national awards ceremony.
- We have continued to refine discharge to assess processes to enable people to leave hospital as quickly as possible. The Hospital team as a result are spending increased time in the community rather than the hospital.
- One of our newly qualified Occupational Therapists has successfully completed her Assessed Supported Year of Employment and continues to work with our Occupational Therapists in the East of the Borough. This is a programme which works alongside the established ASYE for Social Workers and has been led by one of our Professional Leads and Practice Manager/Occupational Therapists. This has now established a progression route for Occupational Therapist within Cheshire East and will lead to a raised profile for Occupational Therapy development and best practice.
- A number of Social Workers were involved at all stages in the tragic fire at Beechmere Extra Care Housing facility in Crewe. From the initial stages of the incident, where Social Workers turned up to offer support having heard the breaking news to working evenings and weekends delivering medication and equipment to those who had lost everything. In all, the Social Workers worked directly with 43 people who were displaced as a direct result of the fire. We worked closely with our Commissioning colleagues to ensure that everyone was

accounted for, had temporary accommodation found, and received support where and when they needed it.

- A successful recruitment campaign saw a high number of Newly Qualified Social Workers apply to work in Cheshire East Adult Social Care and three high performing candidates are in the process of being appointed. Thanks to the successful ASYE and progression programmes led by our Professional Lead for Social Work, we are assured of being able to support the new recruits to develop their knowledge and skills and ensure that we are able to continue their progression with Cheshire East for many years to come.
- The Adult Social Care Teams have worked hard to ensure that reviews of people's care and support needs has been undertaken and have reduced overdue reviews to less than 2%. Each review has been undertaken in a person-centred way that builds on a person's strengths and those of their communities to ensure we are delivering care and support in the least restrictive and most cost-effective way. The teams have been creative in ensuring that a person's needs are met in the way that they direct and not just by commissioning traditional services.
- The Adult Contact Teams have continued to respond to people contacting Social Care in a person-centred way which focuses on what strengths they have already. The approach uses a conversational approach and has been successful in reducing the flow of people into Adult Social Care and dependency on commissioned services to meet their needs.
- The Adult Contact Team identified one of their team to work specifically on those in our communities who struggle with hoarding behaviour. Staff who already had vast experience of working with people in our community and was able to draw on the experience of someone doing a similar role in Housing. One such person supported by staff has gone from significant and life impacting hoarding within their whole house, to having a clear, safe and hygienic home, free of hoarding of which she is very proud. The woman concerned met with Practice Managers of Adult Social Care to talk about her positive experience working with Dave and how she felt he had completely changed her life with his gentle approach which placed her firmly in control. We have held a successful conference on hoarding for children and adults social workers.
- A number of our Locality Managers, a Team Manager and a Professional Lead from Adult Social Care have successfully completed BA (Hons) degrees in business management with Manchester Metropolitan University. This was achieved with the support of the Heads of Service and Directors of Adult Social Care who mentored the 'students' throughout the course.
- A high number of serious Safeguarding Enquiries under s42 Care Act 2014 have been completed by the Adult Social Care Teams. These include serious physical abuse and assault, Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and financial abuse. One such case saw a multi-disciplinary which was able to safeguard a young woman who had consistently and repeatedly returned to her abuser as she felt there were no other options available to her. This woman is now safer but more importantly

has increased her skills so that she is better able to protect herself from potential abuse in the future.

- Managers in Adult Social Care have responded to a large number of requests from the Members and Councillors of Cheshire East – South Community requests were in excess of 90 – within the agreed timescales.
- We have worked jointly with the North West Teaching Partnership to provide a number of workshops to support our social workers including resilience, Contextual Safeguarding and the application of theory in practice.
- Social Work and Occupational Therapy apprenticeships were developed and introduced in 2019 - two Social Care Assessors have started their Social Work training via the Apprenticeship route with Staffordshire University alongside two children's colleagues.
- 5 Social Workers in Adult Social Care have successfully completed the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).
- 9 Social Workers in Adult Social Care have successfully progressed to Grade 9 roles.
- 3 student Social Workers who completed placements in Cheshire East were successful in gaining employment in Cheshire East.
- 4 Social Workers successfully completed Practice Education training.
- 3 Social Workers successfully completed their Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) training.
- Research in Practice has enabled teams to use these resources to support their evidenced based practice. From May 2019 to February 2020, 2162 Ripfa web pages were viewed with over 240 visits. All 19 learning events were fully booked, and 4 webinars were viewed either live or recorded. The most search topics were strength-based working, outcomes, mental health and safeguarding.
- The Professional Lead has contributed to the development of Ripfa Legal literacy resources and publications.
- Adult Social Care was nominated for an MJ Award in the Category 'Transforming Lives'.
- In the East locality, Intermediate Care support workers and reablement were integrated into one (reablement) service; intermediate care social workers, nurses and therapists are now part of care community teams. Reablement processes have been reviewed and revised, and our new more streamlined process allows direct referral for health colleagues.
- Trusted Assessor post established and developed at hospital (using BCF) with the number of homes accepting assessments and therefore not requiring a visit increased.
- Grade 8 Occupational Therapist post established allowing recruitment of newly qualified therapists; first grade 8 OT recruited.
- As part of the work to develop closer working relationships between health and local authority OTs, we seconded an OT to Macclesfield hospital, and she has devised and implemented a revised discharge pathway for people needing

therapy input. A project to review all cases where two carers are required has been agreed.

- Pathways for people with a visual impairment have been reviewed and revised in partnership with the voluntary sector and Commissioning colleagues.
- Adult Social Care completed 2099 reviews in 2019/20 which represents 71% of the total; 94% of people in receipt of support have had a review within the last 2 years.
- All care community teams are now linked to a GP cluster and take an active part in the multi-disciplinary discussions in their community.
- A care concern pilot was successfully completed with 10 care home providers. The council has remodelled its care at home services to maximise service users' independence. The impact of this way of working has reduced the number of first account referrals to the community teams by 50% and the providers feel more confident in reporting mechanisms. We now have an electronic first account form available on the 'Livewell' and Safeguarding Adults Board website.
- Cheshire East is working collaboratively with Halton, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils on a proposal for the Police and Crime Commissioner to commission a more effective 'Appropriate Adult' service for our residents.
- Cheshire East's Partnership Five Year Plan has now been published. The Commissioning team have led on the development of a Social Value Charter on behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.
- We have developed and implemented an all age coproduction charter 'Together'.
- SCIES launched guidance on carers' breaks and the Council was highlighted as a good practice example of commissioning for adult's respite provision and learning disability respite.
- We have commissioned and mobilised a new integrated substance misuse service with a focus on recovery.

Adult Safeguarding

- The Council is now part of the Cheshire and Warrington Gypsy and Traveller Partnership. We have responded to over 100 unauthorised encampments within the borough, ensuring that the welfare of travellers is maintained, and they are supported to access health care support where appropriate.
- SCEP Development Day held and new organisational structure and priorities set.
- Serious and Organised Crime Day of Action was held on 12th February 2020 – over 700 houses were visited to raise awareness about Community Safety issues.
- Channel Panel is now part of the DOVETAIL pilot. Meetings are held monthly to provide a multi-agency response to individuals at risk of Radicalisation. Channel Panel training has been delivered to 201 Officers across Adult Social Care.
- The Safeguarding Adults Board celebrated its 10th Anniversary in October 2019.
- The Safeguarding Adults Board Trainer has now delivered 2200 Basic Safeguarding Training sessions to providers across Cheshire East.

- Multi-agency Protocol for Modern Slavery agreed and launched, and we have delivered 650 training sessions to Officers across the Council on Modern Slavery.
- Adult Safeguarding Provider Team is now established and working with the QA Team to address issues of abuse and neglect in Care Providers in Cheshire East. All Providers are now using the Care Concern process to capture low level concerns in Care Homes.
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) – BIAs and Section 12 Doctors are working creatively to complete Mental Capacity Assessments remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic whilst still maintaining and protecting human rights for people who are subject to a DOLS.
- We presented at a national conference around ‘making safeguarding personal’.

Commissioning

- A new Community Inclusion Day Service in Congleton was established for individuals with a variety of support needs including older people with dementia and/or living with long-term health conditions, people with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities and people with mental health conditions.
- We have launched and published our Cheshire East All Age Mental Health strategy. This is a strategy for people with a functional mental health condition and proposes a whole system approach to improve the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and their families and is supported by integrated health and social care services, resilient communities, inclusive employers and services that maximise independence and choice.
- An All Age Mental Health Partnership Board has been established in Cheshire East to promote mental health and wellbeing and encourage improved partnership working with key stakeholders to ensure that good quality mental health services are in place.
- My Life, My Choice a Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities in Cheshire East has been produced which sets out the vision, ambitions, and commissioning intentions for people with learning disabilities of all ages living in Cheshire East. The strategy was co-produced with individuals who have a learning disability and their parents and carers, and organisations that support people with a learning disability.
- The Council, health, our partners and Cheshire East residents who experience autism as part of their lives have coproduced an All Age Autism strategy which sets out our vision and priorities for services for people with autism. While the Strategy is informed by the Autism Act 2009 and the National Autism Strategy, it is shaped by our children, young people and adults to ensure we all work to meet their needs and aspirations.
- A Mental Health Floating Support Service has been established in Cheshire East. The service has a preventative focus and works to empower people to remain independent, improve health and wellbeing and use strength-based approaches to build resilience and reduce the requirements for long term intensive support

services. The service also helps people to improve their own social relationships and connections and prevent social isolation and loneliness

- Proof of Concept Project - The Council's Supported Employment team continue to support Care Act eligible customers with a Support Plan and a costed package of care (e.g. direct payment for Personal Assistant support) into paid or voluntary work, giving people more opportunities and stronger community networks, while reducing costs to public services. 93 people were supported in the last two years, and costs were reduced by £107,008.
- Social Action Partnership - The Council redesigned the support service that it provides to the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector through a large-scale review process. Analysis of these views led to a refocusing on the priority of supporting organisations to achieve real social impact in local communities in the Borough.
- Direct Payments - The Council redesigned and recommissioned the Direct Payment Support Service during 2019 together with a range of stakeholders, including direct payment recipients, parent and/or carers, operational and finance colleagues. The service maximises choice of support, empowers residents with their understanding of a Direct Payment and the ensuing responsibility to purchase their own support to meet their needs.
- Falls Prevention - Key achievements to date include consultation on and adoption of a falls prevention strategy; the writing of a JSNA section; the recommissioning of Falls Prevention strength and balance classes with capacity increased from 420 to 800 places per year; the distribution of 30,000 falls leaflets to people aged 65+ via the Council and partners; system mapping of falls pathways. This work has contributed to a reduction in hip fractures by 7% and emergency hospital admissions for falls by 4% from the previous year.
- We have refreshed Live Well which is now live with our new design and layout which was completed in consultation with the public to provide a more streamlined directory and a user-friendly interface.
- Social Value – The Council has been identified as the lead to deliver and implement a Social Value programme across the Cheshire and Merseyside footprint. The programme aims to explore and learn how Social Value can practically and effectively be embedded at scale within Anchor Institutions (Local Authorities, NHS, and Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector (VCFSE) organisations) across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
North West Local Cultural Education Partnership Awards	Curious Minds Cultural Education Challenge Award	Life on Reshuffle	Shortlisted
MJ Awards 2019	Transforming Lives	Domestic Abuse Accommodation Project	Shortlisted

ASPE Service awards	Best Health and Wellbeing initiative (including social care)	Carers' Hub	Shortlisted
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Cllr Mick Warren

Portfolio Holder for Communities

Libraries

- Cheshire East Libraries retained their position as Number 1 unitary authority for library issues per 1000 population in the 2019 CIPFA Public Library Statistics and made it into top 5 for all UK authorities. Macclesfield library issued the most books of all North West libraries.
- 7,262 children in Cheshire East took part in the 2019 National Summer Reading Challenge, an 11% increase on 2018. Regional participation data for the North West reported that Cheshire East Libraries reached the highest percentage of children aged 4-12 (16.6%); had the highest number of children under 4 taking part in the 'Mini Challenge' (830); and the highest number of issues (198,958 items).
- During the scheme we saw 32% rise in new library members and as well as 36% increase in children attending events.
- Cheshire East Libraries had more than 600 people try a coding activity during EU Coding Week in Oct 2019
- The 2019 Cheshire East Libraries survey reported a customer satisfaction rate of 96%.

Leisure Services

- 3.4 million visits to our leisure centres – an 8% increase in participation at leisure centres and the associated benefits to health and wellbeing.

Regulatory Services and Health

- The 2019 Air Quality Annual Status Report has been approved by Defra in accordance with the requirements of the Local Air Quality Management Regime.
- The Trading Standards Team has worked with 97 banks and financial institutions to implement the banking protocol as part of our doorstep crime/rogue trader project. This work helps to prevent victims of frauds from withdrawing large amounts of money from their accounts to pay for often overpriced and unnecessary work.
- A comprehensive review of all taxi ranks in the borough has been completed – the first since 2009. As the borough changes and the night-time economy shifts it is important to review ranks so that customers can get to taxis safely and easily.

- The pilot “check and send” service to help customers submit licensing applications right first time has been extremely successful bringing in additional income and improving the quality of applications dealt with by the licensing administration team. This will now be a permanent provision within the licensing service.
- The CCTV Service has received accreditation from the Home office for their work to achieve best practice and standards set by the UK Surveillance Camera Commissioner. This makes them one of only a small percentage of accredited control rooms across the UK.

Communities

- Connected Communities - 15 developed Neighbourhood Partnerships are supporting local strategic drivers for a multitude of place-based projects across the borough. By working in collaboration to address evidenced need, key stakeholders share expertise and networks to deliver outcome focussed interventions. Taking an asset-based community development approach, the aim of the model is not to do things to or for a community but to design services with the community and provide opportunities for local people to deliver services and activities by themselves.
- We have 37 Connected Communities Centres, which provide a single point of contact in a community, enabling people to access local services and connect with local people.
- Over 100 new projects have been developed across communities in partnership with local people and key community stakeholders.
- Community Connector pilot - A Community Connector (prevention) has been positioned alongside the NHS Link Worker (intervention) in Macclesfield, with each supporting a similar size caseload. The Link Worker (based in GP surgery) was able to develop clinical professional relationships whilst taking referrals solely from health colleagues, whereas the Community Connector (based in community venues) was able to capitalise on opportunities for mobilising and utilising services in the VCF sector.
- A re-launch of the Communities Grant saw a change in Policy (Bright Idea Fund) allowing groups to apply for up to £10,000 and local individual residents to apply for £250 to undertake local projects. This is an anchor to promote social innovation in communities and to empower local residents using an asset-based community development approach to look at local solutions to local issues.
- Beechmere Recovery Donation Centre - As soon as the news broke about the disastrous event at Beechmere on 8th August 2019, the community of Crewe (and beyond) came out in droves to offer their belongings and time to support the people affected. The Council’s Communities team swiftly mobilised a team of officers and a venue to create an emergency response centre in Crewe Town Centre. Council Officers coordinated the donations (food, bedding, clothing, toiletries, mobility aids and more), volunteers and communications which allowed the centre to become a safe place for residents experiencing shock and disbelief about their experience. Donations were not only received from members of the

public – many local businesses and community groups provided much needed provisions and equipment.

- Estimates suggest that the community response to the Beechmere disaster required around 360 hours of officer time (some outside of contracted working hours) but more important in excess of 2108 hours' volunteer time. The commitment and passion exhibited by volunteers is a true positive outcome for the incident. There are a team of around 10 local volunteers who continue to support Beechmere social events and drop ins. CEC Community Development Officers have facilitated the integration of Beechmere volunteers into the wider Crewe Neighbourhood Partnership which will enable the use of their skills and experience to influence and shape local provision moving forward.
- Community Cohesion – we were successful in our bid to support community cohesion in Crewe and were granted £122,961 via the Government Controlling Migration Fund (CMF). We have used these funds to support improved health and wellbeing for migrant families. We have three Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who speak a total of 7 languages, who work with schools and migrant families to improve wellbeing. We have used innovative ways to engage with migrant communities, for example being in the playground at the beginning of school time and meeting and greeting with parents, working with local shop owners and sharing literature. CLO's have led school assemblies, delivering the message to teachers and pupils, and coordinated reading sessions using stories that talk about why we have vaccinations. Health practitioners have identified Cheshire East Community Liaison Officer's as a key link into the communities where the migrants are living. They work closely with the school nurse to translate and support with information, which needs to be shared with the families.
- The Social Action Partnership started 1st April 2020

Licensing

- Over 4 nights in December Licensing Enforcement Officer worked with Cheshire Roads Policing Team to stop check taxis working in our area. This included vehicles licenced by other Councils. The purpose of the operation was to ensure that all taxis are safe and suitable for use. In total 50 vehicles were stopped and checked.
- The service has changed its approach to the 'Knowledge Test' which is a requirement of a new driver licence application. Now, applicants can take the test prior to applying and paying the relevant application fee allowing them to determine whether driving is an appropriate career and before significant financial outlay. This change has received positive feedback from applicants.
- During the final quarter, covert licensing operations were undertaken to check for illegal plying for hire activities. This was a joint exercise with Cheshire Police and identified private hire drivers who were undertaking work that had not been pre-booked as is required by their licence. Enforcement cases have been produced and passed to legal services.

Commercial Services

- Commercial Services has been experiencing a high number of staff vacancies for over twelve months. This directly impacts upon the food hygiene inspection programme. During the year members of the team have been undertaking additional work to triage outstanding inspections to identify closed or changed business models. This work was then used to support an ongoing project to employ external agency staff to carry out this work on our behalf, minimising aborted visits and reducing our contract costs.

