

# Public Document Pack

## CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council**  
held on Wednesday, 26th February, 2025 in The Tenants' Hall, Tatton Park,  
Knutsford WA16 6QN

### **PRESENT**

Councillor M Houston (Mayor/Chair)

Councillor D Edwardes (Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Adams, L Anderson, R Bailey, M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, J Bird, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, M Brooks, D Brown, C Browne, L Buchanan, C Bulman, A Burton, R Chadwick, C Chapman, D Clark, J Clowes, A Coiley, N Cook, S Corcoran, L Crane, T Dean, B Drake, S Edgar, K Edwards, M Edwards, H Faddes, R Fletcher, A Gage, S Gardiner, E Gilman, M Goldsmith, M Gorman, K Hague, E Hall, A Harrison, G Hayes, A Heler, C Hilliard, S Holland, T Jackson, D Jefferay, R Kain, A Kolker, N Mannion, G Marshall, A Moran, R Moreton, R Morris, H Moss, M Muldoon, C O'Leary, J Pearson, J Place, B Posnett, J Pratt, J Priest, B Puddicombe, P Redstone, J Rhodes, J Saunders, H Seddon, M Sewart, L Smetham, G Smith, J Smith, J Smith, L Smith, J Snowball, R Vernon, L Wardlaw, M Warren, H Whitaker, F Wilson, J Wray and B Wye

### **72 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors P Coan, A Farrall and M Simon.

Councillor P Redstone arrived at the meeting during Item 6 – Leader's and Deputy Leader's Announcements.

### **73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In relation to Item 16 – Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant, Councillor L Buchanan declared a pecuniary interest as she was an employee of Everybody Health and Leisure and stated that she would leave the Chamber during consideration of this item.

In relation to Item 10 – Supporting Effective Engagement: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution, Councillor S Gardiner stated that he was a named person in the report as he was the deputy leader of the Conservative Group, and the membership of the Members Reference Group was being approved at the meeting.

In relation to Item 16 – Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant, Councillor B Wye declared a pecuniary interest as he was an employee of Everybody Health and Leisure and stated that he would leave the Chamber during consideration of this item.

In relation to Item 16 – Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant, Councillor A Kolker declared that he was a trustee of the Everybody Health and Leisure and stated that he would leave the Chamber during consideration of this item.

In relation to Item 16 – Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant, Councillor L Anderson declared that she was a trustee of the Everybody Health and Leisure and stated that she would leave the Chamber during consideration of this item.

#### **74 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.

#### **75 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor announced the passing of Honorary Alderman Ray Stafford and Honorary Alderman Margaret Martin and invited all present to stand in a minute's silence in remembrance.

#### **76 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

Mr R Slater referred to the decision to remove cash payments from the majority of car parks in Macclesfield and asked what research had been undertaken to assess the potential damage to retail businesses in Macclesfield as shoppers may be opting to shop out of town or on-line. He asked what the reduction in car park revenue was since cashless payments had been introduced and stated that the more vulnerable were more likely to fall victim to theft or scam or have their phones or cards stolen at the ticket machine. Mr Slater referred to the decision to remove the access road to Whalley Hayes Car Park and the car park entrance ramp from the gritting route, which had led to parking difficulties particularly during snowy conditions and asked how this decision was justified as it had directly affected shoppers, who were unable to park, and the car park likely generated a substantial amount of revenue.

In response Councillor M Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that contactless payments were popular with consumers and retailers with only 12% of transactions now in cash and this trend was likely to continue. A full Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken to ensure no one was discriminated against or adversely effected. Anybody with a Blue Badge does have to pay to use the car parks. Shoppers had the ability to pay by smartphone and the Ringo App, which they could do so safely in their own car. In terms of overall revenue, payments were down across Cheshire East because of the weather affecting all car parks and people staying at home. The Whalley

Hayes Car Park revenue was £1500 a week and the severe weather may have cost only a few hundred pounds in lost charges.

Mr P Roos asked why it was continually being stated that changes to bin collections will/could go to 3 weekly. He stated that he lived in a block of 26 flats with almost 50 people. The flats had 4 recycle bins and 4 general waste bins and that these got full on fortnightly collections and worse still when tenants move out and new ones move in. He stated missed bin collections were a frequent occurrence, with Fridays being the collection day and if they were missed it was not possible to report it until Monday and then if lucky a clean-up crew might come by the following Friday, and it was therefore unacceptable to even think about going from 2-week to 3-week collections.

Councillor M Warren, Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee, responded that the Environment and Communities Committee had approved the move from two to three weekly residual waste (black bin) collections at its meeting in November 2024. This change would be implemented in parallel with the introduction of weekly food waste collections, which are mandated by legislation to be offered to all households from April 2026. Cllr Warren stated that as part of the same proposal residents would see an increased level of service related to missed bins which would mean that the Council would return within three working days rather than the five days the policy states now. The Council would continue to closely monitor the performance of the service as the changes to waste collection frequencies are implemented.

Mrs V Scaresbrook, speaking on behalf of Congleton Sustainable Travel, which is part of the Congleton Climate Action Group, asked if council members and officers were aware that Council continued to contravene the law, namely the Equality Act 2010? She stated that the Council's shortcomings in equality issues were highlighted last year, by the Local Government Association's Peer Challenge report and that her group was very aware of this weakness. She stated that if the Council had an effective Equality and Inclusion Strategy, then volunteers would not be fighting various departments over existing obstructions to those on foot, with pushchairs, or using mobility aids and that if the Council took note of the law, many would not be so disadvantaged when going about their daily lives. She asked if the Council were preparing the new 2025-29 strategy and requested that it would be precisely written with clear direction, so that officers and members understand that their decisions and implementations complied with equality laws.

Councillor N Mannion, Leader of the Council, responded that the Equality Act 2010 legally protected people from discrimination in both the workplace and in wider society. The Public Sector Equality Duty meant that bodies like Cheshire East Council had to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, such as shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to our own employees, and that the Council took this responsibility very seriously. He stated he was aware that Mrs

Scaresbrook had raised formal complaints about some specific street furniture, railings and bollards in Congleton, which Mrs Scaresbrook consider to be an obstruction for people with mobility aids such as scooters and that the Council had agreed to remove one set of railings which although not considered urgent would be scheduled into the work programme for completion before the end of March. It was not the intention of the Council to be discriminatory and it needed to ensure the safety of all users as well as our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council was developing a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy once the new Cheshire East Plan has been approved.

