



Extraordinary Council Summons

Wednesday 17th September 2025

2.00 pm

The Tenants' Hall, Tatton Park, Knutsford

WA16 6QN

(postcode for Sat Nav WA16 6SG)

To all Members of the Council

You are hereby invited to attend a Extraordinary meeting of the Cheshire East Council for the transaction of the business specified in the agenda below.

Yours faithfully

Rob Polkinghorne
Chief Executive

Please contact
E-Mail:

Katie Small
katie.small@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies or requests for further
information or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

Agenda

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

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded, and the recordings are uploaded to the Council's website

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

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

3. Public Speaking Time/Open Session

In accordance the Council Procedural Rules, a total period of 30 minutes is allocated for members of the public to speak at Council meeting. Members of the public will be allowed to speak in relation to items of business on the agenda only. Individual members of the public may speak for up to 2 minutes, but the Chair will have discretion to vary this requirement where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days' in advance of the meeting and should include the question with that notice. Requests to speak and questions should be submitted via the [Register to Speak form](#).

4. Recommendations from the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme and the Mayoral Combined Authority (Pages 5 - 98)

To consider the recommendations of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee.

5. The Council's Decision-Making Arrangements (Pages 99 - 114)

To consider the report on whether the Council should move to a Leader and Cabinet form of decision-making, with effect from the Council's Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2026.

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COUNCIL 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON JOINT COMMITTEE: CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON DEVOLUTION AND THE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report outlines the devolution powers, functions and future investment opportunity for Cheshire and Warrington to be delivered via a newly created Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority with a duly elected mayor in May 2027, as part of the UK Government's Devolution Priority Programme.
2. This report seeks Council approval of the recommendations that have been endorsed by the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee (the Joint Committee), which provides strategic direction and oversight across potential devolution for the region.
3. As part of the formal consenting process to proceed with a Combined Authority and associated devolution powers, functions and investment, approval is required from each council: Cheshire East Borough Council; Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council ('the Councils'). Meetings have been convened accordingly.
4. At a meeting on 29 August 2025, the Joint Committee endorsed the proposed recommendations for approval by each of the Councils in accordance with their own constitutional requirements. The Joint Committee report, related appendices and minutes of the meeting contain the detail to support the recommendations in this report. These documents should be considered in full alongside this covering report.
5. Cheshire and Warrington Leaders are committed to achieving the shared vision for the area to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK by 2045.
6. Devolution and the creation of a Combined Authority offers a key mechanism to achieve this vision with future Government investment and support on those areas with a strategic approach to delivering sustainable inclusive growth.
7. Areas with devolved governance arrangements through Mayoral Combined Authorities are best placed to influence national direction, receive

Government support, maximise private investment and to deliver maximum impact for businesses, communities and residents with the scale and focus that these devolved arrangements bring.

8. Existing legislation requires consent from each constituent council to the making of relevant statutory instruments to establish a Combined Authority.
9. To facilitate the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, interim shadow arrangements are required to ensure 'day one' operational functionality and governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Approve in principle the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in accordance with existing legislation under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (as amended).
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service), or their authorised deputy, to consent to the making of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026 in accordance with s.110(1)(b) Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
3. Agree to hold inaugural mayoral elections in May 2027.
4. Subject to approval of the above recommendations, to create a new joint committee, to be known as the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board, to provide strategic direction and interim arrangements in the best interests of the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.
5. Approve the Terms of Reference for the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board as outlined at Appendix B and delegate authority to the Constituent Members of the Shadow Board to carry out the roles and functions as set out in the Terms of Reference.

6. Note that the Constituent Members for the Shadow Board will be the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of each constituent council as set out in the proposed Terms of Reference.
7. Amend the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Terms of Reference as outlined at Appendix C to reflect the revised function of the Joint Committee following establishment of the Combined Authority Shadow Board.
8. Appoint new membership to the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee in accordance with the Joint Committee Terms of Reference.
9. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to take all other steps necessary to establish and implement the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.