Animal Health & Welfare

- The animal welfare team have been supporting businesses with the licensing requirements of the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations which came into force in October 2018 and were the first local authority nationally to submit the newly required Animal Welfare licensing returns.
- The team undertook an investigation into a very serious animal welfare case which began in 2017 and came to court in January 2020. The defendant was issued with a significant fine and has been prohibited from keeping animals for 10 years. The professionalism of the team in the face of witnessing terrible animal welfare conditions was exceptional.

Trading Standards and CCTV

- Cheshire East is the first authority in the NW region (5th nationally) to introduce the Regulatory Compliance Apprenticeship taking on two apprentices during the year. The apprenticeship scheme was developed in response to the national reduction in Trading Standards Officers providing a flexible and phased training and qualification route to bring new officers into the profession.
- In collaboration with Cheshire East Age UK we now have Scams Awareness and Aftercare project team to spread awareness of scams and to keep vulnerable people safe.
- The service prevented over £800,000 from being handed over to criminals. This was as a result of collective work including rapid response interventions, support to secure refunds, work on the banking protocol and general intervention and prevention work.
- Our CCTV service has provided evidence leading to convictions for domestic burglary, violent crime in town centres, drink driving, ASB and assault. The service has also supported work around wanted and missing individuals.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
Anti counterfeiting group	Highly commended department award	Cheshire East Council Trading Standards Investigation team	Win
ASPE Service awards	Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (inc community safety)	Connected Communities	Shortlisted

Code compliant surveillance camera accreditation	Code compliant surveillance camera accreditation	CCTV team	Win
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Cllr Kathryn Flavell

Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Cared for Children and Care Leavers

- Over the last 4 years, the Council has increased funding for cared for children by over £7m to meet demand and ensure our cared for children and care leavers achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Care leavers coproduced their Local Offer which was launched in October 2018. Staff from the Council and partner agencies made pledges, including prioritisation of care leavers within voluntary mental health services and free access to parks and green spaces.
- Star Celebrations take place each November to recognise the achievements of all our cared for children and care leavers.
- The Council has reviewed our joint fostering campaign, Foster4, and we have agreed our new ambition to progress a local recruitment campaign to maximise the strengths that we are building with our existing amazing Foster Carers.
- Our Ofsted inspection in November 2019 found that, “Social workers can clearly articulate children’s needs, identify their risks and vulnerabilities and describe their personalities. Children are supported by purposeful and creative direct work, which informs assessments and plans.”
- The National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers praised Cheshire East’s work with care leavers and included Cheshire East as a good practice example in his annual report.
- ‘Ignition Panel’ has had positive impact on supporting care leavers to participate in planning and shaping their accommodation and support and has also been shortlisted for a number of national awards.
- Our Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adoption Counts, was the second regional adoption agency to be formed in the UK, three years ahead of the 2020 target set by government.
- Cheshire East Council’s adoption performance has been praised by the Department for Education for our strong performance on adoption timeliness.

Children's Safeguarding

- Our Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy and campaign has received national interest. The campaign was coproduced with young people and was shortlisted for several national awards.
- The council was shortlisted for a national award for transforming lives with Municipal Journal for the work we are delivering to our most vulnerable victims of domestic violence, ensuring that they have safe accommodation that can lead to a home for life.
- In our inspection in November 2019, Ofsted found that "The Cheshire East domestic abuse hub provides an effective 24-hour, seven-days-a-week response, underpinned by access to a wealth of intervention and support services."

Children in Need and Child Protection

- We have achieved good impact for children through Signs of Safety, a strengths-based approach to working with families in Cheshire East. Our strategy was identified as a national exemplar. There is strong leadership buy-in, and we have coproduced implementation with staff, our national consultant has said that Cheshire East has the best engagement they have seen. Ofsted found that this approach was embedded across the partnership. To date, we have trained over 1,000 multi-agency staff in this approach.
- Our Ofsted inspection found that the voice of the child is embedded at all levels and children views are listened to and acted on.
- The inspection also found that our front door is strong, and safeguarding concerns are dealt with quickly and appropriately; "Experienced social workers, supported by effective and prompt information-sharing by partner agencies, ensure that safeguarding concerns are responded to well. Children at immediate risk of significant harm are identified swiftly, and action is taken to safeguard and protect them."
- Our edge of care team, works intensively with families to ensure that children only come into care when they need to.
- Our Children with Disabilities team uses a wide variety of communication methods to ensure children's needs inform assessments, leading to strong planning and bespoke packages of support for children and families.
- The mobilisation of our new Children's Homes commission started mid-year 2019-20 with two homes opening early 2020. The new Children's Homes will ensure good quality, local homes are available for our cared for children.

Education and 14-19 Skills

- Cheshire East Council has worked with local primary schools to offer 98.1% of Cheshire East residents a place at a school of their choice for September 2020, with 91.4% being offered their first preference.
- 97% of Cheshire East residents were allocated a place at a secondary school of their choice for Year 7. This was an increase from 96.5% in 2019. Of these 91.6%

(compared to 90% in 2019) were offered their first preference of secondary school.

- The 2019 school results again show positive trends and further successes across all key stages. Current highlights include:
 - Maintaining our high performance in the early years phase for 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) where 73% of learners achieved the required standard. This is above national with CE being one of the strongest performing authorities across the NW region.
 - Very strong performance at Key Stage 1:
 - In Phonics where 84% achieved the pass rate, which is above the national average.
 - In Reading with 77% of pupils achieving the expected level or better, which is above the national figure.
 - In Writing with 70% of pupils achieving the expected level or better, which is above the national figure.
 - In Science with 84% of pupils achieving the expected level which is above the national figure
 - Strong improvements were seen this year in maths at the end of Key Stage 2, where 80% achieved the expected standard; a rise of 2 pts on the previous year.
 - Improvements in the number of students achieving strong passes at GCSE (grades 9-5) with 50% achieving this level in both maths and English. This is again a rise of 2 pts on last year.
 - Very strong improvements in the outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 for our disadvantaged learners across all core subjects
 - Further improvements in the percentage of students achieving A*-C in A levels and a very high overall pass rate of 98%.
- Cheshire East led a successful bid for Strategic School Improvement Funds (SSIF) including 39 schools (20 Cheshire East and 19 Cheshire West) to improve outcomes in mathematics and for disadvantaged learners.
- We have established a comprehensive training and development programme to support all schools with a particular focus on maintained schools. 90 delegates have started a 5 day Leading on Reading course and 70 have begun a 3 day Subject Leadership course with excellent feedback so far.
- Feedback from delegates attending the Schools Governor Conference in November was that it was 'one of the best ones ever'. Over 120 delegates attend with the theme being 'Brave Governance'.
- Continued success with the Careers & Enterprise Company national Enterprise Adviser Network across Cheshire East secondary schools/colleges with 100% coverage achieved and 25 actively working towards the new Gatsby benchmarks.
- Developed and delivered, in partnership with Franklyn Financial Management, SAS Daniels, Thrive and East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, the first 'Cheshire East Stock Market Challenge' for 140 Year 7 students across 5 schools, to promote skills and careers in STEM – The winning school was 'Prime Investors'

- from Brine Leas. 99% of young people rated the Challenge 'good' or 'excellent' and 84% now have a greater understanding of the skills employers are looking for.
- Launched the first annual 'Cheshire East Apprenticeship Directory' featuring a range of local employers - shared with over 10,000 students and raising the profile of local businesses and their apprenticeship offer.
 - Ran a project which registered 266 young people on the Find an Apprenticeship website and created a library of video case studies promoting the exciting and diverse apprenticeships across Cheshire East. Delivered technical skills support to over 35 Cheshire East businesses and tailored Apprenticeship Levy support to a further 19 to increase vocational opportunities for young people.
 - Created 11 Town Data Infographics 2 for each school in Cheshire East to ensure a sound understanding of the local economy and job/skills opportunities available.
 - 900 young people completed the 'YourSay' annual survey in 2019 - providing key information on the quality and relevance of careers advice across Cheshire East, and how well this is underpinned by local employers, (c2400 total responses since launched in 2016).
 - Ofsted confirmed that cared for children are well supported by the Virtual School. Staff have high aspirations for every child and young person to help them to achieve their ambitions; we currently have six young people at University, and one in a higher-level apprenticeship.
 - Over 90 school representatives have accessed cross-service training during last academic year to understand the needs of cared for children. Over 20 individual schools and colleges have accessed whole staff continual professional development training to further develop understanding of attachment and trauma.
 - Positive impact of our medical needs team – a high number of children within the service go on to complete formal exams and achieve well despite their medical condition.
 - A new elective home education (EHE) policy has been launched to bring practice into line with DFE guidance. As part of the launch of the policy parents are being consulted with around new documents used and resources offered by the LA. New ways of working mean that alongside an annual home visit offer, additional visits will be triggered and offered to children and families open on child in need plans, child protection plans and following a missing from home incident.
 - Highly effective and regular meetings now take place to ensure there is a coordinated response across Children's Social Care, SEND and Early Help to the most vulnerable learners, particularly where they are not in school. This has resulted in 190 young people supported to increase their attendance and/or reintegrate back into school.
 - The Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCIES) team have actively sought the voice of the child to influence safeguarding in schools; as a result of which many primary schools have engaged with locality-based children's

safeguarding conferences and children from secondary schools and alternative provisions engaged in the Act Now Conference 2019.

- SCIES were given recognition for their work with involving children in safeguarding
- through successful re-accreditation for the Investors in Children award. SCIES received an award in the category for 'Partnership Working' at Cheshire East's Adult's and Children's Safeguarding and Dignity Awards 2018.
- Our Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCIES) team and Virtual School have been shortlisted for Children and Young People Now Awards.
- Children in secondary schools have coproduced with SCIES a Cheshire East bullying prevention strategy for schools which made priorities and expectations clear.
- An art gallery of work produced by pupils in Cheshire East schools (over 15 pieces of work from 6 schools) has been displayed in our Council Head Quarters at Westfields with plans to extend this to other corporate buildings.
- The last 12 months has seen a significant amount of work undertaken to increase our overall capacity for school places across the borough especially in those planning areas where there is impact of new housing. The following schemes highlight the extensive capital projects which are well underway or close to completion:
 - Expansion of Alsager Secondary School to accommodate an extra 150 pupils.
 - A completely new build for our Pupil Referral Unit (Oakfield Lodge) in Crewe to accommodate up to 60 learners – due to open in October 2019.
 - Expansion of Cranberry Primary School providing over 100 extra places in the Alsager area.
 - Ongoing works in both Nantwich secondary schools with two schemes progressing to meet local need.
 - Detailed programmes of works at Wilmslow High School to increase the capacity in each year group from 300 to 360 over the coming years.
 - Expansion of Springfield Special School with a completed build for a further 24 learners
 - An approved scheme is progressing at Park Lane Special School for an additional 40 pupils
- Cheshire East was one of 19 local authorities approved to develop a free school by the DfE. This will be a 40-place special free school for children aged 4-16 with social, emotional and mental health needs in Crewe. The new school, called the Axis Academy, will support pupil development across all key stages. The new build is expected to be in place by early 2021, and we hope to have some provision available from September 2020.
- Schools have been very flexible during the coronavirus lockdown and have worked with us to ensure places have been available for children of keyworkers and our most vulnerable children. Almost all Cheshire East schools were open over Easter, so we were able to continue to offer places for vulnerable children compared to just 60% that were open nationally.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- There has been regional and national interest in adopting Cheshire East's SEND Toolkit that outlines the provision and support that should be in place in all educational settings for those aged 0-25 years.
- Our SEND Youth Forum is a new and innovative way to engage children with SEND whose voices were previously not heard.
- Our SEND sufficiency statement and implementation plan is a comprehensive assessment of SEND provision that has enabled the Council to target its resources to develop in borough provision in the right areas.
- We are currently carrying out a review of all resource provisions. The outcome will provide a set of key priorities and principles to ensure consistency of practice across them all.
- Since May 2019 there have been significant improvements in the timeliness of our SEND assessments.
- We have established a SEND Ignition panel, which aims to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities into paid employment, good health, independent living, friends, relationships and community inclusion.
- July 2019 saw the first 'Planning your future' event with over 30 providers from the third sector to specialist provision aimed at showcasing the range of provision in Cheshire East for SEND young people and their families. Feedback was excellent and these events will now take place each year.
- The 'Preparing for Adulthood' workstream has produced a transition pack which is individualised to the young person and is for all young people from Year 9 to support their transition from school to further education, employment or training.
- Termly SENCO conferences are embedded to provide Cheshire East, Regional and National updates, continuing professional development and networking opportunities for all professionals involved in SEND in schools and settings. The number of attendees has risen from 35 to over 135.
- The Cheshire East Toolkit for SEND is to be the feature of an article in nasen Connect (The national nasen magazine) in November 2019 and we are currently working to make this document available for purchase by other local authorities.
- We have held an 'Excellence across SEND' workshop with all partners from across Education, Health and Social Care along with parents to coproduce our quality framework and develop a three-year quality development plan.
- We have undertaken consultation on a new transformational funding model and launched a major pilot.
- 81% mainstream Y6 students supported by Cheshire East Autism Team (CEAT) were able to transition to mainstream high schools and thus continue their education in their local school. This equates to 110 young people.
- 1042 delegates attended training sessions run by CEAT on supporting young people with autism. A wide range of stakeholders were trained including parents,

young people, educational professionals, family support workers and medical needs tutors.

- Our person-centred planning for preparation for adulthood for children with a Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND Ignition) strengthened during 2019-20 with excellent feedback from children, families, partners and professionals. The approach has been showcased at a regional level, via NHSE, and has had the DFE national lead for Post 16 travel to observe a SEND Ignition session. The DFE national lead was impressed and fed back to the government minister on the approach being taken by Cheshire East.
- Early in 2019-20 Cheshire East established its lead role to implement a new North West Purchasing System for Special Educational Needs school placements. The new regional purchasing system will strengthen market shaping, communication and relationships and will drive improvement in outcomes through collaborative contract management.
- A critical element of managing the significant demand for SEN school places across Cheshire East continues to gather pace with new Resource Provision at existing mainstream schools, expansion of our special schools and the building of a new special school in Crewe that will cater for 48 pupils with mental health needs.
- 2019-20 saw the introduction of a new pilot to enhance the support to our pupils with additional needs through the commission of specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) for autism, a programme of early intervention through SALT and a new Occupational Therapist focussing on upskilling school staff and targeted support to pupils and their families. This pilot has been recognised as outstanding practice by CQC.
- A peer review of provision to meet the needs of children and young people with sensory impairments in Cheshire East highlighted many positive aspects of service planning and delivery, with particular reference to work around the NatSIP quality standards for sensory support services, the NatSIP support allocation criteria, and the Cheshire East toolkit for SEND.
- We have restructured the SEND service into locality teams to support improved communication with parents and schools.
- We have increased senior management capacity and appointed an additional Head of Service for SEND with a focus on quality to support our drive to achieve high quality Education, Health and Care plans for all our children and young people.
- We introduced termly coffee mornings with parents, the set of these were planned jointly with the parent carer forum and were very positively received.
- There is increasing evidence of the improvement in quality of EHCP plans and increasing parental satisfaction.

Preventative Services

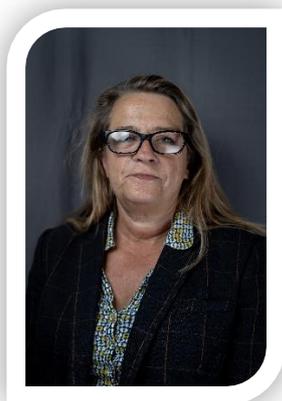
- Our integrated Youth Support Service delivered an extensive Summer programme delivering creative and challenge outdoor activity for over 40 of our most vulnerable children and young people. The programme was hugely successful and involved sailing, kayaking, bush craft and camping residential opportunities to build peer support and positive relationships.
- The Youth Support Service continues to maintain high performance for low numbers of children and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and 'Not Known' destinations post-16. Percentage into learning has been consistently excellent and is above National, Regional and statistical neighbours.
- Cheshire East has been awarded £926,989 from the DfE School Nursery Capital Fund in order to expand our free childcare offer to families. This capital grant was awarded to support the delivery of the 30 hours free childcare offer to enable the local authority to create 88 new places for 2020/21.
- Our new three-year Children and Young People's Plan launched in June 2019, which was produced together with young people. The plan sets out the overarching outcomes that we want to achieve for all Cheshire East children and young people.
- The council has significantly improved our performance on the Troubled Families Programme. We are now the second highest performing area in the North West with over 3000 families having positive attachment with our programme and delivering all expected outcomes in line with our agreed MHCLG targets.
- Our shared Youth Justice Service is outperforming the rest of the region with only 75 young people coming in to the criminal justice system. Only 6 required a custodial sentence which very low compared to our statistical neighbours.
- Ofsted found that "Children and families benefit from a comprehensive and well-developed early help offer." "The quality of help and support provided builds families' resilience and improves the experiences of children."

Public Sector Transformation (PST)

- Health related worklessness – we successfully secured £5.4m from the European Social Fund to support complex adults and vulnerable young people into further education or employment. An additional bid has recently been submitted for £1.9m to support parents who are eligible for the statutory childcare offer.
- Reducing Domestic Abuse – we secured £398,500 to boost support for survivors of domestic abuse. The funding has been used to establish a domestic abuse accommodation partnership across Cheshire and Warrington, increase keyworker support, develop our workforce, and offer trauma-based therapy to those most in need.
- Parental conflict support – lobbying by the PST and Merseyside has secured £115k from the Department of Work and Pensions to support the development of a sub-regional reducing parental conflict strategy (excluding Halton) and practitioner training programme.