Mr R Douglas stated that based on the Council's own figures the total S106 monies potentially outstanding from developers was £93.9 million. Many, if not most, of these monies were indexed for inflation, so, that total must surely exceed £ 100 million. Of this £79 million related to agreements signed before 2020. He asked now much of the £93.9 million had now been paid. He stated that the Council had advised that a new software system had been introduced to monitor Agreements more effectively and a key priority is to monitor and recover any overdue monies and asked why the software had not been used to recover the £800,000 from Stewart Milne in respect of the Thistle Way development before the developer went into administration in January 2024.

In response, Councillor M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, stated that the Council had introduced a system to record s106 agreements to increase effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring of those agreements and significant progress had been made in transferring previously held information onto this system. The potential outstanding figure of £93.9m was no longer relevant and had been superseded because of the ongoing work and the ever-changing flow of monies received or spent. The new potential outstanding figure was £166.2m but that figure included all sites including those that have not started development. At present there was £52.5m in agreements where development had not yet started. Total monies paid to the Council was £100.7m with £94.9m allocated to actual projects, £55.5m of which had already been spent in delivery of those schemes. Officers were continuing work to allocate all received funding to viable projects. Outstanding monies totalled £9.8m, which were being pursued as a priority, using legal enforcement powers as appropriate, and there was £20.5m attached to sites now under construction which were currently being targeted.

Mr M Unett stated that S106 monies were important for improving communities, education, healthcare, provision of services or a particular piece of infrastructure. He stated that he believed that Alsager alone had over £800k in S106 monies, which if not spent in a certain period the developer could claim back. He asked if the relevant member of the administration or relevant officers could meet with him and other Alsager representatives to discuss the unspent S106 monies, receive regular updates and get the process started to utilise the S106 monies.

Councillor M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, in response stated that he would provide a written response and engage with Mr Unett regarding the requested meeting.

Ms S Helliwell referred to speculative planning applications being put in across Cheshire East and asked if the Council had a 5-year housing land supply and, if the Council had not removed sites from the SADPD adopted in 2024, what would the housing supply be now. Ms Helliwell referred to the announcement that the Council would no longer be funding My Cheshire Without Abuse from 31 March and asked what involvement did the Chair and/or the Children and Families Committee have in the ending of the My Cheshire Without Abuse Contract.

In response, Councillor M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, stated that based on the increased housing targets within the new national planning policy and the status of the existing housing land allocations in the current Local Plan the Borough no longer had a 5-year housing land supply. He stated that this position was not exclusive to Cheshire East but would be addressed as the Council continued the process of developing and ultimately adopting a new Local Plan over the next few years. The removal of a small number of housing allocations from the draft SADPD would not have made any material difference to the current supply situation.

Councillor C Bulman, Chair of Children and Families Committee, responded as there were a number of questions relating to domestic abuse, she would respond to all the questions in one response.

Ms L Lancaster spoke of her experience of domestic violence and the support she and her daughter had received from MyCWA and asked that the Council continue funding the services they provided.

Ms S Parr asked what advocacy services would be provided for clients if the domestic abuse services were brought in house?

Ms A Blake stated that she was a survivor of domestic abuse and spoke about the support she had received from MyCWA and asked how the Council planned to effectively replace these indispensable services and continue to provide the holistic, compassionate support that MyCWA has consistently delivered.

Ms A Young referred to the Council and Councillor Bulman's statement on 17 January 2025 outlining that the new domestic abuse service provision from April 2025 would provide a "robust suite of in-house services" that offer "comprehensive" support to the whole family including perpetrators of domestic abuse. She asked if any clarity could be provided upon why the recent domestic abuse strategy delivery plan that had been shared with partner agencies outlined an external provider as responsible for the behaviour change interventions moving forward and why My CWA were not given the opportunity to bid for this contract.

Mr M Young referred to the decision to not extend the MyCWA contract to provide refuge provision and domestic abuse services and stated that Councillor Bulman was on record confirming that the correct democratic process had been followed by a cross-party committee with a decision being made at the November 2023 Children and Families Committee meeting. He stated that he had reviewed all minutes since November 2023 to date and listened to all recordings of the above committee and could find no evidence of this. The only comments appeared to be at the last committee meeting where a number of councillors raised concerns over the process that had been followed with suggested improvements for future decisions. He stated that he had asked to be provided with any minutes or relevant briefing papers and had not received a response.

In response Councillor C Bulman, Chair of Children and Families Committee, responded that Third Sector organisations played an important part in the provision of local services, and the Council recognised the valuable work MyCWA and other partners continued to provide in the region, alongside our own Cheshire East staff and partners. MyCWA had a contract with the Council for safe accommodation alongside a contractual number of interventions to support standard/medium risk perpetrators, adult victims and children. This contract came to an end in March 2024 and was then extended for two 6-month periods until March 2025. All partners were aware that the extension was in place to allow for the new Domestic Abuse Strategy to be developed, in light of the gaps in provision highlighted by the extensive Needs Assessment commissioned during 2023. The Council would always be required to review contracts and the services they offered as those contracts came to the end of their term. This was the everyday work of commissioners and lead officers. There continued to be weekly meetings to manage the transition between MyCWA and officers.

Councillor Bulman continued by saying that moving forward, following the contract with MyCWA coming to an end on 1 April 2025, the support for standard/medium risk adults and children would be offered through an integrated provision, offering group and one-to-one support based within local community buildings delivered directly by the Council. She stated that this may be supplemented by external commissions, but this was subject to development of service delivery models. Support was offered via statutory and voluntary services in addition to the dedicated domestic abuse service. Those that were suitable to receive medium risk support (and therefore did not meet Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference criteria) would continue to have support from the Council's in-house Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit Medium Risk Independent Domestic Violence Advocate/Advisor team and would be offered group and one-to-one recovery work. The Council had qualified staff to deliver behaviour change interventions (known as the Engage provision) and also offer a High risk/High harm DRIVE intervention programme. The Council was not the only commissioner of services for behaviour change work and MyCWA

would continue to deliver across Cheshire as commissioned by other public bodies.