Extract from the Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee held on 29 August 2025

19 CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME AND THE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

Ahead of the introduction of the report, a point of clarification was made regarding Appendix C of Item 5. In early 2025 the three Councils (Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council) agreed to amend the Terms of Reference (TOR) to extend the rotation of the current Chair (Cheshire West and Chester) for a further 12 months to May 2026. Therefore, paragraph 5 of Appendix C should have read as follows, and the TOR would be amended ahead of any reports going to Council meetings in September 2025:

5. The Committee shall maintain a two-year rolling Chair and Vice-Chair from the Subscriber Members. The Chair will rotate every two years in the following order: Cheshire West and Chester Council until May 2026, Cheshire East Council until May 2028, Warrington Borough Council until May 2030 and that it then continue in that rotation. The Vice-Chair shall be from Cheshire East Council (until May 2026) and shall then rotate in the same order as the Chair every two years.

Members considered a report which outlined the devolution powers, functions and future investment opportunity for Cheshire and Warrington, which would be delivered via a newly created Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in

early 2026, with an elected mayor in May 2027, as part of the UK Government's Devolution Priority Programme.

Councillor Louise Gittins noted that the three Leaders of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council were committed to ensuring that the area was the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK by 2045, as a result of the benefits of devolution. It was noted that in addition to the statutory constitution contained within the report, the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would be able to determine a local constitution which would reflect specific local circumstances, and arrangements would need to be in place to ensure that Cheshire and Warrington would be ready for a "go live" operational date, as early as February 2026.

It was noted that shadow arrangements would be put in place which would operate collaboratively from within the constituent councils in an advisory approach to oversee the implementation programme of establishing the combined authority. Members were updated that the initial phase of the combined authority, which would be mid to late 2026, would be a small core organisation which would include statutory posts and the minimum number of other core posts to ensure that it could deliver demonstratable value from day one.

It was expected that the combined authority would receive £1 million of capacity funding from central government for the first financial year, and confirmation had been received that capacity funding would be available for a further three financial years. Confirmation of a 30-year Mayoral Investment Fund had also been received, which would be split equally between capital and revenue; it was expected that Cheshire and Warrington would receive £20 million per year, in addition to further funds for transport, skills, economic development, regeneration and housing.

Councillor Nick Mannion noted the benefits which devolution would bring to rural Cheshire and Warrington and smaller business operating in rural areas. Councillor Mannion noted that devolution would offer the opportunity to reconnect many places with public transport to provide regular access to employment, services and training, and to redesign how services could be delivered.

Councillor Hans Mundy stated that Cheshire and Warrington would welcome extra funding for the area and noted that devolution would allow the area to be on an equal footing with its neighbours such as Liverpool and Manchester with regards to transport and rail infrastructure, to provide benefit for the wider region.

Councillor Karen Shore noted that the impact of increased skills funding for the area would be substantial and would allow for the creation of a central careers hub across the sub-region, the continuation of the Connect to Work programme, a local

Get Britain Working plan, Adult Skills Fund, Employment Fund and the Skills Boot Camp. It was noted that devolution would also allow space for innovation and the ability to focus funding and skills on local enterprises.

Councillor Jean Flaherty noted that the devolution communication had to date been government lead via the consultation, taking into account the voices of residents, and that going forward the combined authority would continue to listen and bring important decisions to the local level.

Councillor Mark Goldsmith noted the benefits of bringing decision making on strategic transport from central government to the local area.

Steve Purdham noted that the Business Advisory Board unanimously supported devolution in Cheshire and Warrington and that control, investment and changes were the key factors for them. It was noted that devolution would create a working environment in Cheshire and Warrington which was better than the present circumstances.

Damon Taylor noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire was supportive of the proposals, however noted that a Cheshire and Warrington Mayor would not have policing powers from the outset. The importance of the close working relationship between the combined authority, Mayor and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office was noted.

Joanne Moorecroft noted that unions were excited at the prospect of devolution and would be working closely with the combined authority.