- Reducing re-offending – working with National Probation Service (NPS) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) we have secured £170,000 for the establishment of women’s centres in Macclesfield and Crewe in Cheshire East, Warrington and Cheshire West and Chester, and to enhance the existing centre in Halton.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
North West Local Cultural Education Partnership Awards	Curious Minds Cultural Education Challenge Award	Life on Reshuffle	Shortlisted
Positive Practise Mental Health Award	Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services	Emotionally Healthy Schools	Highly Commended
Children and Young People Now Awards	Learning Award	Virtual School	Shortlisted
Children and Young People Now Awards	Partnership Award	SCiES	Shortlisted
National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN) annual awards	Best in Education	Tatton Park Education and Farm Teams	Highly Commended



Cllr Toni Fox

Portfolio Holder for Planning

Strategic Planning

- The Council's latest Housing Monitoring Update was published in November 2019 showing that there was a 7.5 year supply of deliverable housing land in Cheshire East, an increase from the previous year's figure of 7.2 years. Maintaining a housing land supply of at least 5 years is important to best ensure that new housing development schemes are plan-led and protect the countryside around our towns and villages from unplanned, speculative housing proposals.
- Six weeks of public consultation took place during August and September 2019 on the 'Publication Draft' version of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD). The council received over 2,700 responses and these are currently being carefully considered. Because of the high volume of representations received about the Plan, it is now expected that decisions about its policies and proposals will be made over the summer/autumn of 2020. If this results in any significant changes to the Plan, a further round of public consultation would be needed prior to its submission to the Secretary of State for examination. If this arises, it is anticipated that this consultation would take place in the autumn of 2020.
- Work has progressed on finalising the evidence base that will underpin the Council's Minerals and Waste DPD with a refresh of the Waste Needs Assessment originally published in 2017, the preparation of a Cheshire East sand study, the updating of the annual Local Aggregates Assessment and a review of the proposed sites and areas submitted by external parties (for the Council's consideration and potential allocation in the draft plan) as part of the last call for sites exercise. Relevant duty to co-operate activity has also continued.
- A final round of public consultation took place between January and March on the Brooks Lane, Middlewich Development Framework. It will provide more detailed planning guidance to encourage further positive investment in the town. Amongst other things it aims to create high quality development, bring about regeneration along the Trent and Mersey Canal and illustrates how a new rail station could be built bringing passenger services to the town once again. The approval of the

Development Framework as a 'Supplementary Planning Document' will be decided later this year.

- An operational CIL charge was introduced on 1 March 2019 to raise money towards infrastructure projects. In just over a year (to the 31 March 2020) it has raised £218,401 in total, £54,322 of which has been distributed to the town and parish councils where the CIL charges were raised from chargeable development
- Crewe Hub Area Action Plan finalised for Regulation 19 consultation, ahead of submission to government.
- Project development works of Crewe hub station and the preparation and submission of a planning application by summer 2020 to enable delivery of the scheme within the required timeframes.
- Authorised the making of three non-immediate Article 4 Directions to withdraw permitted development rights for the conversion of individual dwellings to small Houses in Multiple Occupation for parts of Crewe.

Neighbourhood Planning

- Neighbourhood Plans have reached at least draft stage and moved through the process towards completion. Of those:
 - 8 have been fully completed ("made") (Alsager, Acton, Wybunbury Combined Parishes, Newhall, Church Minshull, Poynton, Wilmslow and Chelford).
 - 1 has successfully passed examination (Over Peover).
 - 1 is currently under examination (Eaton).
 - 1 has been submitted for consultation, ahead of examination (Shavington).
 - 4 have completed local consultations and are expected to be submitted shortly (Hankelow, Little Bollington, Alderley Edge, Gawsforth).
- This progress reflects considerable effort from local communities alongside the support and guidance from this Council and has placed CEC in the top 5 performing authorities with a total of 30 completed neighbourhood plans in the borough.
- Policies within adopted Neighbourhood Plans are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Development Management

- 5700 Applications received last year (2019-20)
- 153 Major Applications (maintaining the position as one of the top 5 busiest councils).
- 99% of Major Applications determined within time marking a significant improvement from last year.
- 92% of Minor applications determined within time strengthening the position from last year.
- Planning Appeals success rate of 76%, maintaining a good decision record which is better than the national average.
- 998 Enforcement cases closed.
- Instigated a Peer Review to assist the Council in improving its services

- Implementation and practical application of the CEC Design Guide has enabled improvement in design quality for residential applications and rejection of poor design.
- Production and implementation of a Heritage at Risk strategy to assess the Borough's listed building stock, with over half completed by the end of 2019.
- Successful prosecution of the owner of Aston Park House for offences committed in relation to unauthorised works to the listed building.
- Acknowledged Conservation input into Jodrell Bank is inscribed by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

Developer Contributions

- Secured over 850K of additional funding towards landscape/ecological mitigation from HS2 petitioning. The funding will be made available to CEC 6 months after the Bill for HS2a receives royal assent. On the current timetable we can anticipate this money coming through after July 2021. The funding will be used for wildlife projects and hedgerow, tree and woodland planting.
- In ensuring 'no net loss' from planning applications the council has secured over £1.5m towards ecology and biodiversity off-setting. This funding has been secured through Section 106 Agreements and is tied to trigger points as development proceeds. To date we have received just over £315,000, much of it quite recently. We work with Cheshire Wildlife Trust and other organisations such as Local Barn Owl Groups to ensure that the benefits for wildlife are maximised. Funded work to date includes 9 sites for species rich grassland (13.4ha), 1080m of new native hedgerow, support for pond creation and restoration, restoration work at Wybunbury Moss National Nature Reserve and Blakenhall Moss Local Wildlife Site, funding to Barn Owl Groups for nest box construction.
- Granted consent for thousands of new houses across the Borough; major infrastructure works such as the A500 widening; a 'state of the art' Recycling facility for all food and bio-degradable waste generated by CEC households and new employment developments in Crewe and Middlewich.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
National land information service	Most improved service	Land charges team (Civance)	Shortlisted
IESE Public Sector Transformation	Innovation	Civance	Win



Cllr Laura Crane

Portfolio Holder for Highways & Waste

Waste and Environmental Services

- Emptied over 13 million bins.
- Managed and safely disposed of over 180,000 tonnes of household waste.
- Through Ansa's concerted efforts successfully carried out a complete transformation of collection rounds and staff rotas delivering savings of over £0.5m
- Successfully introduced a food recycling service through the garden bin scheme, delivering over 170,000 food caddies. Ran an extensive publicity campaign for the new service. Thank you to all those recycling food waste.
- Our composting plant, built at Leighton Grange farm, Crewe, received its national standard accreditation for its high-quality compost product, the last stage in its accreditation.
- Launched the Waste Watchers app to provide our waste service information in one handy place.
- Completed an extensive review of the waste strategy that was approved by Cabinet in March.

Strategic Parking

- Updated High Level Parking Strategy for the borough adopted as part of the Local Transport Plan.
- Safer Parking Around Schools Initiative – a continuation of the multi-agency initiative with our Parking Enforcement Team, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Police. Promoting the Councils Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy. Emphasis is made about parking safely, responsibly, considerately and legally; ensuring that the children arrive safely at school either in a vehicle or on foot as a pedestrian.
- Multi-agency Operations – working in tandem with Cheshire Police and other agencies on various operations tackling concerns raised by residents. This resulted in a high level of positive feedback from members of the public
- Working alongside our Countryside rangers, United Utilities & Police to alleviate obstructions in rural areas for the safety of the public, also paving a way for emergency vehicles.

- Late night Licensing/Police operations tackling illegal parking and other issues.
- Making a Difference for a Brighter Future Together annual awards – Emma Steers (Senior Civil Enforcement Officer) was awarded First Time Manager of the Year. A reflection of all the hard work she put into the parking enforcement team whilst embracing the Brighter Future vision and stepping up to provide cover. Emma acted up as CEO supervisor from June 2019 and continues to do so, to support the return of the actual staff member.
- Supporting local Town Councils with the successful continuation of their local events, fairs and markets.
- Awarded a Highly Commended Certificate of Excellence for our Parking Services PATROL (PARC) Awards annual report in July 2019.
- Introduced online applications for staff permits which has received excellent feedback from users.
- Audited by DVLA (KADOE) on which we received a green rating - (excellent with no infringements).

Highways

Awards and accreditations

- Awards - Ringway Jacobs were recently awarded the National Asset Management Award at the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation awards in June 2019. This award marks the achievements of those working in the sector and promotes professionalism at best practice to a wider industry audience.
- BSi environmental and safety audit success - BSi assessors visited Brunswick Wharf depot and Delamere House on 25 and 26 June to audit our Quality Systems (ISO 9001), Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001) and Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (ISO 45001).
- Secured audit success in ISO 55001 Asset Management and awarded the National Asset Management Award at the CIHT recognising our achievements in the industry.
- Successfully retained accreditation of BSI ISO 44001 Collaborate Business Relationships.
- Received an Armed Forces Covenant Silver award as part of our commitment to our ex-servicemen and women employees.
- Achieved awards for the upgrade of the vehicle restraint system on the A54 Buxton. Road Safety Award at the North West CIHT awards, ICE North West Small Project Award and winner of Project under £1m at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association.
- Gold Performance Award received for excellence in management of Street information by the GeoPlace Awards.
- 2019 / 20 maintained continued accreditation for Department for Transport level 3 funding.

People and training

- 8 of our employees graduated with a Construction Management degree, some beginning their journey with us back in 2014 as highway apprentices.

Network Management

- Successful defence against a service strike claim. In December. Attended Crewe Magistrates Court in defence of two accusations. Due to our robust processes and procedures, the claims amounting to 25k were dismissed and BT were ordered to pay costs of £6,000, as the judge felt that we took every step to avoid the incident.

Unexpected events affecting Maintenance and Operations

- Tackled significant flood events in summer (end of July and August 2019) and October 2019 through mobilisation of our Adverse Weather Desk. Managed and investigated customer reports and prioritised crews, whilst keeping key stakeholders informed. During these two flooding events, 469 enquiries were received, and 1,270 hours were spent responding to flooding event activities.
- Mobilised a quick response to two diesel spills both requiring resurfacing work on A34 Rood Hill and Linley Lane.
- During February 2020, storms Ciara and Dennis resulted in the mobilisation of the Adverse Weather Desk. During these two storms, 202 emergency calls were received reporting 89 trees down, 87 floods plus a variety of other weather-related concerns; power lines, trampoline in the carriageway, power cuts for traffic lights, large hole in road and broken signs.

Innovation and schemes

- A54 Safety barrier replacement scheme constructed to programme in a very challenging location within the Peak District National Park. The design solution addressing engineering challenges posed by narrow road located on a hillside and subject to extremes of weather and significant environmental factors such as species/habit protection and work adjacent to sites of special scientific interest.
- Introduced a mostly electric only powered site on McLaren Street in Crewe for a flags to flexi scheme – supporting Environmental strategy.
- Implemented the use of bridge material made from Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP). Joey the Swan was the first of its kind in Cheshire East and the planks used were made from 100% recycled plastic bottles.
- LED energy reduction programme finalised leading to carbon reduction for Cheshire East.

Flooding:

- The Highway Service has responded to several serious flooding events during 2019 which has necessitated numerous road closures whilst the significant

infrastructure damage is assessed, and the reconstruction work programmed in liaison with our partner organisations. The repair work will be ongoing through the year and we will continue to support those affected communities, together with our partner organisations, to improve their flood resilience.

Highways Development Management

- 89% of planning application consultations responded to within 21 calendar days: target 90%.
- 100% of planning pre-application consultations responded to within 21 calendar days: target 90%.
- £2.3m of s106 contributions secured towards key CEC highway infrastructure schemes.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
Go Awards 2018	GO Procurement Innovation / Initiative of the Year Award: Local Government, Central Government and Other Organisations (Local Government & Central Government)	Procurement of an Organic Waste Treatment Facility for Cheshire East Council to enable the recycling of food waste across the borough	Shortlisted
PATROL PARC Awards	Parking report	CEC parking report	Yes



Cllr Nick Mannion

Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration

Parks and Playing Pitches

- Awarded the Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards for Queens Park Crewe.
- Awarded the Green Flag Award for: Fountains Field (Middlewich), Milton Park (Alsager), Sandbach Park, The Moor (Knutsford), Congleton Park and Bollington Recreation Ground.
- Queens Park won Bees Need's Champion Award demonstrating a commitment to Biodiversity and Pollination.
- Completed the annual refresh of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Carbon and Energy

- Before the lock down the Council, with many volunteers, managed to reach its target for planting nearly 6000 trees this planting season, increasing biodiversity and carbon capture over the tree's life time.
- We have also progressed our Hydrogen bin wagon trial project and are grateful to our partners including Store Energy and the LEP funding that has enabled us to progress to begin the delivery phase of the project.
- Cabinet approved on 5th May 2020, the carbon action plan in its entirety, which details not only how the Council will reduce its own emissions to deliver carbon neutrality by 2025, but also how the Council can influence our residents and businesses to reduce the emissions across the borough.
- A new carbon screener template has been developed for integration into the business planning process for 2020/21.
- In February 2020 we announced a new pilot to convert bin wagons to be hydrogen fuelled, following receipt of the LEPs Local Growth Fund. The hydrogen will be produced in the greenest way possible, at the ANSA environmental services depot in Middlewich, using an electrolyser connected to solar panels and grey-water recycling.
- The Council has already accelerated the planting of approximately 6,000 trees and shrubs across the Borough in February/March 2020, this planting was able to be completed despite the challenging circumstances faced by the country and the local authority.

- In February 2020 Cheshire East Council announced a new competition targeted at primary schools, which is partnered with Energy giant Storengy UK. The competition asks for entries, from primary school students across the Borough, of what they will do to combat the climate emergency; with the prize being a solar panel package worth up to £10,000.

Economic Development

- Developed a draft economic strategy for the borough in conjunction with partners of the Place Board which has been through a public consultation period and is scheduled for adoption early 2020. The five-year Cheshire East Economic Strategy 2019 – 2024 and associated action plan set out an ambition for sustainable growth and the key priorities to enable and drive forward delivery. This will support us in; articulating our offer and opportunity to investors; framing our conversations with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Government Departments and any strategic bids we will be submitting in the future for national programmes; and ensuring we are prepared for the post Exit from the EU funding landscape and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The council has helped to create 304 high value jobs and 212 sq. ft of new floorspace in the Borough this year.
- The council has worked with existing businesses to secure £16.7m of investment with a further £4.4m of investment as a result of companies relocating or expanding.
- £21.3m of investment leveraged as part of ELENA energy program.

Environmental Protection

- The Cheshire East Low Emissions Strategy – one of the first amongst Cheshire and Merseyside has now been approved and will be implemented alongside our strategic air quality work. The LES links to other CE policy and strategy focussed on improving local air quality across Cheshire East.
- The links between transport and air quality and the need to focus actions accordingly continue to be supported by Local Transport Plan funding and increased liaison between Environmental Protection and the Highways team.

Development and Regeneration

- A hybrid planning application was submitted in May 2019, which will deliver:
 - Around 1,500 new homes, including 30% affordable.
 - Up to 12 hectares of employment land.
 - New village centre (shops, restaurants, day nursery, hotel, pub, etc.)
 - Primary school
 - Green infrastructure (corridors, country-park style open spaces, sports pitches, community allotments/ orchards)
- The council worked very closely with Homes England to put forward a high-quality development scheme with appropriate public infrastructure that can be accelerated and can attract and benefit from Government funding. The council

has been allocated £21.7million of Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) Forward Funding by Homes England to fund key infrastructure to bring forward this site and deliver on its place making objectives as quickly as possible.

- Strategic regeneration framework for Macclesfield approved by cabinet in October 2019, following public consultation. In line with the recommendations in the SRF officers are now looking to develop plans to enhance the public realm in the historic heart of the town centre (identified by the public as their priority area for regenerative interventions) and are seeking to identify resources for the progression of other recommendations stemming from the SRF.
- Advanced plans for the redevelopment of the Royal Arcade site for a major mixed-use, leisure-led scheme including specifications for a new multi-storey car park, bus station and public realm.
- Crewe Market Hall - Secured planning consent for the remodelling of Crewe Market Hall, subsequently procured a works contractor and progressed with plans for the procurement of a new markets' operator for Crewe - Following completion of a comprehensive 12 month works programme Crewe Market Hall is planned to reopen to the public in summer 2020.
- Future High Street Fund - The council's Future High Street Fund Expression of Interest for Crewe has been selected by MHCLG to progress to the next stage of assessment. This involves the development and submission, in early 2020, of a final business case for capital investment of up to £25m. The Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) was set up to support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future. The council will further investigate development options including but not limited to existing council assets, which could be used to diversify the range of uses in the town centre, increase footfall and improve perceptions. This could include opportunities for environmental and accessibility improvements, better connectivity, green technology and a wider range of homes and workspaces in the heart of the town.
- Stronger Towns Fund (Town Deals) - Crewe has been selected by government to develop proposals for a Town Deal. This provides an opportunity to bid for funding, separate from and in addition to the Future High Street Fund, to deliver regeneration and 'improved transport, broadband and cultural institutions. A prospectus and guidance will be published by government but is yet to be received.
- Collaborated with stakeholders across our towns to facilitate investment, regeneration and development, with the intention of generating increased footfall and expenditure in our town centres by residents and visitors.