Councillor Bulman stated that services that the Council have previously commissioned MyCWA to provide did not include delivery of all aspects of homelessness support, addiction services or food and clothing banks. MyCWA was a charity and may provide these services in their own right under contract to other public sector organisations or third-party funders, but this delivery was separate from and not funded by the work they did under contract to Cheshire East Council. All of these additional services were available locally through other providers, and the Council shared information about all the options available on the Council's Livewell website.

Councillor Bulman continued by stating that within housing legislation any individual/family fleeing Domestic Abuse could approach any Council for assistance irrespective of whether or not they had a local connection to that Council. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced new duties on Councils to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse and their children could access the right support in safe accommodation. Cheshire East Housing had a clear Domestic Abuse Policy which set out how the Council would support survivors of domestic abuse. The Council had dedicated officers who would work with victims/survivors, and they would assess their circumstances and provide temporary accommodation whilst this was carried out. This could be temporary accommodation (owned by Cheshire East), supported accommodation or other specialist domestic abuse refuge out of area. Cheshire East Housing had access to the Gold Book which was the national refuge online service where they can see current refuge vacancies and make referrals. Officers work closely with the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse service and link with them to get further specialist advice, information, and support. In addition to the housing offer, the Council provided a range of services specifically for victims of domestic abuse and currently commissioned some provision externally, including safe accommodation. It was this additional offer that the Council commissioned MyCWA to meet, in conjunction with the internal services within Housing and DAFSU (Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit). Following the contract coming to an end in March 2024 and during the extended two 6-month periods, until March 2025 there was an open Procurement process (in which MyCWA was involved), for the safe accommodation contract which unfortunately failed, due to a provider withdrawing from the process prior to award. The Council was meeting with the current provider on a weekly basis, as well as internal partners, to consider all available options for ongoing delivery of the service. The current tenants would be secure in their accommodation and the main focus would be on ensuring current and future safe accommodation clients' needs were met.

## **77 LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader, in summary:

- 1 thanked those who had shared their experiences with domestic violence and committed to improving services for victims and their families.
- 2 announced that Councillor Anthony Harrison had been appointed as the Armed Forces Member Champion.
- 3 reported that Councillor Anna Burton had been a finalist for the National Association of Local Councillors' Staff Award, which was a notable achievement for a newly elected councillor.
- 4 reported that the Council continued to make good progress with the Transformation Programme.
- 5 reported that key senior management appointments had been made with the appointment of the Executive Director of Resources (s151) being on the agenda for the meeting.
- 6 reported that the Assurance Panel was providing ongoing oversight on the recommendations from the Peer Challenge and that regular meetings were held between council leaders and LGA colleagues. Out of the 73 recommendations, 35 were now completed with further formal feedback due in coming weeks.
- 7 reported that the Ofsted monitoring visit on the Children's Services was underway with the Inspectors monitoring and reporting on progress since the inspection. They would also check that performance in other areas had not declined since the inspection.
- 8 reported that projected supported by the Future High Street Fund and Towns Fund were due to be completed soon. Work was progressing well with the Cheshire Family History Centre on the old library site in Crewe and the refurbishment of Macclesfield Indoor Market was expected to be completed by mid-2025.
- 9 reported that the Government was progressing devolution across England and that Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Council had successfully submitted an expression of interest for a new strategic authority and, if approved, would see the election for a Mayor in May 2026.
- 10 encouraged all councillors to actively involve their communities in the devolution consultation process.

The Deputy Leader, in summary:

- 1 reported that a recent LGA survey found that 80% of councillors nationally had experienced harassment or abuse, including face-to-

face, by mail, or online. A Member Reference Group had been set up which had commissioned a survey to gather details of harassment and abuse suffered by Cheshire East Council Members and the results would be used to help develop support policies. He encouraged all councillors to complete the survey.

- 2 reported that the Council in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions JobCentre Plus team would be hosting a jobs fair on 27 February 2025 in the Crewe Market Hall.
- 3 reported that the Council had launched a consultation on the Local Transport Plan, which was open for responses until 21 April 2025.
- 4 stated that from 31 March 2025 there would be an hourly service on bus routes 391/392 between Poynton and Stockport, and the reintroduced 71/72/73 Nantwich rural services would provide Nantwich, Wrenbury and Audlem with a direct bus connection to Leighton Hospital.
- 5 reported that he and the Leader had met with the Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust to discuss the £1.2 billion Healthier Futures campus at Leighton Hospital, aimed at improving health, education, jobs, and community connections.
- 6 reported that he and the Leader had met with Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington and Greater Manchester leaders to discuss transport developments, particularly in rail.
- 7 reported that the Council would be launching a prospectus for Crewe Hub, initially at the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum conference in May, to promote its 360° connectivity and its major investment opportunities.
- 8 reported that the Local Government and English Devolution minister, Jim McMahon, had visited Ellesmere Port on 13 February and had met with the leaders of Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Council to discuss plans for devolution in the region.
- 9 reported that Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington had secured £9m for their new Skills Bootcamp programme, which would help to provide technical training for over 2,600 learners.
- 10 reported that he had recently visited Middlewich, Congleton and Nantwich Town Councils and invited town and parish councils to invite him to meet with them.
- 11 highlighted that 'Rock the Civic 2' live music event was taking place at Nantwich Civic Hall on Friday 28 February 2025.

## **78 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26-2028/29**

The Corporate Policy Committee, at its meeting on 6 February 2025, had considered a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for Cheshire East Council for 2025-2029.

The Corporate Policy Committee had recommended to Council the recommendations set out on page 23 and 24 of the agenda pack.

It was reported that the table in paragraph 2.4 on page 91 of the agenda pack and the revenue budget summary table on page 136 of the agenda pack had been revised and circulated to Members.

Following debate, the recommendations were put to the vote, and in accordance with legislation, a recorded vote was carried out with the following results:

### **FOR**

Councillors L Anderson, S Bennett-Wake, J Bird, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, M Brooks, C Browne, L Buchanan, C Bulman, A Burton, C Chapman, D Clark, A Coiley, N Cook, S Corcoran, L Crane, B Drake, D Edwardes, K Edwards, M Edwards, H Faddes, E Gilman, M Goldsmith, M Gorman, C Hilliard, M Houston, D Jefferay, N Mannion, G Marshall, A Moran, R Moreton, J Place, J Priest, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes, H Seddon, G Smith, J Snowball, R Vernon, M Warren, F Wilson and B Wye.