Rural and Culture

- Developer contributions secured through the planning process have been used to improve the accessibility of local facilities for pedestrians from a new housing estate in Nantwich. A traffic-free footpath running from the new residents' homes to local schools and onwards to the town centre has benefited from an improved surface making it available for year-round use.

- Sandbach Footpaths Group secured funding via the New Homes Bonus grant scheme to improve the accessibility of footpaths in the vicinity of Sandbach. The Group identified potential circular walks close to residents' homes that they wished to improve by replacing stiles with gates. Working with landowners and the Public Rights of Way team, these routes are now being improved making them easier to use for local residents.
- Working in partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council secured Rural Development Programme for England (2014-20) funding to improve the infrastructure of Cheshire's Twin Trails: the Gritstone Trail and the Sandstone Trail. The funding was granted under the growth programme as part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The funding has been used to bring both trails to a high standard and to work closely together as a visitor attraction. This has been done by improving signposting, way marking, interpretation, by the replacement of stiles with more accessible gates and surfacing improvements. The project has now been completed with the benefits of the improvements there for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.
- The value of the visitor economy reached another record high in 2017 of £963 million; an increase of over 77.1% since Cheshire East Council was formed.
- There are 11,780 people employed in the Cheshire East visitor economy; an increase of 36.8% since 2009.
- In 2018 the average amount visitors paid for their accommodation hit record levels for Cheshire East.
- The economic impact of the staying visitor reached £251m; up by 64.7% since 2009.
- Tatton Park's Business Support team won the Marketing Cheshire 'Team of the Year' award 2019.
- Successful completion of a new Visitor Arrival Building at Tatton Park, part-funded by £246,000 of grant funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
- Tatton Park's 2019 Christmas Mansion event was one of the most successful, with a 60% increase in visitor numbers, compared to the average of the previous 4 years.
- 3200 hazel and willow whips have been planted as part of the 'green offsetting' strand of the 'carbon neutral' plan along with 200 cherry laurel and 30 Specimen trees in the Gardens.
- Awarded Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards for Tatton Park.
- Awarded Green Flag for Teggs Nose and Brereton Nature Reserve.
- Countryside Ranger Service has an events satisfaction rate of good/excellent of 96.87% with a 37% increase in visits to the Countryside Ranger Service website.
- Successful completion and launch of Crewe Cultural Strategy and Cultural Forum
- Successful delivery of several major events – most notably Wavefield which attracted over 5,000 people.

- Crewe Lyceum Theatre had its best year yet. The panto filled the theatre to 91% capacity with 24,000 tickets sold.
- Completion of a Green Infrastructure Plan for Cheshire East.

Housing

- The Accommodation Team referred 1046 cases via the single point of access for supported accommodation and floating support to enable some of our most vulnerable residents to access appropriate accommodation with support.
- Following the fire at Beechmere, Extra Care Housing Scheme - Strategic Housing worked in partnership with other directorates, statutory agencies and providers to rehouse over 120 vulnerable residents that were left homeless.
- Further houses in Crewe and Congleton were purchased to increase the availability of suitable temporary accommodation for homeless families in these areas.
- Housing Related Support services were reviewed and evaluated, and the services provided completely overhauled. The new service specifications were targeted at specific client groups in order to develop a more person-centred offer. The services were tendered successfully within budget and successfully mobilised, despite the COVID-19 lockdown.
- The Council was successful in their bid for further Rough Sleepers Initiative funding for 2020/21 receiving a grant of £438,329.30 which will be used to provide further accommodation with staffing and bespoke workers to engage with statutory partners such as the prisons and the health service.
- Move on to settled accommodation from the Council's hostel has been extremely successful the target for 19/20 was set at 80% and the outturn figure was 89% which is excellent considering the complexity of the residents. This is in comparison to the figures from the Homeless Link Single Homelessness Support in England: Annual Review 2018 which gives the successful move on figure as 49%.
- Preventing homelessness has been very successful this year with the annual target set at 875 exceeded by the end of Q3. Full year figure 1073.
- Exceeded the affordable home target of 355 homes delivered in 2019/20.
- We have reviewed the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers' Strategy to ensure it meets Government requirements and provides a clear strategic focus.
- 374 HMOs reviewed for compliance with management and property standards.
- The Green Doctor service has secured £212,500 of financial benefits for Cheshire East residents through energy saving improvements, switching energy tariffs, and securing additional benefits.
- 428 households helped to improve their living conditions through liaison with landlords, enforcement and support for vulnerable homeowners.

Economic Development

- 11 new inward investment projects were managed and delivered by the team, in total creating 433 jobs (against a target of 200). This included a larger cross-team project, the Swizzels investment in Middlewich.
- Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) setting out a vision, principles and key objectives for the future regeneration of Macclesfield town centre approved in October 2019 following stakeholder engagement and full public consultation exercise.
- Commenced works for remodelling and upgrading Crewe Market Hall.
- Facilitated plans by Scottish Power Energy Networks for a new £2.5m primary sub-station in Crewe town centre, to meet future energy demands.
- Succeeded with plans for further town centre regeneration in Crewe through being shortlisted for the Government's Future High Streets Fund, with an initial £150k grant awarded to support business case development to access up to £25m
- Prepared Planning Applications for circa 3,000 new homes across Garden Village, South Macclesfield Development Area and Leighton Green.
- Progressed the public realm improvements scheme on Castle Street in Macclesfield town centre ready for delivery on site commencing May 2020 (will now have to be deferred due to COVID-19).
- Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) setting out a vision, principles and key objectives for the future regeneration of Macclesfield town centre approved in October 2019 following stakeholder engagement and full public consultation exercise.
- Completed Shop Front Grant Scheme in Macclesfield Town Centre successfully helping to improve the appearance of 16 properties around the lower Mill Street/Park Green area of the town centre.
- Progressed plans for delivery of a pocket park at the egress of Macclesfield Bus Station ready to start on site spring 2020 (deferred due to COVID-19)
- Finalised brief for design work to improve the Chestergate and Historic Heart of Macclesfield town centre following stakeholder workshops.
- Procurement exercise undertaken to secure a team to develop 9 Town Centre Vitality Plans for the Borough's key service centres.
- Advanced plans for the redevelopment of the Royal Arcade site for a major mixed-use, leisure-led scheme including specifications for a new multi-storey car park, bus station and public realm.
- Commenced works for remodelling and upgrading Crewe Market Hall.
- Facilitated plans by Scottish Power Energy Networks for a new £2.5m primary sub-station in Crewe town centre, to meet future energy demands.
- Succeeded with plans for further town centre regeneration in Crewe through being shortlisted for the Government's Future High Streets Fund, with an initial £150k grant awarded to support business case development to access up to £25m.

- Crewe selected as a location for consideration for Government's Towns Fund to support its economic development, with an initial £162k grant to support development of a Town Strategy.
- Established a new partnership-based Place Board for Crewe (initially a Shadow Board) to lead in developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long term economic, physical, environmental and social development of Crewe.
- Collaborated with stakeholders across our towns to facilitate investment, regeneration and development, with the intention of generating increased footfall and expenditure in our town centres by residents and visitors.
- 11 new inward investment projects were managed and delivered by the team, in total creating 433 jobs (against a target of 200). This included a larger cross-team project, the Swizzels investment in Middlewich.
- FDI projects: 7 projects were classed as foreign direct investment, with the majority of these being smaller life sciences projects landing at Alderley Park. Examples include GE Life Sciences (USA) creating 5 positions, with Sai Healthcare (India) creating 40.
- Enquiries: 81 new inward investment enquiries were managed by the team.
- Supported Astrazeneca to introduce a 'Green Commuting Strategy' for staff at Hurdsfield to free up parking space for future investment at the site.
- Supported Royal London Asset Management and Colliers International to develop a marketing strategy for new business units at the RL site in Wilmslow.
- Supported Barclays with their long-term development strategy for Radbroke Technology Centre.
- The team have continued to support Cheshire Green Industrial Park (152 acre site in total, planning permission for 1.5million sq ft of units covering B1 (C) (light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (warehouse, storage and distribution). First occupation of Plot 1A (1.43 acres) and Plot 1B (0.63) facilitated by the team.
- RDPE Growth Programme - 12 Cheshire East rural businesses supported successfully through to the full application stage circa 1.4 million of grant request lodged with the Rural Payments Agency.
- RDPE Cheshire LEADER Programme - 15 rural businesses supported resulting in £545,746 grant secured and 63 jobs created.
- Events – Rural Grant funding workshop organised and delivered by the team. 72 businesses in attendance.
- Delivered a public sector procurement and tendering workshop for small businesses.
- Secured £326,000 in grant funding from Innovate UK to undertake a research project, in partnership with Barclays, to test different approaches for encouraging SMEs to adopt productivity boosting business practices, particularly focusing on the adoption of digital payment technologies and practices.
- Obtained grant offers relating to Housing Infrastructure Funding, subject to contract, from Homes England totalling £41.7m towards delivery of strategic

housing schemes at Garden Village at Handforth, South Macclesfield Development Area and Leighton Green.

Estates

- Completed capital receipts sales of assets and farms worth £5.673m
- Exceeded the annual rental income target by £130k bringing in £2.085m via its investment and farms portfolio.
- Continued the successful statutory testing and management of the Council's estate
- Managing £70m of construction projects on the Council's assets.
 - £30m projects have been completed including, New Composting Plant, Demolition works at Macon House and Hollins View; Cledford Hall Farm Barn Demolition; Concrete Capping works at Malkins Bank; Remodelling Works to the Town Hall at Macclesfield and 10 No School Expansions.
 - £15m are in construction projects, including 5 of the 9 being School /education facility expansions and refurbishments; Listed Barn Repairs and the refurbishment works to Macclesfield Leisure Centre and Crewe Market Hall.
 - 19 projects circa £27m in the early feasibility, pre-construction stages of development, including 3 No Leisure Centres refurbishments, 7 No School expansion projects and the second phase of essential remediation works at Malkins Bank.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
Active Cheshire	Everyday Superhero Awards	CEC Rangers	Shortlisted
Marketing Cheshire Awards	Team of the year	Tatton Park's business support team	Yes
Marketing Cheshire Awards	Wedding venue	Tatton Park	Shortlisted
National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN) annual awards	"Best In Education"	Tatton Park Education and Farm teams	Highly Commended
Marketing Cheshire Annual Awards	Tourism Experience or Event of the Year	Tatton, 'Field to Fork'	Win
Green Flag Awards	Employee of the Year	Elaine Webster	Win

IEMA Sustainability Impact Awards 2020	Sustainability Strategy to achieve net-zero	Ralph Kemp	Applied
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Cllr Jill Rhodes

Portfolio Holder for Public Health & Corporate

Governance and Compliance Services

Democratic Services

- Member induction programme agreed for the 2019 newly elected members.
- Launched a member/officer protocol.
- 1,749 Civil marriages / civil partnerships. This service was closed at the end of this period due to Covid19.
- At the 2019 North West Weddings Awards the service was voted the best ceremony provider.
- The registration service won a bronze award for 'reinventing local services' at the annual iESE national awards. The award was for improving outcomes for the local community, including residents and businesses.
- Introduced A centralised, dedicated service for member enquiries, resulting in a more efficient and focussed way of dealing with residents' enquiries, the service is expected to begin being rolled out to town and parish councils in the coming months.
- Established most accurate Electoral Register since the council was created, containing around 300,000 electors
- FOI Disclosure Log launched. FOI requests and responses now published on the council's website.
- Published the first monitoring officer annual report.
- Delivery of a "snap" Parliamentary General Election on 12th December ensuring, at short notice, that over 300,000 Cheshire East Borough voters and over 50,000 postal voters could vote in 300 polling stations, and by use of the postal system.
- Agreement reached on implementation of the new Committee System in May 2021
- Responded to the cancellation of all electoral activity, including the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, and the proposed Cheshire East Crewe West by election.

Audit & Risk

- 5 detailed reviews into historic land transactions and a consolidated finding report to address identified control weaknesses.
- 7 whistleblowing referrals received and investigated.
- 5 counter fraud investigations.
- Ongoing support to subsequent police investigations as key witness: 2 successful prosecutions with the 2 former staff members.
- Audit and Governance committee approved Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual governance.
- Statement within statutory deadlines at the July 2019 meeting.
- Achieved seventh gold medal in the internationally renowned RoSPA (Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents) Health and Safety Awards in recognition of our health and safety practices and achievements.
- Training and establishment of a new Audit and Governance Committee to enable them to meet quickly after the elections, thus meeting statutory deadlines for accounts etc.

Legal Services

- Alongside Democratic Services, we have been working on the community Governance Review and Committee System, both of which will have a potentially significant impact on the shape of local democracy.
- Alongside IG/FOI colleagues, facilitated the action plan for IPCO in terms of our use of powers under the Investigative Powers Act, and satisfactory acceptance of this by the IPCO.

Transformation

Business Change

- Led on a successful LGA Corporate Peer Challenge including preparation of material, engagement with staff, members and partners and the co-ordination and support of the peer review team.
- Established a consultation panel to ensure robust and meaningful consultations take place across the organisation.
- Published the council's first Borough Profile, drawing together range of business intelligence to 'set the scene' about Cheshire East.
- Revised the council's approach to performance scorecards and reporting processes.
- Developed a Corporate Improvement Framework.
- Business intelligence team for the People Directorate was recognised for its strong support of the front door peer review and support given to the company supporting the EHCP review process.
- Support for the Ofsted ILAC's inspection in November – with recognition in the final formal report "41. Senior leaders and managers have access to an array of

comprehensive performance information. Monthly and quarterly reports provide analysis of performance and identify areas of focus. This has improved compliance in most areas of performance”.

- A member of the Business Intelligence Team was awarded Employee of the year in the council’s annual awards ceremony.
- Undertaken or opened a range of consultations with residents and the Digital Influence Panel including:
 - Libraries survey - over 4,700 responses
 - Kerbside Waste Collection Service – schedule reorganisation consultation – over 1,600 responses.
 - Budget Consultation 20/21
 - Community Governance review – pre-consultation survey
 - Environment Strategy consultation
 - Article 4 and Selective licensing analysis and report
 - Prepared residents’ survey to engage with residents which received over 4,000 responses.
 - Transition to secondary school project (Yr6 and Yr7) – over 3,000 responses.
- Launched the Insight Cheshire East website, providing accessible information and data direct to the public.
- Worked with the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet to develop a draft Corporate Plan for 2020-2024, supported by a robust communications and engagement strategy.
- Delivered a range of successful equality and diversity events, including Pride in the Park event at Queen’s Park, Crewe, local Pride events held in Macclesfield, Congleton and Nantwich, Holocaust Memorial Service, International Women’s and Men’s Days, Menopause Awareness Day, dedicated staff forums for LGBT+ and mental health first aiders, established a prayer room in two of our main office bases
- Took part in Mandela Day, spotlighting the ‘My67minutes’ campaign across the organisation.
- Implementation and roll out of SEND payments portal in March.
- Supported key projects and programmes, e.g Cultural Transformation Programme
 - Brighter Futures Transformation Programme
 - HS2 / Constellation Partnership
 - Redevelopment of Congleton Leisure
 - Organic Food Waste
 - Environmental Services Hub
 - HWRC review
 - archives project includes HLF bid
 - Procurement of new planning system
 - ASDV review
 - Westpark
 - B4B Programme

- Tatton Park (Vision 2 and EPOS system)
- Crewe Market
- Carbon Neutral programme
- Highways Premises Strategy
- Cemetery Review
- Undertaken service diagnostics and systems reviews for key parts of the business.

Human Resources

- Implemented the Brighter Future Together (Culture) programme with full governance structure including staff and Member Forums.
- Recruited and trained over 100 Brighter Future Together Champions to support the embedding of culture across the organisation and facilitated “A Conversation for all Members” training that focuses on building and maintaining positive relationships with each other, officers and residents.
- Commissioned a new confidential helpline for officers experiencing unacceptable behaviour – Stop Bullying Behaviour helpline.
- Embedded new apprenticeship scheme and levy - 277 apprenticeship new starts to date. Total of 125 apprentices currently on programme.
- Supported the roll out of E-Payslips with over 90% of staff signing up.
- The Wellbeing in Work newsletter has been refreshed to include the five strands of the wellbeing in work strategy with content to highlight the work undertaken across the Council in helping staff to improve their wellbeing.
- Launched the Leadership and Management Development Programme 2019/2020 based on manager skills audit, with a total of 346 staff having undertaken the programme.
- Completed NJC pay assimilation to national pay structure and first phase of holiday pay review and payments. Completed second phase of holiday pay review and payments, developed and implemented Oracle update for automatic calculation of holiday pay going forward. All services operating in line with requirements except Schools, TSS and Catering, however, plans in place for these services which have Term Time Workers.
- Delivered induction for all new members providing an opportunity to discuss our workplace culture, values, behaviours and refreshed the Corporate Induction for officers.
- Developed and implemented embedding plan for culture programme work. Introduced revised PDR process, created and implemented My Conversation toolkits, Getting up to Speed – Induction for Managers, Getting up to Speed – Induction for All, Getting in the Knowledge key cards for all staff.
- HR policies approved and implemented with training delivered to managers in relation to; Recruitment, Organisational Change and Equality in Employment - Introduction of a new recruitment toolkit, as part of the Brighter Future Together

(Culture) programme, including behavioural based questioning and a new template for job descriptions.

- Approved and implemented further Policy updates including Leaving the Council, Flexible and Mobile Working, Flexi Time Scheme, Pay and Allowances, Travel and Expenses and Leave and Time Off.
- Launched The Big Conversation staff survey to assess staff engagement across the Council. Engaged with the Brighter Future Champions to support managers to communicate the results and seek feedback on potential areas for improvement.
- Collated The Big Conversation staff survey action plan for the Council across key themes.
- Successfully implemented and completed the MARS 2019 scheme, Gender Pay Gap report and Pay Policy Statement.
- A record-breaking year for the Made My Day Recognition programme with a total of 2330 sent during the scheme year (Jan – Dec) against a target of 1195. Made My Day continues to grow with March being a record-breaking month where 246 were sent.
- Successful end of year recognition event held, over 150 nominations were received.
- Successful Well-being Week took place in April and September with over 600 staff attending and receiving a health check at each event.
- Supported the recruitment of a new senior leadership team including a new Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and various Director roles

Public Health

- Suicide Prevention – the Pilot of the ‘Gatekeeper’ Training ensured a total of 401 people from frontline services trained in suicide prevention. Gatekeeper training for 26 secondary schools is now underway with 63 members of staff from Cheshire secondary schools and colleges trained to date.
- The council is working with the Cheshire and Merseyside Public Health Collaborative to develop and promote Making Every Contact Count (MECC) across organisations throughout Cheshire East.
- The collaborative campaign ‘Know Your Numbers Week’ take place annually in September. Blood Pressure checks are offered to staff in the workplace and in the Connected Community Centres for the public.
- Youth Connect 5 – This wellbeing and resilience course for the parents of 10-18-year-old children has been delivered to 180 trainers across Cheshire and Merseyside.
- A survey of all our primary schools has shown that 50% of our schools are undertaking some form of children walking a mile a day during school hours. A total of 54 schools have implemented a scheme, with a further 10 underway. We are working with the remaining schools to implement the ‘Make the Mile’ initiative.
- The council’s flu vaccination programme for staff achieved approximately a 20% uptake in its first year. This year the uptake at our clinics was higher than last year

- and requests for vouchers have also been higher. The Council was successful in bidding for £5,000 from NHS England to support targeted flu communications.
- The One You lifestyle service programme is achieving strong performance in terms of participant outcomes with regards to weight management, physical activity, and falls prevention:
 - 79% of participants moved from inactive to active
 - 66% experienced a reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI)
 - 37% achieved over 5% weight loss
 - 67% achieved 3% weight loss and over
 - 68% had a decrease in fear of falling score (Falls prevention)
 - 86% improved their timed up and go assessment (Falls prevention)
 - 82% had an improved Dietary Quality Score
 - To draw attention to hypertension during 'Know Your Numbers' week, working in collaboration with district nurses and community leaders, there were 24 stations set up across our communities taking well over 250 residents' blood pressure readings, which resulted in 40 GP referrals and over 50 referrals to the OneYou service.
 - The Council was an active partner in the preparation of a successful funding bid for £486,000 to the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.
 - The Public Health Improvement Team was successful submitting a bid and was awarded £49,000 from NHSE Innovation Funding to support middle aged men's mental health and reduce suicide in Cheshire East.
 - The British Heart Foundation awarded £100,000 of funding for people to have potentially life-saving blood pressure (BP) checks. From that the Public Health team at Cheshire East have trained up the volunteers in the Connected Community Centres and staff in external workplaces to increase testing outside of primary care. From November to February, 170 people in the community have had their BP taken.
 - A state-of-the-art touch screen health kiosk was introduced in Cheshire East after a successful collaborative bid and has begun its journey at the lifestyle centre in Crewe and has been in place until March with over 500 health checks been undertaken. The kiosk calculates BP as well as Body Mass Index, Body Fat, Heart Rate and Heart Age. It will be moved throughout the year into other locations.
 - The Public Health Improvement Team held handwashing sessions in every building to raise awareness of the importance of handwashing as the flu season began.
 - The Director of Public Health and the Health Protection Team have led the initial stages of our response to the Covid-19 situation. This has included providing technical support and advice to our staff, care teams and schools, positive engagement with the media and early multiagency planning.
 - The Health Intelligence Team have been supporting Cheshire East Council and the Local Resilience Forum with data, planning and modelling throughout the Covid-19 situation. This is in addition to developing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapters and creating a refreshed 'Tartan Rug'.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
North West Wedding Awards	North West Wedding Awards	CEC Registration Service	Win
IESE awards 2019	Reinventing Local Services	CEC Registration Service	Win
NW Wedding awards	Best Ceremony Provider	CEC Registration Service	Win
LGC Awards	Public/Private Partnership	Ignition	Shortlisted
RoSPA H+S Gold Award	RoSPA H+S Gold Award	H+S team	Win



Cllr Amanda Stott

Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT & Communications

Procurement

- £600m highway design, maintenance and construction services contract awarded.
- £44m design and construction of A536 Congleton Link Road awarded.
- Completed the procurement of Congleton Leisure centre - £8.2 million.
- Cleaning and catering contracts combined into one contract – first year saving £52,385, 34.3%.
- Translation and interpretation contract saving -£64,318, 34.2%
- Nil non adherences to contract procedure rules during Q1 2019-20.

Finance

- Achieved the statutory reporting deadline for the audited Group Statement of Accounts.
- Provided training to 300 budget managers as part of the Leadership & Management Development Programme.
- Almost 1,000 views of the on-line consultation for the 2019/20 pre-budget.
- External assessment of the Council Treasury investments showed a reduction in the overall risk profile, whilst returns continued to exceed bank base rates in line with our target.
- Retained CIPFA Platinum accreditation.
- Continued the staff Save Us Money Scheme.
- Provided financial advice and support to enable £3m expansion of the Alliance Environmental Services joint venture, to cover grounds maintenance and street cleansing functions within Staffordshire Moorlands and High Peak Boroughs.
- Provided financial advice and support to the Journey First project, successfully securing £5m ESF monies to support care leavers and people with complex needs.
- As Accountable Body, supported the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership in its bid for ERDF monies to create a £20m Evergreen Development Fund.

Customer Services

- New digital services have been implemented to provide improved customer access 24x7 to a range of services including council tax, benefits, waste and recycling, blue badges and pest control.
- A new online customer account has also been implemented providing customers with up to date information on their council tax balance, latest payments, bills and benefits entitlement.
- Maintained 99% collection rate for Council Tax and Business Rates.
- The benefits team have consulted on a revised Council Tax support scheme and are adopting the changes to the Blue Badge scheme.
- Launched 'Social Value' supplier survey to achieve as much social value through every £spent as possible, especially within key contracts with high spend/platinum suppliers.
- Benefits Team have gained approval and successfully implemented a new banded Council Tax scheme.
- The Web Team have re-designed and launched the new "Live Well" site.
- Revenues Team have completed the procurement of a new print solution for bulk mail.
- Customer Services have refined and launched the Customer Experience workstream of the Brighter Future Together Programme.

ICT Services (inc ICT Shared Services)

- Organisational approval of the email retention policy, which supports best practice information management such as the ICO's Code of Practice and compliance with the GDPR.
- Won two GeoPlace awards – Gold Achievement Award for finishing the financial year on Gold Standard for LLPG, and Gold Performance Award for achieving Gold 11 times out of 12 last financial year.
- Information Assurance and Data Management (IADM) is supporting preparedness planning for the 2021 census.
- Re-developed the legacy Tithe Maps solution, the new system benefits from a newly released set of aerial photographs and supports an interface with Google StreetView – this has been recognised across the region with requests to share knowledge.
- Launched a corporate e-learning module "Protecting and Managing Information" to improve the Council's maturity of handling information.
- Implemented a Business Continuity tool across the Authority to support management of business during times of disruption to operations.
- Proof of concept completed for a Cheshire East Personal Care Record cross-referencing advice in Live Well Cheshire East. An initiative with Eastern Cheshire CCG for access to health records, adding own information, connecting

health devices (for example, Fitbit / weight scales etc.), and communication with configured clinical teams in any care setting.

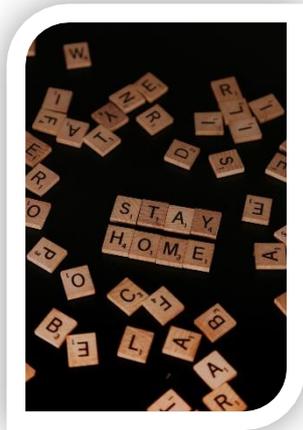
- The 'Choices for Care' Live Well service was launched allowing Adults, Carers, and young people to complete self-assessments. These form-based self-assessments ask a series of questions and signpost people to help and support available on Live Well. Financial eligibility self-assessment checks are also now available online for Adults.
- Complete refresh of Live Well Cheshire East page design based on extensive public consultation. New menu system added with extra help for navigating health and wellbeing information and services, including a new self-service social prescription facility.
- Engagement of Microsoft as a strategic cloud enablement partner.
- Implementation of a new secure, compliant mobile device management solution, removing the need for frequent costly upgrades, exploiting the benefits of cloud, reducing on premise infrastructure and providing significant improvements in management and reporting.
- A joint ICT Strategy was developed with assistance from Ernst Young (EY);
- Developed a Target Operating Model (TOM) to support the strategic direction and hybrid model.
- Supported the introduction of over 250 champions (Technology Champions and Bright Sparks) across both councils who have volunteered and been mobilised to support the transition to new technologies. These champions have been trained in the latest products Windows and Office 365 products, so they are ready to help;
- As part of "Digital Refresh", begun council-wide programme to update our computers to Windows 10 and Office 365 to provide even better service to our customers. 1500 users migrated to date.
- Next Generation Wide Area Network procurement completed which will support the operational delivery of network services and give both Councils strategic opportunities to explore Digital/Smart Cities/5G.
- Key Line of Business (KLOB) Application Decommissioning – 45 applications decommissioned to date, with a further 66 applications in the pipeline, equating to 25% of KLOBs.
- Developed draft Digital Business Strategy.

Business Change - Communications

- Communications strategy for key strategic priorities inc:
 - Environment strategy, climate change and waste strategy
 - HS2, strategic highways programmes, town centre Regeneration
 - Local Plan
 - Cheshire East Partnership 5-year plan
 - Fostering and Adoption
 - SEND

- Staff Survey
- Elections
- Free school meals campaign brought in £182,985 funding.
- Surpassed 25,000 followers for corporate Twitter account in June.
- Surpassed 11,000 followers for corporate Facebook account in August.
- Provided emergency crisis comms strategy and support for two major incidents.
- Working with colleagues in Ansa, we delivered comms to inform and engage people around changes to waste and recycling services and food waste collection.
- Pitched and placed an article in Local Government Chronicle celebrating the importance of champions in culture change
- Reviewed and secured approval for a revised Media Relations Protocol.
- Produced a successful marketing campaign for Pride in the Park 2019 including advertising on D&G Buses, street advertising furniture and communicating with residents around road closures for the event.
- Secured a media partnership with Reach, publishers of Crewe Chronicle to promote Pride in the Park across its readership.

Award	Category	Entry Details	Result
MJ Awards 2019	Innovation in communications	A life with less plastic	Shortlisted
Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation	Best Practise in Social Inclusion	Council Tax Team	Shortlisted
Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation	Excellence in Social Inclusion	Revenue Team	Shortlisted



Whole Council Response to Covid-19.

In December 2019, the outbreak of a coronavirus called Covid19 was reported in China. The months that followed saw the spread of this virus through Iran, Italy and into Europe and by March it was prevalent in the United Kingdom.

On 23rd March, Central Government announced a 'lock down' across the country to reduce the speed of transmission and impact that this would have. The advice was that all who could work at home should do so, people should stay 2 metres apart, there should be no unnecessary travel and schools were closed to most children. Residents over 70 and the vulnerable were told to stay in their homes and not have contact with anyone except essential carers.

In the month between the start of lock down and writing this report Cheshire East has achieved and delivered the following.

Corporate Services

Communications

- Introduced Daily Staff and Daily member briefing to ensure that everyone was up to date with information regarding Covid-19 response
- Key communications staff are still working at Westfields to ensure a timely response to any issues that arise.
- Worked closely with the HR department to ensure that all staff know the correct processes to follow in case of infection of either themselves or their families.
- Four months of media releases and statements produced in one month due to the impact of the Covid19 pandemic.
- Facebook followers increase by nearly 2,500 in the same period

Logistics hub setup and operation

- Logistics hub set up from scratch
- Officers have worked long hours including weekends and over the bank holidays to make sure that food parcels were able to go out to the identified vulnerable people.
- Officers attended local supermarkets to bulk purchase food items using their own transport, specifically toiletries as these are not supplied in the boxes distributed nationally.
- Secured a donation of 1300 packing boxes which are being used by both the Shielding hub and Children & Families.
- Secured a donation of 700 breakfast items from Mornflake Oats as well as donations of food from Taste for Life and a chemical firm in Holmes Chapel.
- 120 food parcels have been distributed over the course of 3 weeks to elderly and vulnerable people.

Intelligence and data

- Developed the homeworking assessment and support to ensure that all staff who are now working at home are doing so safely.
- Lead on 'lessons learnt' project.
- Providing and cross matching data sets of vulnerable adults in conjunction with Public health and adults social care.
- Developed vulnerable children data sets,
- Working with the DfE to develop national daily data requirements and returns.

ICT Projects

- Developed a process for dealing with the increase in ICT requests caused by staff having to work from home.
- Triaged 495 requests for new ICT kit over a 4-week period
- Devised a safe process to hand over new ICT equipment to staff in a safe way to ensure minimal contact.

- Responded and actioned 438 of these requests within the 4-week period
- Triaged 47 requests for advice on teleconferencing
- Ensured that approximately 2,500 members of staff were able to work from home on either existing, new or their own equipment.

Human Resources

- Developed a Workforce Redeployment Programme to temporarily redeploy staff to support business critical areas. To date, in excess of 55 staff have been redeployed.
- A multi-faceted recruitment campaign has been launched to recruit staff into health and social care. This includes running a Cheshire East Care4ce campaign, joining a North West campaign to recruit Auxiliary Social Care Workers and working with ES&R to recruit their staff on a casual basis. HR is supporting this with a shortened recruitment process to enable additional resource to be put into place as soon as possible.
- A process for testing staff for COVID 19 as part of the nationwide testing programme has been implemented for staff who are symptomatic and staff who are self-isolating due to a family member showing symptoms. Testing is available for frontline Local Authority staff.
- A daily reporting tool has been established to accurately inform senior management on the current status of the Council's workforce. Letters have been issued to all staff across the Council identified as critical workers to support their movement when travelling between council sites or other locations in line with their job role.
- Working with colleagues across the Council and the Trade Unions, an extensive range of FAQs have been developed to address staff questions relating to government guidance, changes to working arrangements and temporary policy changes. A bespoke Well-being Communication Plan has been developed and implemented during the COVID 19 response period. This includes a bite size communication that is included in the daily COVID 19 update and articles and information focusing on 'Well-being in Work', e.g. working differently, creating a new routine, working from home, keeping in touch and 'Well-being at Home' focusing on both physical and mental well-being for staff and family members.
- A solution has been found to share communications with our non ICT enabled staff via cheshireeast.gov.uk/staff which can be accessed via any device through the internet and does not require a Cheshire East email or login. All COVID 19 updates and Well-being in Work updates are available on these pages.
- Continued engagement with the Brighter Future Champions. The focus of the weekly communication is to share well-being hints and tips, share insights of innovative ways of adjusting to working differently and to seek feedback from the group of what further support would be helpful. After each communication, positive feedback has been received from the Champions, particularly around sharing experiences which has helped colleagues stay connected when working from home.

Governance and Compliance

- Effectively responded to the emerging Covid-19 emergency by making provision for Members of the Council to make decisions remotely, rather than in face to face meetings. With the help of colleagues from ICT, rolled-out Windows 10 and Office 356 provision and training to Members and to officers who would be required to service “virtual” meetings.
- Analysed emerging legislation in order to inform preparations for virtual meetings.
- Responded to the need for the first virtual meeting of Cabinet to take place on 5th May
- Implemented arrangements for telephone death registrations: for the first time being equipped to deal with the registration of deaths without face to face meetings with Registration Service staff

Benefits and Revenues

- Issued over 4,000 grants to businesses totalling £53million,
- Implemented easements to support those struggling financially such as the deferment of Council Tax and Business Rates, responded to a significant increase in claims for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefits,
- Supported vulnerable customers contacting the People Helping People service and ensured COVID information is easily accessible on the Councils Website.

People

Cared for Children and Care Leavers

- Staff within our Care Leavers service have shown many examples of creativity and great use of technology to stay in touch with our young people during the coronavirus lockdown. Staff have carried out social distance walks and door step visits, had virtual lunches and even dressed up on video calls to make young people laugh.
- During the coronavirus lockdown, we held a competition for care leavers and all children and young people with a social worker to design a tote bag. All children and young people who have a social worker will receive a bag featuring the winning design for their age category.

Children in Need and Child Protection

- During the coronavirus lockdown, workers have been using creative ways to stay in touch with children and young people and have carried out face to face visits where necessary to ensure children and young people are safe.

Education and 14-19 Skills

- Schools have been very flexible during the coronavirus lockdown and have worked with us to ensure places have been available for children of keyworkers and our most vulnerable children. Almost all Cheshire East schools were open over Easter, so we were able to continue to offer places for vulnerable children compared to just 60% that were open nationally.