### **AGAINST**

Councillors S Adams, R Bailey, M Beanland, D Brown, R Chadwick, J Clowes, T Dean, S Edgar, R Fletcher, A Gage, S Gardiner, K Hague, E Hall, A Harrison, G Hayes, A Heler, S Holland, T Jackson, R Kain, A Kolker, R Morris, H Moss, M Muldoon, C O'Leary, J Pearson, B Posnett, J Pratt, P Redstone, J Saunders, M Sewart, L Smetham, John Smith, Julie Smith, L Smith, L Wardlaw, H Whitaker and J Wray.

The motion was declared carried with 42 votes for, 37 against and 0 not voting.

### **RESOLVED:** That Council:

1. note the report of the Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), contained within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report, regarding the robustness of estimates and level of reserves held by the Council based on these budget proposals (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 2, Section 25 Statement).
2. approve the Revenue estimates for the 2025/26 budget (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 2, Overview) and the medium-term Capital Programme estimates 2025-2029, as detailed in the

Medium-Term Financial Strategy report 2025-2029 (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 2, Capital budget).

3. approve the setting of Band D Council Tax of £1,882.04 representing an increase of 4.99%. This is below the referendum limit (including 2% ringfenced for Adult Social Care) and arises from the provisional finance settlement (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 1, Key Funding Assumptions).
4. approve the utilisation of up to £25.3m conditional Exceptional Financial Support (Capitalisation Direction) via borrowing to balance the 2025/26 budget shortfall (as reflected in Appendix A to the report, Section 2, Balancing the Budget) and to delegate to the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) to review the basis of funding through the 2025/26 year and report to the appropriate committee any recommended change to the funding basis of the Exceptional Financial Support. The 2024/25 planned use of Flexible Capital Receipts is increased to £1.518m, an increase of £0.518m from the £1m approved in the 2024-28 Medium-Term Financial Strategy Report to fund transformational projects within the Council (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Section 1, Key Funding Assumptions).
5. approve the 2025/26 planned use of Flexible Capital Receipts as £1.0m (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 5, Section 3).
6. approve the allocation of Revenue Grant Funding for 2025/26 of £397.080m (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 3), and delegates authority to the Chief Finance Officer, to approve supplementary estimates if the value of any named grant changes from the figures contained within Appendix A, Annex 3 (noting that all such variations will subsequently be reported to the appropriate committee, and that any new, previously unnamed, grants are subject to approval in-line with the Constitution).
7. approve the allocation of Capital Grant Funding for 2025/26 of £99.122m (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 4), and delegates authority to the Chief Finance Officer, to approve supplementary estimates if the value of any named grant changes from the figures contained within Appendix A, Annex 4 (noting that all such variations will subsequently be reported to the appropriate committee, and that any new, previously unnamed, grants are subject to approval in-line with the Constitution).
8. approve the Capital Strategy (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 5).
9. approve the Prudential Indicators for Capital Financing (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 5).

10. approve the Investment Strategy; including the financial limits for various classifications of investment, and the investment decision making process set out in the Strategy (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 6).
11. approve the Treasury Management Strategy (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 7) and the Minimum Revenue Position Statement for 2025/26 to 2028/29 (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 5) which includes a change in the Minimum Revenue Position Policy, with effect from 1 April 2024.
12. approve the Reserves Strategy (as set out in Appendix A to the report, Annex 8), which includes proposed movements to and from reserves.
13. note that the Corporate Policy Committee considered the Budget Engagement exercise undertaken by the Council, as set out in Appendix B to the report, and the results contained within that report.

## 79 COUNCIL TAX STATUTORY RESOLUTION

Consideration was given to a report relating to the setting of the Council Tax for 2025/26

As a billing authority Cheshire East Council was responsible for the billing and collection of Council Tax from local taxpayers and must, therefore, make a resolution to set the overall Council Tax level. This meant the Authority also collected Council Tax income to cover not only its own services but also precepts set by other authorities.

The Council Tax levied was therefore made up of four elements:-

- Cheshire East Borough Council
- Town & Parish Council precepts
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire precept
- Cheshire Fire Authority precept.

The motion in respect of the setting of the Council Tax was proposed and seconded. Following debate, in accordance with legislation a recorded vote was carried out in respect to this item, with the following results: -

### **FOR**

Councillors L Anderson, S Bennett-Wake, J Bird, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, M Brooks, C Browne, L Buchanan, C Bulman, A Burton, C Chapman, D Clark, A Coiley, N Cook, S Corcoran, L Crane, B Drake, D Edwardes, K Edwards, M Edwards, H Faddes, E Gilman, M Goldsmith, M Gorman, C Hilliard, M Houston, D Jefferay, N Mannion, G Marshall, A Moran, R Moreton, J Place, J Priest, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes, H Seddon, G Smith, J Snowball, R Vernon, M Warren, F Wilson and B Wye.

## **AGAINST**

Councillors S Adams, R Bailey, M Beanland, D Brown, R Chadwick, J Clowes, T Dean, S Edgar, A Gage, S Gardiner, K Hague, E Hall, A Harrison, G Hayes, A Heler, S Holland, T Jackson, R Kain, A Kolker, R Morris, H Moss, M Muldoon, C O'Leary, J Pearson, B Posnett, J Pratt, P Redstone, J Saunders, M Sewart, L Smetham, John Smith, Julie Smith, L Smith, L Wardlaw, H Whitaker and J Wray.

## **NOT VOTEING**

Councillor R Fletcher

The motion was declared carried with 42 votes for, 36 against and 1 not voting.

## **RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1 approves a Council Tax for Cheshire East Council for the financial year 2025/26, at £307,263,921 in accordance with the formal resolutions as set out in paragraphs 20-24 of the report, as follows:

### **Formal Resolution**

- 1 That it be noted that on 11 December 2024 the Council calculated the Council Tax base 2025/26.

(a) for the whole Council area as 163,261.10 (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")).

(b) for individual parishes, as in Appendix A.