Preventative Services

- To support families during the coronavirus lockdown, we developed the Children and Families People Helping People welfare scheme which has supported all children and families who need essential shopping, support with bills and access to food and household essentials during this difficult time. Cheshire East Council has directly delivered support to more than 500 families with urgent needs.
- Prevention services have adapted during the coronavirus lockdown and have found creative ways to ensure services are provided to children, young people and families. This has included providing videos, leaflets and other information for parents to support them to create a learning environment at home for their children, daily live streaming to young people by the Youth Engagement teams, online chats and quizzes, and online Youth Council meetings. Workers have been using video calls to stay in touch with children and young people and have carried out face to face visits where necessary to ensure children and young people are safe and well.

Public Health

- The Acting Director of Public Health and the Health Protection Team have led the initial stages of our response to the Covid-19 situation. This has included providing technical support and advice to our staff, care teams and schools, positive engagement with the media and early multiagency planning.
- The Health Intelligence Team have been supporting Cheshire East Council and the Local Resilience Forum with data, planning and modelling throughout the Covid-19 situation. This is in addition to developing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapters and creating a refreshed 'Tartan Rug'.

Communities

- In rapid response to support residents out in the community that now found themselves required to socially isolate and through that have become vulnerable due government advice to stay inside to protect themselves the [People Helping People](#) service was launched on 20th March 2020.
- The service provides local residents with underlying health issues and/or who were above the age of 70 who do not have the available support networks with the option to request help for tasks such as food shopping or prescription collection.

- To meet the needs of local residents the service also allows local people to offer their availability and support hence the People Helping People.
- The scheme was also extended to vulnerable children and their families.

Adult Social Care

- Adult Social Care has been maintaining contact with all service users ensuring their safety and wellbeing. This includes preventing any carer breakdown.
- The hospital social work teams have continued to support hospital discharges and we have seen the lowest delayed transfers of care for many years.
- The team have not had to enact any 'Care Act' easements.
- The social work team have also been supporting the individuals on the 'shielded patients' list.

Commissioning

- The commissioning team have ensured that every adult & children's social care and public health contract/services were able to deliver services in line with the Government guidelines. A huge effort has been undertaken to support the adult social care market and in particular the care home sector.
- They have supported the Clinical Commissioning Group by block purchasing a number of beds to support the discharge process and work collaboratively to ensure the safety of residents in our care homes.
- They have set up new programmes to support vulnerable groups during the pandemic:-
 - Hidden Carers
 - Job Matching Service
 - Mental health information point.

Place

Waste and Environmental Services

- The Council is grateful to all its recycling and waste teams and those who have joined them from other services who have enable us to keep residual, garden/food and silver bin recycling going throughout this period of Covid-19. We also thank the public for their support for our 'Waste Hero's' who have clapped and left rainbows on their bins in encouraging our teams as they have collected the bins.

Parks and Playing Pitches

- We are grateful to our parks and open spaces teams who have continued to mow the grass and maintain our public open spaces to allow them to be used for exercise and wellbeing during this time.

Housing

- As part of the response to COVID-19 the Government introduced the “Everyone In” initiative which required Councils to find accommodation for anyone sleeping rough in their area. The Homelessness Outreach team were already aware of and working with this cohort and apart from one person managed to work with people and access suitable accommodation for them.
- The transition to home working has been really successful considering the nature of the services which are very public facing. The staff worked really hard on finding solutions that would work well for our customers who can often be vulnerable and chaotic.

Economic Development

- COVID19 support for business including;
 - Setting up and managing the Business Helping Business Scheme – 96 businesses supported
 - Drafting content and updating business information on the Council website
 - Supporting the Business Rates team to deal with queries relating to the small business grant

Strategic Transport & Parking

- Senior Civil Enforcement Officer has taken on a unique role from Feb/March 2020 to support redeployment of staff into delivering essential food and prescription parcels and alternative work rotas for our CEO’s during the Covid-19 crisis.

Highways

Innovation and Schemes

- The COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in the service working in more innovative ways to ensure that fundamental day to day activities continue to take place. Social distancing has resulted in new and more dynamic ways of working both out on the network and within the office environment, allowing to deliver more efficiencies
- Donated cones to Shavington medical centre to ensure social distancing is followed. One of the operational staff revisits on his way to work to reset the cones after they are moved overnight.
- Maintained bin collections across the authority with the help of colleagues from across the business.



Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N

Date First
Published: N/A

CABINET

Date of Meeting: 9 June 2020

Report Title: Cheshire East Council Corporate Peer Challenge Report

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jill Rhodes, Public Health and Corporate Services

Senior Officer: Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

1.1 In January 2020, Cheshire East Council hosted its first Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). Facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA), a peer team consisting of councillors and senior officers from local authorities around the UK who examined the Council's leadership, governance, financial planning and capacity to deliver its priorities. This is part of a commitment to local government leading its own improvement.

1.2 The team spent four days on-site in Cheshire East, during which they:

- Spoke to over 180 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 40 discussions, focus groups and observing regular meetings as well as additional research and reading.
- Visited key sites of the borough to look at practice in action and engaged with staff at other locations.
- Collectively spent c. 270 hours on-site to determine their findings, the equivalent of one person spending eight weeks in Cheshire East.

1.3 A final report of their findings has now been received.

1.4 The CPC Peer Team, in its feedback presentation when on site and final report now received (Appendix A), delivered the following key observations and recommendations:

Observations:

- The Council has made good progress over the past few years.
- It delivers a number of high-quality services to the residents of the borough which we should be proud of.
- The culture change programme has made a profound difference to the way the organisation functions and the experience of staff.

Key recommendations:

1. Continue with the Council's commitment to staff culture and wider workplace wellbeing.
 2. Develop and launch a new Corporate Plan.
 3. Provide clarity regarding the process, decisions and timelines for the introduction of the Committee System.
 4. Finalise technical and political decisions that will underpin the new Committee System.
 5. Consider the strategic and operational context in which the Committee System will be operating.
 6. Refine the council's approach to strategic finance and create dialogue regarding collective appetite to risk.
 7. Communicate priorities for working in a partnership environment and learn the lessons of historic practice and approaches.
 8. Refine the work programme and focus of Scrutiny Committees to support internal challenge and improvement.
 9. Develop new approaches to engage councillors in neighbourhood working.
 10. Review the findings of the 2019 Resident Survey to inform future relations with residents.
- 1.5** Since the delivery of the informal feedback in January, progress has been made on a number of these recommendations, including workplace wellbeing and the transition to a committee system.

1.6 Over the last 2 months the Council's attention has been focussed on the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the careful relaxation of the 'lockdown' and the move towards a recovery phase, there will be an opportunity to pause and reflect on the CPC recommendations, considering the learning and changes we would want to make as a result of our recent experience.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet

- a) Approve the Corporate Peer Challenge report for wider publication;
- b) Note the progress to date, and the delivery of key actions since the informal feedback was received in January 2020;
- c) Agree to take forward the further work identified on strategy and finance, governance, culture and partnerships and support the development of required action plans; and
- d) Monitor progress on a six monthly basis.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Challenge Team are about the Council's overall strategic direction and planning, rather than specific operational issues. They have been used to reflect on the future direction of the Council and to inform the refresh of the council's corporate plan.

4 Other Options Considered

4.1 The Council welcomed the opportunity to host a corporate peer challenge visit and would want to demonstrate positive action to respond to the recommendations. Some councils decide not to publish their CPC report. This was not considered desirable or appropriate given our commitment to openness and transparency.

5 Background

5.1 Since 2012 the Local Government Association (LGA) has provided, as part of its support to the sector, the facilitation of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) reviews whereby senior members and officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visit the Council with the objective to provide constructive feedback to inform improvement plans and support corporate learning. It is designed to be forward looking, and to facilitate reflection on issues and how they may be

resolved. While it can be used as an external 'health check' on the councils' corporate governance, the peer challenge is not a form of inspection.

5.2 The peer team considered the following five lines of enquiry which form the core components of all corporate peer challenges. These are the areas believed to be critical to councils' performance and improvement:

- **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** Does the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
- **Financial planning and viability:** Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
- **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- **Political and managerial leadership:** Does the Council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- **Governance and decision-making:** Is political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change to be implemented?

5.3 In addition to these, the Council asked the peer team to provide feedback on the workforce culture, as well as the organisational approach to internal assurance.

5.4 The CPC team comprised of:

- Team Leader and Chief Executive – Tracey Lee, Plymouth City Council
- Member Peer (Labour) - Cllr Chris Read, Leader, Rotherham Council
- Member Peer (Independent) - Cllr Hannah Dalton, Epsom and Ewell Council
- OD/Culture - Sarah Messenger, LGA
- Corporate Director - Neil Thornton, Rochdale Council
- Audit/Finance - Tim Watkinson ex Audit Commission now LGA
- LGA Programme Manager - Matthew Dodd

5.5 In terms of the process undertaken; the peer team were based at Westfields, Sandbach during the four-day review. There was an initial 'scene setting' attended by Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team and regular informal feedback.

5.6 Meetings and discussion sessions took place with a range of officers, members and other stakeholders/partners enabling the peer team to explore the issues relevant to the purpose, scope and terms of reference for the peer review.

5.7 At the end of the initial on-site activity (13th – 16th January), there was a feedback session and members of Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team were invited to attend and presented with the findings of the review.

5.8 This has been subsequently followed by a formal report (Appendix A), summarising the peer team's feedback with their recommendations for improvement. There has been a delay to the original timelines because of the impact of COVID-19.

5.9 During the five months between the CPC visit to the publication of the final report, the Council has made considerable progress on a number of the key recommendations, examples of this are;

5.9.1 Recommendation 1: Continue with the council's commitment to staff culture and wider wellbeing.

- The Council has developed an organisational action plan to respond to the findings of the Big Conversation staff survey.
- The staff wellbeing strategy and supporting action plan has been reviewed and updated, and more recently in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and mobile working arrangements. Wellbeing forms a key part of the culture work and is discussed regularly within teams and forums, along with the internal staff newsletter 'Team Voice' and Covid-19 staff briefings.
- We continue to engage and develop our Brighter Future Champions and held a development day at the end of January 2020. The champions have been encouraged to get involved in the Brighter Future Transformation Programme, with individual champions now identified for each workstream. We acknowledge an important role for the champions as we progress plans to implement the committee system.

5.9.2 Recommendation 2: Develop and launch a new Corporate Plan.

- The senior leadership team and cabinet members have developed a draft corporate plan for the period 2020-2024.
- The Council is keen to ensure that there is full and robust consultation on the draft corporate plan, and a comprehensive consultation and engagement schedule has been prepared.
- The original intention was to begin public consultation in March 2020 just before the Covid-19 restrictions were imposed. New dates for consultation need to be agreed.
- We are currently exploring opportunities for a digital consultation that can be meaningfully delivered during this pandemic.

5.9.3 Recommendations 3,4 & 5: Provide clarity regarding the process, decisions and timelines for the introduction of a committee system.

- In January 2020, a letter signed by all Group Leaders was sent to all staff and members to outline the continued commitment to move from the current Leader and cabinet form of governance to a new committee system, with a new intended implementation date of May 2021.
- In March 2020, the Constitution Committee agreed to the detailed design of the proposed committee system, including the structure of the committees, roles of the leader and deputy leader and the role and power of committee and sub-committee chairs and urgency provisions.
- A formal resolution vote of full Council has been scheduled for July 2020. This will be a legally binding vote to implement the new model.
- Consider the strategic and operational context in which the Committee System will be operating. – See above

5.9.4 Recommendation 6: Refine the council's approach to strategic finance and create dialogue regarding collective appetite to risk.

- The Council set the 2019/20 budget in February 2020. Since then the outturn has been finalised (see report elsewhere on this agenda). The financial implications of COVID-19 started to emerge in March. It is already clear that there will be both significant additional costs and falls in income which will require a new Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be developed to take account of the Council's changed circumstances.

5.9.5 Recommendation 7: Communicate priorities for working in a partnership environment and learn the lessons of historic practice and approaches.

- Strong partnership working has been a vital part of the response to Coronavirus. We are using the recovery process to develop new conversations.

5.9.6 Recommendation 8: Refine the work programme and focus of Scrutiny Committees to support internal challenge and improvement.

- This will be led by the scrutiny committees themselves.

5.9.7 Recommendation 9: Develop new approaches to engage councillors in neighbourhood working.

- This will be part of the discussions with Members on the new committee structure.

5.9.8 Recommendation 10: Review the findings of the 2019 Resident Survey to inform future relations with residents.

- The residents survey concluded in November 2019 with a 46% response rate, (an improvement on the 2017 survey).

- Discussions have taken place with a number of service leads on the findings of the survey, including planning, customer services, highways and countryside rangers. All services are considering the findings and preparing action plans as a result.
- A full report is now at final draft stage with a publication date to be agreed shortly.

5.10 The progress to date demonstrates the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

5.11 The ten key recommendations from the CPC are shaping priorities for further improvement. These will be developed into actions with measurable targets, focussed on four strategic themes:

- Strategy and Finance
- Governance
- Partnerships
- Culture

5.12 We are using the opportunity of the unprecedented changes resulting from COVID-19 to reflect on the next stages of improvement. The publication of the final report of findings provides the Council with the opportunity to engage and collaborate with its staff, Members and key stakeholders, ensuring that there is clarity and ownership about the next steps of our improvement journey.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1 Legal Implications

6.1.1 Engaging in the LGA corporate peer challenge and acting on the feedback is not mandated. The actions taken and progress to date, will however, assist the Council to meet its duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (s 3 LGA 1999).

6.1.2 As work progresses and actions are identified, any direct legal implications which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the recommendations related to the introduction of a committee system will be incorporated into the ongoing programme of work.

6.2 Finance Implications

6.2.1 The cost of the corporate peer challenge is included within the authority's annual subscription to the LGA. Other costs are internal and related to officer time. The cost of implementing any actions resulting from the recommendations will be met from current budgets (unless separately identified and agreed as part of the budget setting and approval process).

6.2.2 There is no direct impact on the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) arising from this report.

6.3 Policy Implications

6.3.1 Participating in the corporate peer challenge supports the Council's commitment to being a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. The findings will be used to drive improvement and will support the development and refresh of council policy.

6.4 Equality Implications

6.4.1 The CPC feedback report will be published on the council's website ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

6.5 Human Resources Implications

6.5.1 Implementing any required actions will require the support and contribution of a number of officers and members, including the brighter future champions, equality champions and named officers identified in the action plan. This will be achieved within existing resource with management arrangements in place to consider skills and capacity.

6.5.2 The feedback report has clearly recognised the positive contribution of the council staff and members in engaging with the workforce culture programme, and a key recommendation is to ensure that this progress is continued and sustained.

6.6 Risk Management Implications

6.6.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge report does not identify any serious concerns or recommendations. As such, there are no identified risks arising from it.

6.7 Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for our rural communities, which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the launching of a refreshed Corporate Plan will include priorities and commitments which will impact rural communities. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

6.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for children and young people/cared for children, which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the launching of a refreshed Corporate Plan will include priorities and commitments which

will impact children and young people/cared for children. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

6.9 Public Health Implications

6.9.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for public health which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the launching of a refreshed Corporate Plan will include priorities and commitments which will impact the wider public health of the borough. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.10.1 Implementing any required actions will indirectly support the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability. For example, the launching of a refreshed Corporate Plan will include priorities and commitments which will directly and specifically support environmental priorities and initiatives.

6.11 Ward Members Affected

6.11.1 The CPC ten recommendations will affect all residents across all areas of the borough and therefore all ward Members.

7 Consultation & Engagement

7.1 In preparing for the Corporate Peer Challenge the Council engaged with all officers and members, not only to raise awareness and understanding of the challenge week, but to seek representation and support to attend the 1-1 and focus group discussions.

7.2 As reported by the LGA over 180 people were spoken with during the four-day visit, and feedback sessions were offered to those that attended the meetings.

7.3 The Council will continue to consult, engage and collaborate with residents, officers and key stakeholders to determine the scope and focus of the work to be delivered over the short to medium term.

8 Access to Information

8.1 Further information on the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge programme can be found at:

<https://local.gov.uk/our-support/peer-challenges>

9 Contact Information

9.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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Job Title: Head of Business Change

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Corporate Peer Challenge

Cheshire East Council

13-16 January 2020

Feedback Report

1. Executive Summary:

Cheshire East council has made significant improvements in recent years to address issues of misconduct and to transform the culture of the organisation. This reform has been made whilst managing wider financial pressures, increased demand and maintaining service standards. The opportunity now exists for Cheshire East to build on these foundations. The council can use their successful approach to organisational change to make wider reforms and service transformations to improve outcomes for residents.

Cheshire East was established in 2009 and covers 450 square miles, with a population of 380,800 residents in 175,000 households. The largest proportion of residents live in the Crewe and Macclesfield areas, with significant settlements in market towns such as Sandbach, Knutsford and Wilmslow. The borough is well connected through road and rail links, including Crewe railway station, which serves as a major junction on the West Coast Mainline, supporting travel to Manchester, Liverpool, North Wales and the Midlands.

Cheshire East has a strong social and economic base, illustrated by several indicators, including the low levels of free school meal eligibility (8.7% against a North West average of 16.2%), high levels of owner-occupied housing (75% against a North West average of 64%), and average household income (£35,800 against a North West average of £27,200). However, there is a considerable range to household income in the borough, varying from £19,900 to £66,600 between the most and least deprived wards. This demonstrates a level of inequality that exists within the borough, with six areas within the most deprived 10% nationally. This, alongside the geographic diversity of the borough has contributed to the notion amongst officers and members that Cheshire East is a “*place of places*”, made-up of multiple identities, issues and needs.