- 2 Calculated that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2025/26 (excluding Parish precepts) is £307,263,921.

- 3 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2025/26 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

a. £895,825,778 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.

b. £575,740,023 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

c. £320,085,755 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council

Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).

- d. £1,960.58 being the amount at 3(c) above divided by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- e. £12,821,834 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act
- f. £1,882.04 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- g. **Appendix A** being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulations 3 and 6 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its total council tax base for the year and council tax base for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.
- h. **Appendix B** being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (f) above, the amounts of special items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided by in each case the appropriate tax base from Appendix A, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the area to which one or more special items relate. (Band D charges for each Parish area).
- i. **Appendix C** being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the 1992 Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the 1992 Act,

as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands (Local charges for all Bands).

j. **Appendix D** being the aggregate of the local charges in (i) above and the amounts levied by major precepting authorities, calculated in accordance with Section 30(2) of the 1992 Act (The total Council Tax charge for each band in each Parish area).

4 note that the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to Cheshire East Council in accordance with section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as shown in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the report.

5 accepts that Cheshire East Council's basic amount of Council tax for 2025/26 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

2 notes that the Council Tax precept of Cheshire Fire Authority, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire and each Town and Parish Council have been approved and notified to the Council in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by sections 72 to 79 of the Localism Act 2011.

3 notes the average Council Tax for the Cheshire East Borough is £2,332.61 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by sections 72 to 79 of the Localism Act 2011.

## **80 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE: CHESHIRE EAST CORPORATE PLAN 2025-29**

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the Corporate Policy Committee on 6 February 2025 in relation to the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2025-2029.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Council approve the Cheshire East Plan 2025-29, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

**81 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:  
SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT: CHESHIRE AND  
WARRINGTON DEVOLUTION**

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the Corporate Policy Committee on 6 February 2025 in relation to Supporting Effective Engagement: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution.

It was reported that there was an error in the Cheshire and Warrington Committee Terms of Reference, on page 349 of the agenda pack, and that in paragraph 5 the period for CEC should read with track change “CEC (until May 202~~7~~8)”.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1 approve the expansion of the membership of Member Reference Group to include the Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group. This will increase its membership to seven.
- 2 approve the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group to attend as a substitute to the Member Reference Group, in the event that the Leader of the Group cannot.
- 3 the Member Reference Group continues to provide guidance and advice towards identifying a devolution proposal for Cheshire and Warrington, enabling officers to further progress opportunities and discussions with government officials.
- 4 delegate authority to the Member Reference Group to make any further amendments its membership, such amendments to be approved by a majority of the members of the Member Reference Group.
- 5 The Terms of Reference for the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee be amended to extend the rotation of the current Chair (Cheshire West and Chester Council) for a further 12 months to May 2026 and amend accordingly the dates for the following rotations by the same period, including the Vice Chair, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

**82 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:  
PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025-26**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Corporate Policy Committee in respect of the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26.

The Corporate Policy Committee, at its meeting on 6 February 2025, had considered the draft Pay Policy Statement and resolved that Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 and that any

in-year changes be approved by the Monitoring Officer and published accordingly.

**RESOLVED:** That

- 1 the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26 be approved; and
- 2 any in-year changes be approved by the Monitoring Officer and published accordingly.

**83 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:  
CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025-2026**

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the Corporate Policy Committee on 6 February 2025 in relation to the Calendar of Meetings for the municipal year 2025/26.

**RESOLVED:** That Council agrees

- 1 the approval of the Calendar of Meeting for Cheshire East Council for the municipal year 2025-26 and notes the draft Calendar for June to October 2026.
- 2 that the start times for morning meetings, excluding full Council, be 10.30 am.
- 3 that each committee determine whether their committee meetings during the 2025-26 municipal year should include twilight meetings, which should start no earlier than 5.30 pm.

**84 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE:  
APPROVAL OF SUPPLEMENTARY REVENUE ESTIMATES**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Finance Sub Committee on 9 January 2025 in relation to the Supplementary Revenue Estimates for the allocation of additional grant funding over £1m, as set out in Annex 1, Section 3, Tables 1 to the report.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve the following Supplementary Revenue Estimates for the allocation of additional grant funding:

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | Children and Families –<br>Dedicated Schools Grant                        | £1,089,000 |
| 2 | Economy and Growth –<br>Enterprise Cheshire Warrington<br>Skills Bootcamp | £1,717,000 |

**85 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE:  
APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESOURCES (S151)**

Consideration was given to the recommendation of the Appointments Committee held on 13 February 2025 in relation to the appointment of the Executive Director Resources (s151).

**RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1 approve the recommendation of the Appointments Committee that Ashely Hughes be appointed as Cheshire East Council's Executive Director Resources (s151) as the Chief Finance Officer at an annual salary of £142,951 (CX3) at a date to be confirmed.
- 2 note that the Appointments Committee has decided not to proceed with the appointment to the role of Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer.

**86 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

Cllr Michael Beanland, Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, presented the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2023/24 to Council.

The report provided details of the work undertaken by the Committee and the assurances received during that year.

The Annual Report was received and noted.

**87 SWIMMING POOL SUPPORT FUND GRANT ACCEPTANCE**

*Having previously declared an interest Councillors L Anderson, L Buchanan, A Kolker and B Wye left the meeting during consideration of this item.*

Consideration was given to the report requesting the acceptance of a capital grant from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund to fund energy efficiency measures across three leisure centres within Cheshire East.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1 accept a capital grant of £625,933 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund – Phase 2 to fund energy efficiency investments at Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Macclesfield Leisure Centre and Bollington Leisure Centre.
- 2 approve supplementary capital estimates of £365,235 to Crewe Lifestyle Centre SPSF and £209,961 to Macclesfield Leisure Centre SPSF.

3 note that a supplementary capital estimate for Bollington Leisure Centre was approved in November 2024 and noted by the Environment and Communities Committee in January 2024.

#### **88 DELIVERY PROPOSAL FOR THE HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FOOD PROGRAMME FOR 2025/26**

Consideration was given to the report requesting the acceptance of a grant for the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme Delivery for 2025/26.

The Council had been allocated £908,330 of HAF funding. As £900,000 was included in the MTFS 2025/26 budget, Council was being asked to approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £8,330.

The Mayor proposed and it was agreed that recommendation 1 be amended to commence with "To accept the grant and ...".

**RESOLVED:** That Council

- 1 accept the grant and approve the supplementary revenue estimate of £8,330, which is above the estimated value of £900,000 in the 2025/26 budget.
- 2 approve the extension of the delivery model of Holiday Activity and Food for a further year in line with the proposals set out in the report.
- 3 delegate authority to the Executive Director Children Services to incur expenditure in line with the grant conditions.

#### **89 NOMINATION OF MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE 2025-26 CIVIC YEAR**

Consideration was given to the nominations for the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2025/26.

##### Mayor for 2025/26

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor David Edwardes should become Mayor Elect for 2025/26.

Councillor Edwardes declared an interest in respect of this item and left the Chamber during its consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor David Edwardes be designated as the Mayor Elect with a view to their formal election and appointment as Mayor for Cheshire East for 2025/26, at the Mayor Making ceremony to be held on 14 May 2025.

Councillor Edwardes returned to the meeting.

Deputy Mayor for 2025/26

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Judy Snowball be designated as Deputy Mayor Elect.

Councillor Snowball declared an interest in respect of this item and left the Chamber during its consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Judy Snowball be designated as the Deputy Mayor Elect, with a view to their formal election and appointment as Deputy Mayor for Cheshire East for 2025/26, at the Mayor Making ceremony to be held on 14 May 2025.

Councillors Snowball returned to the meeting.

90 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Consideration was given to the following Notice of Motion which had been submitted in accordance with the Council's Procedural Rules.

**Motion 1**     **From Exceptional Weather Events to Securing Telecare Services: Meeting the Challenges presented by the Analogue to Digital Upgrade by 2027**

**Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor A Kolker**

“At December’s Full Council Meeting, a question was raised regarding the loss of power and digital communications for significant periods during Storm Darragh on the 6th – 9th December 2024.

Whilst many areas experienced power outages, they were most extreme in more rural and remote areas of the borough.

It highlighted that analogue landlines that had already been converted to digital systems failed as soon as the power failed. Mobile phone batteries failed a short time into the power outages which in some cases lasted 2 – 3 days.

These areas are also more vulnerable to intermittent power outages caused by aging and vulnerable power infrastructure, by digital “black spots”, poor reception and slower broadband speeds.

Nonetheless, the national digital upgrade continues apace and is due to be completed during 2027.

Whilst the Council Leader and Chairs of relevant committees acknowledged these problems at the December Council Meeting and identified potential strategies to address them, a more formal, multi-agency approach is urgently required, to bring these forward in the limited time-frame available.

The Government has now recognised this issue in relation to telecare services. *“...old landlines are still vital lifelines for very many people, including users of telecare, and it is crucial that we take people through the digital phone switchover safely. Upwards of 2 million people in the UK use telecare - the most common example being personal alarm pendants or buttons that many of us have seen family members use - and most of these telecare devices have historically relied on the analogue landline network”.*

*“Telecare users have been identified as being at risk during the digital phone switchover, with past serious incidents underscoring the importance of safeguarding these individuals”.* (DHSC: 11.02.2025)

Working collaboratively and closely with stakeholders from across the telecommunications and adult social care sectors, a new Telecare National Action Plan was launched on 11th February 2025.

*“Helping people to stay independent in their own homes, joining up services and improving the quality of care is essential to the future of Social Care. Technology enabled care (TEC) plays an important part in achieving this. The action plan sets out our vision for how to transition telecare provision into a modern, digital and resilient part of adult social care. The migration to digital telephone networks will lay the foundations for a next generation of telecare services so that care is personalised and preventative.”* (DHSC: 11.02.2025)

This approach is not just a national requirement but is a necessity for Cheshire East Council, if it is to take control of social care expenditure and bring spiralling care costs under control.

It is therefore proposed that this Council moves:

1. To implement the National Telecare Action Plan and its outcomes as follows:
  - no telecare user will be migrated to digital landline services without the communication provider, the customer or the telecare service provider confirming that the user has a compatible and functioning telecare solution in place
  - use of analogue telecare devices is phased out to ensure that only digital devices are being used
  - telecare users, their support networks and their service providers understand what actions they need to take
  - stakeholders collaborate to safeguard telecare users through the digital phone switchover

2. That the data acquired through implementation of the Telecare Action Plan is recognised as the baseline for further work with other vulnerable residents:
  - to identify those communities with no/poor digital access (black spots).
  - to identify other vulnerable residents (eg older residents, residents still dependent on analogue phones, residents dependent of 2G and 3G that are also being phased out) and expand the data base.
3. To design and distribute a Residents' Safety Toolkit – providing advice, guidance and practical support, to enable residents to better prepare for periods of power or signal outages.
4. To lobby Government to further invest in those areas that have little or no digital access, in particular to ensure that residents in rural or otherwise isolated areas are not excluded from accessing effective digital services that would enable them to stay in their own homes for longer.
5. Work with NALC, CHALC, Town and Parish Councils to develop their own Local Resilience Plans, utilising local knowledge and skills to further mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events or other local, critical incidents.”

**RESOLVED:**

That the Motion be referred to the Adults and Health Committee.

**91 QUESTIONS**

Cllr Arthur Moran asked if information could be provided on the grant which Cheshire East has received to plant a new woodland near Nantwich.

Cllr Mick Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, responded that the Council had been awarded around £478,000 as part of Trees for Climate grant to plant two new woodlands near Nantwich and Cranage. This project would help the Council to beat its target to offset 37,500 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>.

Cllr Chris Hilliard asked when the construction of the Handforth to Wilmslow Active Travel Route would commence and finish.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that Active Travel England, who provided funding for this project, had agreed in principle to the plans for the scheme, from Handforth Train Station to Style Road in Wilmslow. The route would connect the two towns and integrate with wider cycle routes. The design would soon go out to public consultation. Local cycling schemes and Town Councils had already been consulted and were supportive.

Installation was being scheduled for the 2025 school summer holidays to limit disruption, with final works to complete in 2026.

Cllr Andrew Kolker referred to the prevalence of Bird Flu in Cheshire East and asked if the Public Health Team could issue a notice to all Councillors on what residents should do, and how to keep safe if they found a sick or dead bird.