The council was led by a Conservative administration from 2009-2019. However, the ‘all-out’ elections of May 2019 resulted in the council entering ‘no-overall control’, with there being no individual majority party across the 82 councillors. Since the election, the council has been led by a Joint-Administration comprising Labour and Independent councillors, with a Labour Leader and Independent Deputy Leader.

Historically, Cheshire East has faced a number of internal and external investigations into the practice of the council and the conduct of senior officials and elected members. These investigations were identified and referred for investigation by senior officers regarding matters of procurement, land transactions and the treatment of whistle blowers, and have undoubtedly been damaging to the reputation of the council and the morale of staff. However, it was not the role of the Corporate Peer Team to revisit any individual instances or issues but instead to consider any subsequent learning and improvement that had been applied by the council.

Following the appointment of the Acting Chief Executive in 2017 the council requested a review of the workplace culture that was completed by the LGA. In addition to the themes covered in all corporate peer challenges (CPC), this CPC provides an opportunity to assess progress against the findings and recommendations in culture review. The Peer Team also

reviewed the wider corporate health of the organisation, with a specific focus on the processes of internal assurance and audit.

Shortly prior to the CPC, the council's Acting Chief Executive announced that she would be leaving the organisation to take up a Chief Executive post at another council. The Peer Team heard a range of positive comments regarding the contribution that she had made to the council's improvement, emphasising the importance of securing the correct replacement.

The Corporate Peer Challenge Team spent four days on site in Cheshire East. During this time the Team spoke to a broad range of stakeholders, including staff, councillors, and partner organisations. The team received a broad range of feedback and were struck by the positivity of the staff working for the organisation, and the remarkable progress that has been made in improving workforce culture in a relatively short space of time. The importance of this work was illustrated by clear leadership and commitment, including the determination of councillors to drive and prioritise improvement. These messages were received from multiple levels within the organisation and this improvement has been embedded across multiple teams and locations.

These improvements in culture have also supported the council to advance their internal assurance, with officers stating their comfort to '*call out*' and '*professionally challenge*' practice when appropriate. Alongside this cultural shift, the Team recognised the practical actions that have been taken, including improved management oversight and the development of supporting assurance frameworks and action plans.

The council has a good understanding of the socio-economic needs of the borough and undertakes regular activities to gather the views of residents including resident surveys, and thorough approaches to budget consultation. However, as a new administration, there is naturally further work to be done to set-out the priorities of the organisation following the May 2019 elections. The renewal of the council's Corporate Plan provides an opportunity to communicate these priorities within the context of needs, resources, and local partnerships.

Following the May 2019 election, the joint administration confirmed their commitment to operate an "inclusive model of governance". Following the Peer Review on 30 January, Group Leaders have agreed to defer a decision to change the Council's model of governance; moving from a Cabinet and Leader model to a Committee System with a view to implementation in May in 2021. The importance of this transition cannot be overstated. The council needs to be assured regarding the impact of any changes on timeliness of decision making and collective oversight. It is also important that the appropriate training for members and officers is undertaken and capacity is in place so that the Committee System is successful.

Cheshire East has a net revenue expenditure of approximately £270 million. There has been an estimated reduction in Government funding to Local Government of 49.1% from 2010-2018, this equates to a reduction of 28.6% in the council's spending power. Whilst the council has been required to make savings in recent years, there remains a strong local financial base, including council tax, business rates and new homes bonus. This has resulted in the council having a low exposure to settlement funding assessments from

Central Government, and wider grants. These grants currently account for approximately 15% of the council's income.

However, the council had forecast to overspend their budget for the past two years (but balanced at year end) and is forecast to overspend for 2019-2020 which clearly needs to be addressed. Finally, unallocated reserves are currently at £10.3 million, this is below the comparator figure for other Unitary Authorities, and the council needs to consider their wider approach and strategy for increasing these reserves. Within this context, the challenge remains for Cheshire East to ensure that they are managing the finances of the council as effectively as possible, and the opportunity exists to review approaches and appetites towards risk across councillors and senior managers to reflect the priorities of the organisation.

The Peer Team recognise the progress that has been made by the council in addressing historic issues and improving the culture of the organisation. The team were also impressed that whilst these improvements were delivered, the council had continued to deliver effective services, including high-performance in areas such as housing delivery. As the Council builds on the progress made to date, the opportunity exists to apply the skills and experience of cultural change initiatives to wider change programmes. This will involve managing the implementation of the Committee System and being prepared for the associated transition. Furthermore, the Joint Administration is presented with the exciting opportunity to communicate medium- and long-term ambitions for the borough through a new Council Plan and aligning resources to these goals through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This will support partners and residents to better understanding the aims of the council, whilst also setting out an approach to wider improvements and transformation.

2. Key Recommendations:

There are a range of suggestions and observations that are included within the main body of this report, that will help to inform potential 'quick wins' and practical actions. The following notes represent the key recommendations from the CPC Peer Team to Cheshire East Council, and reflect the feedback delivered on Thursday 16 January:

- 1. Continue with the council's commitment to staff culture and wider workplace wellbeing:** This includes making sure that the progress made to date extends to all teams and considering how shared practice within the organisation could support any outstanding pockets. There is also a need for the council to mitigate the risk of regression following the departure of the Acting Chief Executive who has been central to this work. Finally, the council implement plans for what the next wave of the "Brighter Futures" programme considering how this capacity and momentum could be used to address other issues.
- 2. Develop and launch a new Council Plan:** The current corporate plan expires in 2020. This presents an opportunity to progress the work underway to set out the priorities of the new administration, including their commitment to addressing climate change, in a clear and consistent manner to residents, staff and partners. This corporate plan should be set within the context of the needs of the borough, the views of residents, the resources available, and the political priorities for the coming years.

- 3. Provide clarity regarding the process, decisions and timelines for the introduction of the Committee System:** The Peer Team recognise that the Joint Administration is committed to replacing the Cabinet and Leader model with the Committee System. The committee system has set out a clear timeline for any transition, however, ongoing work is required to provide clarity to staff regarding the date of implementation as well as training opportunities and requirements.
- 4. Finalise technical and political decisions that will underpin the new Committee System:** There remain several key decisions that need to be made regarding the transition towards the Committee System. This includes technical decisions regarding the number and scope of committees, the role of Committee Chairs, and the size of each Committee. However, there also remain several important political decisions that need to be finalised regarding the structure and operation of the new system. Alongside these political decisions associated with the new approach to governance, the council needs to consider the levels of decisions and delegation which it is comfortable to be made by officers across the organisation, reflecting the recent staff survey finding to empower staff and distribute decision making across the organisation. This should include reflecting on current arrangements in-light of proposed reforms.
- 5. Consider the strategic and operational context in which the Committee System will be operating:** It is important that the implementation of the Committee System is not viewed as a technical process in isolation alone. Therefore, the council will need to assure themselves of the following alongside the new model of Governance:
- The timeliness of decision making.
 - Collective oversight for strategic issues that cut across multiple Committees.
 - The impact of the new model on partnership working.
 - The relationship of decision making with neighbourhood forums.
 - The training and development required for councillors and officers.
 - The communication and engagement required with staff throughout this process.
- 6. Refine the council’s approach to strategic finance and create dialogue regarding collective appetite to risk:** The council has taken a very prudent approach in addressing financial challenges to date. However, further improvements could be made including:
- The relationship between transformation programmes and budgetary pressures.
 - The monitoring and tracking of benefits and savings across the organisation.
 - Review the council’s appetite towards risk in core budget assumptions, and the relationship with reserves.
 - Simplifying the council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure that it is more focused and succinct.
 - Review the medium-term financial strategy to ensure resources reflect the content of a newly developed corporate plan for a four-year period.
- 7. Communicate priorities for working in a partnership environment and learn the lessons of historic practice and approaches:** The council works in a complex partnership context and should consider the areas of work that it wants to prioritise. This

should be communicated clearly to partners to support clarity on ambition. The council should also consider the lessons learnt from successful partnership projects, as well as instances which have not gone to plan.

- 8. Refine the work programme and focus of Scrutiny Committees to support internal challenge and improvement:** The council may benefit from considering the relationship between breadth and depth within Scrutiny Committees, and the topics and issues that would most benefit from Scrutiny input or working groups. The council should also be proactive in identifying their approach to enabling effective challenge within any Committee System in the future.
- 9. Develop new approaches to engage councillors in neighbourhood working:** The council should consider new ways of working that give more focus to the role of councillors as community leaders. This could potentially include the development of neighbourhood budgets, providing the opportunity for councillors to support local schemes, including the development of a new conversation with residents regarding expectations as the council moves forward.
- 10. Review the findings of the 2019 Resident Survey to inform future relations with residents:** The council is currently processing the results from their most recent resident survey since 2017. This information should be used to identify areas of improvement in customer relations and support the council's next wave of cultural change.

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge Approach:

3.1 The Peer Team:

Peer Challenges are delivered by experienced councillor and officer peers from across the sector. The make-up of the peer team reflects the requirements of the council and the specific focus of the peer challenge. Members of this team were selected based on their relevant experience and expertise, and their involvement was agreed with the Council prior to arriving on site. The peers who delivered the Cheshire East Corporate Peer Challenge were:

- **Tracey Lee** – Chief Executive of Plymouth City Council;
- **Cllr Hannah Dalton** – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council;
- **Sarah Messenger** – Workforce Consultant Local Government Association;
- **Cllr Chris Read** – Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council;
- **Neil Thornton** – Executive Director Corporate Services, Rochdale Borough Council;
- **Tim Watkinson** – Principal Advisor Local Government Association;
- **Matthew Dodd** – LGA Challenge Manager.

3.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges that the LGA undertakes. These are the areas that are critical to a councils' performance and improvement:

1. **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** Does the council understand its local context and place, and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. **Leadership of Place:** Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. **Organisational leadership and governance:** Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
4. **Financial planning and viability:** Do the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
5. **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

Additionally, Cheshire East asked for the CPC process to consider two additional areas:

1. **Workforce and Culture:** What progress has been made following the 2017 Workforce Review into issues of bullying, harassment and working environment?
2. **Internal Assurance and Audit:** How effective are the systems and processes that the council has put in place following investigations into areas of historic practice?

3.3 The Peer Challenge Process:

It is important to stress that the CPC process is not an inspection. Peer challenges are designed to focus on improvement, and each is tailored to meet individual councils' needs and context. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material and evidence that they read.

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge every four to five years. This was the first CPC which Cheshire East has undertaken, but where appropriate these findings have been

cross-referenced against other external reports. There is an expectation that the Council will consider a further CPC from 2023 onwards.

Prior to arriving on site, the Peer Team were provided with a Self-Assessment developed by the council. This document is designed to highlight good practice and the current issues of the council in order to support the peer team to identify emerging questions and themes. Moreover, this document provides an important opportunity for Cheshire East Council to reflect on their achievements and progress to-date and consider their ambition and actions for future years. In addition to this Position Statement, the Peer Team prepared for this challenge by reviewing a wider range of supporting documents and information, in order to ensure that they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent four days onsite, during which they:

- Spoke to **more than 180 people** including a range of council staff, elected Members, external partners and wider stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from **more than 40 meetings, focus groups and discussions**. This including **attending and observing business meetings** of the Council, including Cabinet on Tuesday 7 January.
- **Visited key sites of the borough** including Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Jubilee House, and Nantwich Library to look at the practice of the council in action. Members of the team also visited other council locations and offices, including Westfields and Delamere House to engage with **staff at other locations**.
- Collectively spent **c. 270 hours on-site to determine our findings**, the equivalent of one person spending **eight weeks in Cheshire East**.

This report provides a summary of the Peer Team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (16 January 2020). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government Officers and Members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time, and we appreciate that some of the feedback may be about issues that you are already addressing and progressing.

4. Feedback:

4.1 Understanding of the local place and priority setting:

As the only organisation that works across the specific geography of "Cheshire East", the council is unique in serving the population of the borough. The council was able to provide a depth of information regarding the needs of the borough. This information helped the Peer Team to better understand the profile of Cheshire East, and the population that the council serves:

- **Ageing Demographics:** The age profile of the borough is older than the national average with 22.5% of residents over the age of 65, compared to an average across England of 18%. This profile is due to become more prominent over coming years,

with a forecast increase in residents over the age of 65 by 17,000, compared to a decrease of over 6,000 in working age residents.

- **Housing and Development:** Over the past three-years there have been 7,145 new homes that have been built in the borough. This included the delivery of 1,737 affordable homes during the same period. Approximately 28% of the houses in the borough are detached, compared to a North West average of 13%.
- **Business and Economy:** It is estimated that there are approximately 20,000 businesses that are located within the borough across several sectors. This has continued to the economic strength of the borough, estimated at £14.4bn.

Beyond an understanding of the population and needs of residents at a borough level the council has a very strong understanding of the needs and variations that exist between wards. Over the course of the time spent in Cheshire East, the Peer Team heard frontline staff, managers and councillors all refer to the tools and processes which are used to capture the different issues and needs at a ward level. The “tartan rug” which assesses wards through a red, amber, green system is an effective way for the council to understand local issues.

As well as the socio-economic needs of the borough, the council has in-place a robust scorecard approach to assessing the performance of services across Directorates. This helped the Peer Team to understand areas of both good and challenging performance for the council. This included the increasing visitor numbers to council owned leisure facilities (1,786,656), the strong local tax base for the authority (98.65% collection), and the average response time for answering calls within the customer contact centre (116 seconds). Throughout the team’s time on site, a number of participants also raised issues regarding the levels of customer service and stated their ambition to improve council performance in this area. It was also clearly articulated to the Peer Team that issues of climate change are a priority area for the council moving forward.

In addition to the use of needs and performance information, the council has a clear commitment to engaging and consulting with residents. This has included the operation of a Digital Influence Panel which contains approximately 1,400 members and has been used to inform a broad range of consultations. This Panel replaced the previous Citizen’s Panel and is used as a contact list and starting point for consultations. This includes the budget consultation which closed shortly before the peer team arrived on-site. The Peer Team also saw first-hand examples of high-quality community engagement through the work of the Connected Communities Programme during our time on-site. The Peer Team recognises the appetite and ambition of council to improve and extend consultation and engagement, and the ongoing work that the council is undertaking to develop a framework to support this.

The council’s commitment to conducting bi-annual resident attitude surveys makes a strong contribution to their insight into the opinions and aspirations of residents. This survey was distributed to approximately 8,000 households (4.5% of the borough) in late 2019 and results will be available in early 2020. This process will provide a valuable update on the findings from the 2017 survey, which included 81% satisfaction with Cheshire East as a place to live, but a much lower satisfaction rate of 56% with “how Cheshire East runs things”. This reflected a response of 56% for those who said that they did not believe the council “acts on the concerns of local residents”.

These results were produced in September 2017 at the height of several high-profile local issues for the council. However, it is important that the results from the 2019 survey are distributed and understood across the organisation. This intelligence will indicate the extent to which the council's improvements in workforce culture have extended to external customers and residents and will provide essential information for where the efforts of the next wave of cultural transformation should be applied.

The current corporate plan for Cheshire East runs from 2016-2020. It includes core values and strategic outcomes and is well understood within the organisation. However, the process of developing a new corporate plan presents a timely opportunity for the Joint Administration to set out future priorities and focus and communicate the type of council that they want to create in line with the financial challenges facing the organisation, the needs of the borough, and the strategic context in which the council is working. This process will also enable the council to consider how priorities relate to the ambition of partners, and the aspirations of residents. However, it is important that the council distinguishes between the long-term corporate objectives that need to be included in a new council plan, and the short-term opportunities that can be progressed in the interim, and to avoid the risk of missing immediate opportunities for improvement or the clear short-term priorities of councillors.

It was recognised across the organisation that councillors have a unique understanding of their local ward and issues. There is an opportunity to bring together councillors with the wider engagement work that is taking place through the Connected Communities Programme and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions. This work could be extended through the introduction of local neighbourhood budgets to support councillors in their role as community leaders to broker a new conversation with residents.

4.2 Leadership of Place:

The Peer Team recognise the complexity of partnership working in Cheshire East and support the pragmatic approach that has been taken to date. The council has made significant contributions to local forums for partnerships working including:

- The Constellation Partnership;
- The Cheshire East NHS Place Partnership Board;
- The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board;
- The Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board;
- The Cheshire and Warrington Sub-Regional Leaders Board;
- The Cheshire East Leaders Board;
- The Place Board.

The Peer Team noted the complex structures and multitude of forums for partnership working in the borough and felt that they may benefit from being reviewed or simplified to ensure that they are effective and that there are clear lines of accountability.

The positive contribution that the council has made to the sub-region was confirmed throughout the course of the review. This included significant praise for the contribution that the council has made as Chair of the Sub-Regional Leaders Board; with specific

praise for the annual conference, and the increased focus on bringing together the people and place agendas through the concept of inclusive growth. This positive approach towards partnership working was recognised by council staff in both operational and management positions, who spoke about the importance of working with partners.

Outside the contribution that the council has made to partnership forums, the Peer Team also heard positive examples of direct partnership working. This was illustrated by the work that was conducted by Cheshire East Council in partnership with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service following the Beechmere Care Home Fire. Following the fire in August 2019, the Council worked in partnership with Fire and Rescue, as well as the wider care market to support the 123 residents of the extra care village who were affected.

However, despite some strong examples of partnership working, the Peer Team recognised that relationships across all local partners are mixed and includes instances and programmes of partnership working which have not run smoothly, including work on shared services and systems with some partners. As a learning organisation, it is important that the council continues to consider any lessons learnt from these programmes, and how these issues could be resolved or avoided in future. These lessons should be shared internally to support continuous improvement.