Cllr Jill Rhodes, Chair of Adults and Health Committee, agreed to ask the Public Health Team to provide a written response.

Cllr Chris O'Leary stated that the B5470 Macclesfield Road had been closed for some time, and investigations were ongoing to identify what caused the road to collapse. In the meantime, several businesses along the road were being adversely affected as were local farmers and parents doing the school run. Cllr O'Leary sought assurance that once the Council knew what happened, that immediate action would be taken to repair and reopen the Macclesfield Road.

In response from Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated the dealing with the collapse of the road was technically complex, with 3 phases to resolving the issue - ground investigations, design and construction. The Council was working hard to understand the causes of the failure and were currently undertaking ground investigations of the embankment and surrounding area. This would inform the design and delivery of the solution. A solution would be delivered as soon as it was practicable. The Council had a web page dedicated to the issue, which would be updated with a programme of work as soon as a solution had been identified.

Cllr Rod Fletcher asked if the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee could provide information on how much income had been received from the Well Lane car park in Alsager between 2 December 2024 and 2 March 2025.

In response from Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee stated he would provide a written response after 2 March 2025.

Cllr Lata Anderson stated that the main road through Wilmslow, MacLean Way, was resurfaced in 2024 but within weeks it was damaged with loose stones on the surface. Highways had confirmed that they would be sweeping the road surface and assurances were given that the road would be resurfaced again. She asked when the resurfacing would take place and what should be done for those who had suffered damaged windscreens as a result of the loose stones on the road.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee responded that repair work was due to be carried out in April / May 2025, and that claims could be made on the Council's website and that these would be reviewed by an independent claims company.

Cllr David Jefferay stated that for the past two years in late March, a car park in Wilmslow had been used by members of the Iranian community to celebrate the Iranian Festival of Nature. Whilst the visitors were welcome, it had previously caused issues with traffic congestion, unsafe parking, public toilet provision, and overflowing bins. He asked if Cheshire East could provide support for this event, such as traffic officers, temporary toilets, rubbish skips, liaison with police, and enforcement officers.

Cllr Mick Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr Brian Puddicombe stated that parking outside schools at pick up and drop off times could be chaotic and potentially dangerous. He stated that the Safe Haven Pilot Parking scheme had chosen four schools in Macclesfield and asked if the Chair of Highways and Transport Committee could explain how the schools were chosen, what was the cost to Cheshire East Council, where would the revenue from fines be spent, and how were parents being encouraged to use more Active Travel means to get their children to school.

In response from Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that a recent press release had detailed Cheshire East Council's intention to explore the benefits of using cameras to enforce school Keep Clear markings. Priority locations for the pilot had been identified from reports and monitoring from Parking Services. Contracts with service providers were being finalised. Prior to the cameras being installed there would be consultation with schools, residents, and Ward Members would be briefed in advance. The priority was to change driver behaviour, and not to generate revenue.

Cllr Fiona Wilson asked if the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee could confirm that the pot hole funding grants from the Government have been, and would continue to be, all spent on pot holes. She also asked if the Chair could comment on the difference kind of repairs undertaken.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that it had been confirmed at the Highways and Transport Committee that all money received from the Government on pot holes was spent. There were specific rules concerning what money can be spent on different type of emergency pot hole repairs. He stated that the three levels of repair were:

Level 1 – Emergency repairs to pot holes caused by icy weather. It was common for there to be a large number of these around the Borough in a short space of time following cold wet weather, and emergency repairs were carried out on these to ensure that they do not damage vehicles where possible. These repairs were designed to make the roads as safe as possible as quickly as possible.

Level 2 and 3 – Larger resurfacing repairs and making good Level 1 repairs. These were time consuming and expensive.

Cllr Linda Buchanan stated that complaints had been received regarding the state of the road surface of the A500 from Roundabout Three to Cheerbrook Roundabout and that the road surface is peeling away causing stones to damage wind screens. She had been informed that remedial work would be carried out by the contractor in May 2025 at no cost to tax payer. Cllr Buchanan asked if the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee could confirm that members of the public who had submitted claims for damaged windscreens as a result of the road surface issues, would not be burdened by covering legal and reimbursements costs, and these would be covered by contractor.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee stated that it had been confirmed that the contractor would cover all remedial costs. The issue in question was as a result of faulty bitumen, but unfortunately the repairs could not happen until the weather warmed up in April / May 2025. In the meantime, roads were being inspected and swept. Members of the public were encouraged to report damages caused by the road surface on the Council's website.

Cllr John Bird asked what assurances Cheshire East could provide to small towns and rural communities in relation to benefits and improvements to services following devolution.

In response Cllr Michael Gorman, Chair of Economy and Growth Committee, stated that the Cheshire East Member Reference Group for Devolution would focus on integrated transport, jobs and skills, affordable housing, planning, digital isolation and the dairy industry. The rural community was a major and central focus in any devolution deal. Cheshire East also chaired a housing and regeneration working group which would look at the regeneration of towns in Cheshire East. The position of Town Councils would also be looked into in any devolution deal.

Cllr Liz Wardlaw asked how roads were repaired in colder climates.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that emergency repairs could be carried out in winter in colder weather, but they do not last well. Warmer weather in spring and summer is required for repairs in the UK.

Cllr Allen Gage referred to the statement released by the Chair of Highways and Transport Committee regarding contractor maintenance issues concerning the A500. He asked if details of the issues could be provided, and what assurances could be provided that residents would be reimbursed for any damages incurred to their vehicles.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that these issues had already been covered in previous questions.

Cllr Sam Corcoran stated that there has been a significant increase in house sale boards being placed on Council owned green spaces in Sandbach, which effected the looks of the area. He stated that other councils issued fines for estate agents boards on council land and asked if this could be something that the Council would consider and whether this could also be extended to vinyl signs on railings advertising businesses.

In response Cllr Mick Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, stated that he thought it was a good idea and worth investigating. Local town and parish councils could enact bylaws to remove banners from roundabouts and fences.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that there was a legal right for yellow housing development signs to be erected, but Cheshire East must approve them beforehand. The Council did not currently charge for this, but other councils did, so officers had been asked to look into this.