The partner organisations that the Peer Team spoke to through this process were keen to develop long-term strategic relations with the council. This could be supported through the clear articulation of the council's priorities through a new council plan, enabling a structured conversation built around long-term goals. This approach will also enable relationships between organisations to be grounded in the needs of communities, rather than being transactional in nature, or based on individual councillors or members. We also note, however, that the geography of Cheshire East inevitably gives rise to complex partnership arrangements, and that the Council will wish to prioritise how and when different relationships develop in order to secure maximum value. Given the resources and capacity implications of partnership working, it is important that the council considers which partnership initiatives are a priority, and resources them appropriately.

The council may also wish to consider and communicate its appetite for shared roles and shared services. There are several legacy arrangements that are in place that would benefit from a formal review, including the formal footing which underpins shared services with neighbouring authorities. Progress has been made through the establishment of a Shared Services Committee with Cheshire West and Chester. However, the opportunity exists for this forum to not only support accountability for current models, but to consider their strategic fit and the future appetite of the council. This work should be clearly communicated to partner organisations to support their understanding of prioritisation and pace within this context.

Finally, the opportunity exists for Cheshire East to play a more active role in engaging with local Members of Parliament. Following the 2019 General Election it is recognised that there will be potential changes to the policy context for local government, and it was felt by the Peer Team that the council may benefit by working closer with local MPs to set out their asks and offers to central government.

4.3 Organisational leadership and governance:

Following the suspension and subsequent resignation of the former Chief Executive in 2017 the council appointed an Acting Chief Executive. She is positively regarded by members of staff across the organisation, and partners, and has played a pivotal role in the council's approach to addressing workplace culture. The acting CEX was praised by officers and partners for her transparency, openness and has modelled many of the behaviours that the council is keen to embed within the workforce. However, the acting Chief Executive will be leaving Cheshire East in the spring of 2020, and the appointment of a new individual will be an important cross-roads for the council.

These improvements in workforce culture are also reflected in improved relationships between councillors and officers. The previous nature of these relationships was particularly damaging and detrimental in 2017, and the Peer Team recognise the stark improvements that have been made. As well as the recognition for the contribution made by the Acting Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, the Team heard positive feedback for the leadership demonstrated by the current and previous Leader of the Council on this topic. The Team witnessed first-hand the approach and respect that exists between officers and members throughout the week. This progress has been because both officers and councillors have recognised the key role and responsibility that they have in driving and modelling change.

Following the 'all-out' local elections for all 82 councillors in May 2019 the council moved from being a Conservative administration to no-overall control. A Joint Administration was formed comprising 41 members of the Labour and Independent Groups, including 25 Labour and 16 Independent Group Members. The remaining 41 councillors represent the Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Real Independent and Non-Grouped Independents by 34, four, two and one seats respectively. This included the election of 38 new councillors who had not previously held office. Given the number of newly elected councillors the council should be live to considerations regarding the ongoing training, development and support.

The Joint Administration has settled into new roles and responsibilities well, and there is a clear commitment from the Leader and Deputy Leader to work effectively together. There has been a mature approach to joint working across the Joint Administration, as illustrated by the commitment to appoint Cabinet roles based on skills rather than political interest. The Peer Team appreciated the collegiate relationships that were in-place across Cabinet, and the enthusiasm that existed for the subject matters discussed.

In May 2019 the council passed a Notice of Motion supporting a change in the decision making and governance arrangements for the council. This motion stated that they would move towards a Committee model subject to a legally and constitutionally robust process. Following the CPC process the Council has confirmed that they are planning to implement this system from May 2021. A change in governance models such as this is a major undertaking that will be central to the council's success over coming years. There are also several risks which need to be managed throughout this process. The Council has made good progress through the Working Group of the Constitution Committee to develop proposals, timelines, and the details of such a system. This has

included independent advice, visits to other councils that currently operate this system and several councillor engagement sessions.

During the Peer Challenge, there was ongoing discussion regarding the date and process for implementing this new system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide clarity regarding this process. This includes making several political and organisational decisions such as the implementation date, the structure and size of Committees, the role of Chairs, and the process for selecting them. It will be important for the culture of the organisation that this information is communicated to staff clearly, and that officers across the council and from multiple levels are engaged in the process. This should also include consideration of any additional capacity that is needed, and the additional training that will be needed for members and officers.

When moving towards the Committee System the council needs to also consider the levels of decision making and delegation that will be applied. It will be central to the success of the new system that decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level, and that there is understanding of the due processes and approaches. This was illustrated in the 2019 staff survey when only 33% of respondents felt that decisions were taken at the right level.

Beyond the technical process of designing and introducing the Committees, due thought needs to be given to how they will operate within the current context of local government. Whilst many representatives of the council spoke of the need for a 21st century Committee System, this needs to include consideration of issues of collective oversight, timeliness of decision making, accountability and transparency. There will also need to be clarity regarding the relationship between Committees and how councillors work in partnership forums and local area arrangements.

Although the peer team did not explore the operation of scrutiny in depth, the Team recognise that the council has moved towards best practice by allowing opposition councillors to Chair Scrutiny Committees following the May 2019 elections. The Team praise this development in supporting political challenge to drive improvement. Further consideration is needed towards the wider approach of Scrutiny within these new arrangements, including the potential to focus on a smaller number of issues in greater depth, and having fewer items presented for updates on activity (which could be dealt with through group briefings). However, beyond these marginal improvements, a more fundamental decision is required regarding the approach, scope and functions of Scrutiny under any Committee System.

4.4 Financial planning and viability:

The council has an annual turnover of approximately £700 million, and a net revenue expenditure of approximately £270 million. The council is largely financed from local sources of revenue, with council tax accounting for 77% of all funding, and government grants only accounting for 5% of overall funding. The council also enjoys strong business rate growth, with an indicative increase of 5% a year. This has limited the level of reductions that the council has had to make in response to austerity, and they have been able to protect several service areas.

Historically, the council's budget has over-spent by £0.4 million in 2017-2018 and by £1.1 million in 2018-2019. In October 2019 the Council reported that they were forecasting to overspend by £7.5 million for the financial year of 2019-2020. This forecast was largely due to budget pressures from demand-led services within the People's Directorate, previous pension costs, and the achievability of saving targets. These reflect challenges which are faced by many organisations, and the council should consider their approach towards savings across the organisation to share ownership and encourage informed approaches to financial risk.

In previous years there have been transfers from earmarked reserves to address these issues. The council currently has low levels of reserves (£10.3m) for an organisation of their size, and these levels have reduced over recent years. The Chief Finance Officer is aware of this and has publicly stated the intention to act to increase reserve levels in future.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy reports a budget gap of £11million in 2020-2021, and on Monday 6 January the council closed their budget consultation which included emerging information on proposals to address this gap. The MTFS also provides information on the cumulative savings of £19.9 million that need to be delivered between 2021-2024. It is also believed that the MTFS would benefit from being simplified, presenting a clearer narrative on the council's strategy and use of resources whilst also supporting improved member engagement on content.

Total capital expenditure in 2017-2018 was £88.2million compared to the budget of £120.4million. Expenditure on the capital programme in 2018-2019 was £96.8million compared to the revised budget of £153.8million. Given that the council has benefited to date from significant investment in infrastructure and has a high-level of aspiration for this programme in the future, it is important that the council balances this ambition with the practicalities and capacity to support delivery.

The council takes a pragmatic approach to the delivery of services, and this includes several alternative service delivery vehicles (ASDV) that deliver services on their behalf, including Ansa Environmental, Transport Service Solutions, Orbitas Bereavement Services, and Civicance, which are overseen by a Shareholder Committee. These Vehicles are currently generating a profit, and those with which the peer team engaged were delivering high-quality services. Moving forward, the council should consider their medium-term and long-term goals for their growth and operation.

The council will need to consider the decisions and analysis related to the development of any further ASDVs, including the risks, return, and relationship with wider commissioned services. The council is currently in the process of developing an ASDV for adult social care services (Care4CE) and will need to assure itself regarding the transition of staff to this new organisation and the associated organisational development work. Finally, this transition will require the council to develop new methods to monitor performance and manage quality within a contractual relationship, for services which had previously been under direct control.

The council has a "Brighter Future" Transformation Programme which contains five core work streams:

- Culture;
- Estates and ICT;
- Customer Experience;
- Commercial;
- Governance.

The Peer Team recognise the importance of these workstreams and that they have been prioritised as a result of their cross-cutting nature and impact on multiple services in the council. However, given the annual overspends within the budget that have been created due to demand led services, the council he council may wish to consider how best to support service transformation linked to existing budget challenges as well as the Brighter Futures Transformation Programme.

Moreover, further work is needed to fully identify and quantify the potential cashable and non-cashable benefits to transformation programmes. This should include an agreed approach to tracking benefits to ensure that it supports councillors to make future decisions regarding invest to save, and wider budgetary decisions. Beyond the strategic input of councillors on these decisions, the potential also exists to introduce neighbourhood budgets to support local schemes and initiatives, including the potential to link with other local funding sources and approaches.

The council would benefit from agreeing and defining their appetite and attitude towards risk financially. This includes consideration of risks from both a management and political perspective. This approach will be central to future transformation programmes and policy objectives but should also be embedded within all of the council's financial assumptions (such as future years income through New Homes Bonus, or the longevity of additional funding announcements). The council may benefit from support to developing their strategic approach to financial management that supports these conversations and enables closer alignment between the budget and priorities.

4.5 Capacity to Deliver:

Cheshire East employs approximately 3,800 staff (this does not include staff in Alternative Service Delivery Vehicles). The Peer Team could not help but notice the energy, passion and commitment of staff working for Cheshire East. It was clear to members of the team that they care hugely about the work that they do and the people of the borough. However, 74% of the council workforce is over the age of 40. This creates natural challenges for succession planning within the council. Whilst staff turnover has remained both stable and low between 10-11%, the council does face challenges due to the number of working days lost due to sickness and ill-health, this was narrowly above 10 days per employee in 2018-2019 against a public sector average of 8.5.

The Acting Chief Executive and wider Leadership Team are visible throughout the organisation and this is appreciated. Staff throughout the organisation spoke with respect for wider members of the Leadership Team, and the actions and behaviours which they have modelled. This has set a high standard for managers across the organisation.

Cheshire East has a track record of delivering behaviour and culture change. This has been evidenced through the cultural transformation at the council, and the progress of the Brighter Futures Programme. The network of officers that have been created through the Brighter Futures Champions is a valuable resource, these officers have developed their skills and confidence, and are 'bought-in' to the organisation. This network provides an important tool as capacity for future work in this area.

Whilst great progress has been made through the Brighter Futures Programme, the council is clear that culture change is ongoing. With this in-mind, the council needs to continue to invest time, effort and energy into sustaining the change that has been achieved to date. This has been recognised as a key theme within the council's transformation programme and has been resourced appropriately.

The new member enquiry system that has been developed and implemented in 2019 appears to provide a streamlined way of managing queries and questions across a range of service areas. As with all new initiatives such as this, there will need to be a periodic review to ensure that the operation of this approach does not undermine the quality of councillor and officer relationships, and to capture the continuous improvements that can be made to systems.

Staff across the organisation recognised the potential for I.C.T to support their effectiveness in their roles. There were some frustrations with the current ICT systems, including confusion regarding the use of 'bring your own device' and the relationship with flexible mobile working and clarity is needed on this without delay.

The Peer Team noted the publication of the OFSTED report into children's services which was published the week before the CPC took place and rated the council as "requires improvement to be good". The council will need to consider the capacity requirements that are required to act on the findings of this report, and any wider corporate support and approach that may be needed for further progress over coming years. This will require careful balancing with the wider capacity required for corporate transformation, the delivery of savings, and wider service improvement.

The council's transformation plan includes a dedicated workstream on customer experience. As part of this work there is a need to define the standard of customer experience that the council wants to deliver. This work should involve reviewing current standards and focusing on services with known issues of poor customer experience. The planning service was one such area that was identified area which would benefit from an external review.

However, the biggest issue that has the potential to impact upon the capacity of officers and members will be the introduction of the committee system. This is likely to require more members to attend formal meetings, and careful consideration is needed for the corporate support and resources that will be required to support this new system, including the impact on key services such as; finance, policy, legal, and democratic services. Consideration is also needed for the practicalities of this transition, including the timing of meetings, and the potential impact of evening meetings on officers' wider commitments. The Council also raised the potential to 'double run' systems as part of

their governance transition, this has the potential to place further demands on the capacity of officers.

4.6 Workforce Wellbeing and Culture:

The transformation of the organisational culture within Cheshire East has been profound. When the LGA undertook a workforce review in 2017 it was clear that there were several staff who had experienced or witnessed bullying, felt unsupported by their line manager, or were fearful of the impact of change. This culminated in an unhealthy working environment, and in some cases, staff saying that they were 'ashamed' to admit they worked for the council.

Two years following this review, the council has been able to demonstrate the action plan that they put in place in response to the report, the changes in practice that have been made, and, importantly, the progress that has been made.

The challenge of changing an organisational culture cannot be overstated. This process can often be simplified to communication campaigns, relaunched values or training courses. But it is about changing the emotional relationship between the employee and employer, for example how staff feel when they enter the office, their relationship with their manager, and their wider psychological contract. This emotional relationship does not change easily or quickly.

Cheshire East Council understood that and put in place the key ingredients for success by having visible leadership at the top of the organisation modelling the behaviours that they wanted to embed. By encouraging and facilitating people to talk openly and honestly with each other, and equipping managers with the skills and confidence to manage people well, changing policies and procedures to ensure they are fair and easily understood. By seeking feedback and acting on what people say. The views of staff two years later illustrated that they had experienced and felt the difference.

Importantly, councillors from across all parties are positive about this programme of culture change and understand the ongoing role that they play in 'setting the tone' of the organisation. This was witnessed by the team first hand when watching officers and councillors interact. It is important that there is an ongoing conversation between members and officers to support this relationship. This staff survey also includes challenges for future improvement, such as 30% feeling that the council effectively managed change.

The council has also introduced practical changes to support this improvement, including wellbeing areas to offer a break to staff, and the development of a network of Mental Health First-Aiders.

A healthy organisational culture should be constantly evolving. Whilst there is still further work to do at Cheshire East to make sure that these improvements are made in every team and function, the council should be extremely proud of the progress made to date.

4.7 Internal Audit and Assurance:

In light of the historic investigations the council was keen for the Team to give some attention to internal processes and assurance. Linked to the progress made on workforce culture, the environment within the organisation is now such that any identified concerns are very likely to be 'called out' or challenged, and staff are confident that senior managers would listen to their concerns.

There is also improved management oversight over the identified areas of historic concern. Most notably, procurement and land and property transactions. These controls provide more assurance to the council and should be kept in place to ensure that they are effective and proportionate. This oversight has been accompanied by improvements in systems and processes, including the development of a clear 'Assurance Framework' for Land and Property Transactions, that is in effect an action plan to ensure the necessary actions are implemented. The council have also set up an Asset Board to support the governance on these decisions. These processes have been recognised by both internal and external audit who have carried out reviews and test-checked the operation of the controls. Both internal audit and external audit have confirmed that the controls are now adequate and that the controls are operating as expected.

The required statutory roles of Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer are now both held by substantive officers rather than interims, with the importance of these roles recognised by senior management, including the Chief Executive Officer. The appointment of new individuals in key roles (e.g. Head of Audit and Risk, and the Chair of the Audit Committee) provides an opportunity to develop strong relationships across key roles. It was clear to the Peer team that internal audit is recognised and respected within the council.

As with all councils, there is ongoing work to maintain the progress made in this area. This includes regular reviews of core policies and practices to make sure that they remain fit-for purpose and are understood by staff. A review and subsequent awareness campaign of the whistleblowing policy would be particularly helpful. The wider Risk Management Framework of the council would also benefit from a refresh, this could be done in conjunction with the development of an Assurance Framework across all key risk or business areas, potentially utilising the three lines of defence model.

The Audit and Governance Committee of the Council has made improvements in recent years with much more effective challenge being provided through this committee, including reviews of contracts due for renewal. There is currently one 'independent person' on the Committee who is not a member of the council and can therefore help to provide independent challenge. However, the size and membership of the committee may benefit from review to ensure the committee can operate effectively and provide sufficient challenge across all areas of responsibility, including on financial matters.

5 Next steps

5.1 Immediate Next Steps:

We appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership of Cheshire East Council will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this work. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this offer. Claire Hogan, (North West Principal Adviser) is the main contact between your authority and the LGA, and her email address is: Claire.hogan@local.gov.uk.

Claire will arrange to meet with recently recruited Chief Executive to discuss this final report, and any support needs that the LGA or those elsewhere in the sector may be able help with. Throughout the Peer Team's time on site, regular feedback was given to the Leader, Deputy Leader, Acting Chief Executive and Executive Director for Corporate Services.

The LGA are also keen to continue the relationship that has been formed with Cheshire East Council through the peer challenge, building on the openness, transparency and principles of improvement. This will include signposting to examples of best practice in the sector, identifying opportunities, and communicating policy changes in-line with the issues raised within this report. This approach may also include instances when the practice of Cheshire East is communicated to other Councils in the sector to support their improvement journey.

5.2 Follow up visit:

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. The timing of the visit is determined by the Council. Our expectation is that it will occur within the next 18-24 months

5.3 Next Corporate Peer Challenge:

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge or Finance Peer Review every four to five years. It is therefore anticipated that Cheshire East Council will commission their next Peer Challenge to take place from 2023-2024.

Finally, all the Peer Team would like to thank the officers and Members of Cheshire East Council for making us feel so welcome during our time on-site and for contributing towards the process.

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