Cllr Kate Hague stated that the Tabley Brook Bridge had been closed due to structural damage which had led to the suspension of the bus route 89 for 12 months which was of concern to residents. The closure would also impact local roads during the Cheshire Show. The Cheshire East Flexi Bus was designed to help rural areas with poor public transport options; however, it had limited criteria for use. She asked if there were any plans to reroute the 89 bus to serve the residents of Pickmere during the bridge closure and would the Flexi Bus be used as an interim solution to this, with fares aligned. She also asked if a timeline for the bridge was to be reopened could be provided and if there were any plans to mitigate disruption in connection with the Cheshire Show.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

## **92 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Council received a schedule of urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council, which were reported for information in accordance with the Council procedure rules.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the schedule of urgent decisions be noted.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 4.55 pm

Councillor M Houston (Mayor/Chair)

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**COUNCIL 25 February 2025****Item 5 – Public Speakers: Written Responses**

6 Mr Michael Unett

**Written Response**

Regarding the works at Bank Corner, the Council has incurred costs to date designing the scheme and the project is committed. Funds received to date have been partially used to cover these design costs, committing the monies. The full scheme is estimated to cost more than the S106 funds held by the Council (or promised and not yet paid to the Council). However, the Council is looking to deliver a scheme here that can be delivered in phases, with this initial phased delivered on site within the next 12 months, subject to resource planning and further detailed design.

The Council received some S106 funding for traffic management measures from the Sainsbury's development, and we are using this to progress an investigation into widening the footpath below the railway bridge. As part of this study, which will commence shortly, we are also doing further work to understand the issues in the drainage system including jetting out and surveys of the existing system; with a view to securing a longer-term solution. We will update when the feasibility study is completed on next steps and timelines.

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**COUNCIL 25 February 2025****Item 20– Questions: Written Responses****3 Cllr A Kolker**Written ResponseOverview

In response to cases of Avian Influenza (sometimes referred to as Bird Flu) the UK Chief Veterinary Officer ordered a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) to cover the whole of England to be established from noon on Saturday 25 January following the escalating number of cases of avian influenza and continued heightened risk levels in wild birds.

The AIPZ will require all keepers of birds to conduct enhanced biosecurity to mitigate the risk of further outbreaks of the disease. The AIPZ will be in place until further notice and will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of avian influenza.

The current risk to human health remains low and as standard, properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat. The UK Health Security Agency remains vigilant for any evidence of changing levels of risk and are keeping this under guidance under constant review.

The situation in Cheshire East

At present only one incident of Avian Influenza has been identified in the borough in a small cluster of wild birds found near a canal in Middlewich. This incident occurred in mid-February and was dealt with by the health protection agencies.

On our border near Malpas, an incident of Avian Influenza occurred at the end of February at a commercial property. This incident was addressed by the health protection agencies, supported by staff from Cheshire West and Chester Council. Staff from Cheshire East Council were kept briefed on the measures to contain the incident. As required by the national guidance the birds at this property were culled. Following a review that occurred on 3<sup>rd</sup> March the incident was stood down, though surveillance in the area continues.

Since the announcement of the national Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ), Cheshire East's communications team have published information for the public on the Council's website and through other media routes. These messages have been updated on a regular basis. To assist the public following the incident in Malpas the posters were disseminated. [Poster-2-GB-Bird-Flu-Detected-in-Area-No-Feeding-Wild-Birds.pdf](#) These provide simple advice should a member of the public find a dead or sick bird and the actions that they should take.

Should further incidents be reported within the borough or on our borders, messages to the public will be updated.

[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental\\_health/animal\\_welfare\\_and\\_licences/avian-influenza-bird-flu.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental_health/animal_welfare_and_licences/avian-influenza-bird-flu.aspx)

**6 Cllr R Fletcher**

Written Response

Parking revenue at Well Lane car park in Alsager for the period 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 to 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 is £1394.60

**8 Cllr D Jeffery**

Written Response

Regarding the Iranian Festival of Nature itself, our website clearly states that gatherings of this size must apply to hold the event at least 90 days before the event is due to start. This allows the Council to assess the suitability of the site and liaise with relevant officers, including those responsible for litter clearance, parking, parks team, and officers from different council departments, as well as the Police, Fire, and Ambulance services. Attempts by the Council to encourage attendees to formalise this event which previously gathered at Tatton Park have not been successful, and without the appropriate pre-warning, this remains an unauthorised event in the park.

Therefore, we have set up a multidisciplinary group, learning from Tatton Park's experiences, and propose to take the following approach this year.

While an unauthorised event we recognise with no contact or overall organiser the event may still go ahead this year.

Our approach is therefore to try to reduce impacts this year and to persuade organisers this is not a suitable site or an authorised event for the future.

To mitigate the impact the gathering has on the park and Wilmslow, the following mitigations are suggested or have been implemented:

Arrangements will be made to have staff presence on call to visit the site over the two weekends following the Iranian New Year (21st of March) to deal with litter and other issues such as parking, and community wardens will liaise with the police as required.

It is important to note that staff do not have any powers to enforce but the increased presence on site should allow information to be handed out to attendees explaining the rules on events and park with a contact to customer services. The police have been alerted and can only assist with certain parking issues or anti-social behaviour.

Conversations took place with Tatton Park, who advised the event organisers are not willing to formally register the gathering as an event through the Cheshire East events team. Therefore, no other location within CEC is proposed as a venue for the gathering as the proper event organisation process is unlikely to be followed.

We will liaise with Police and Fire and Town Council and give prior notice of the Councils approach.

**16 Cllr K Hague**

Written Response

The Tabley Brook Bridge carrying the B5391 has suffered arch failure and collapse. The road closed with a traffic diversion route of circa 8 miles in place. Investigations are underway to inform a design solution and a programme of works is being developed.

It is unlikely that the construction works will be completed before the Cheshire Show in June therefore, we will engage with the event organisers to minimise any disruption from traffic management arrangements.

The 89 bus service is using the A556 and Linnards Lane to get back on its route. Flexilink is a demand-responsive service so residents can book a journey if they are eligible and beyond the reach of other public transport services.

The age restriction for FlexiLink is likely to be removed later in the year, so it can be used by all residents who do not have access to a regular bus service.

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