Councillor Stuart Gardiner stated that, as Leader of the Opposition at Cheshire East Council, he was not currently supportive of the information presented and had significant reservations. Councillor Gardiner raised concerns regarding:

- a. How the government had pushed back when information on funding had been requested,
- b. Rurality,
- c. Quoracy of meetings, and
- d. What guarantees could be provided.

Members noted that it was the ambition of Cheshire and Warrington to start from a baseline and work towards additional benefits, powers and funding for the area over future years, and noted that a substantial amount of work had already gone in to supporting the rural areas in Cheshire and Warrington and this would continue. It was noted that it was likely that the funding levels anticipated would be confirmed by central government. It was noted that in terms of quoracy and

democracy, the combined authority would have an elected Mayor, who would be accountable to the three authorities, residents and businesses, it would provide the opportunity for members to provide named substitutes to meetings, and that there needs to be a majority vote. Members noted that in accepting the deal from central government, there would remain several unknowns, but the positives already outweighed any uncertainty for Cheshire and Warrington, and members noted that the combined authority would do its work in a transparent and open and inclusive way in order to work closely with all political groups for the greater benefit of the combined authority area.

Officers committed to providing a briefing to Members on “rurality”.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Approve in principle the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in accordance with existing legislation under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (as amended).
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officers (Head of Paid Service), or their authorised deputy, to consent to the making of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026 in accordance with s.110(1)(b) Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
3. Agree to hold inaugural mayoral elections in May 2027.
4. Agree to, subject to approval of the above recommendations, to create a new joint committee, to be known as the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board, to provide strategic direction and interim arrangements in the best interests of the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.
5. Approve the Terms of Reference for the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board as outlined at Appendix B and to delegate authority to the Constituent Members of the Shadow Board to carry out the roles and functions as set out in the Terms of Reference.
6. Note that the Constituent Members for the Shadow Board will be the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of each constituent council as set out in the proposed Terms of Reference.

7. Amend the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Terms of Reference as outlined at Appendix C to reflect the revised function of the Joint Committee following establishment of the Combined Authority Shadow Board.
8. Appoint new membership from each Council to the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee in accordance with the Joint Committee Terms of Reference.
- 9 Delegate authority to the Chief Executives, in consultation with the Leaders, of each constituent council, to take all other steps necessary to establish and implement the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.

Link to [Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee 29 Aug 2025](#)

Supplementary Information Published After the Joint Committee Report including financial implications

Following consideration of the Devolution and Combined Authority paper by the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee on 29th August 2025, further financial information has been released which is relevant to the decisions being sought from the three constituent Councils. This paper summarises the new information.

Level of Mayoral Investment Fund – The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have now confirmed the scale of the 30-year Mayoral Investment Fund that would be paid to the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, as part of the Devolution Priority Programme, if established. The confirmed value of the Mayoral Investment Fund is £21.7m per annum, or just over £650m over the 30-year commitment. That funding is split 50% for capital investment and 50% revenue funding. Beyond that split, the Combined Authority would have complete flexibility to spend this funding on agreed priorities for the area.

As a new Mayor would not be in place until May 2027, the first instalment payable to the Combined Authority in 2026-27 would be a reduced sum set at **£10.85m** (50% of the normal annual value). Funding of **£21.7m** would then be paid annually for each of the next 29 years before a final balancing payment of **£10.85m** is made in 2056-57, giving a total investment to the area of **£651m** over that period. These sums are a slight increase on the illustrative allocations (£20m pa) included within the published report, and critically the balances are now guaranteed for the full 30-year period.

Level of Mayoral Capacity Funding - Alongside the announcement of the Mayoral Investment Fund, further instalments of the Mayoral Capacity Grant have also been confirmed. It was already known that, subject to a positive devolution decision, a grant of £1m would be released in 2025-26 to support the local costs of creating a Mayoral Combined Authority in Cheshire and Warrington. It has now been confirmed that a minimum of an additional £3m will be made available over the following 3 years, with funding for each year to be confirmed, subject to business planning.

This will bring the total Mayoral Capacity Funding to a minimum of £4m between 2025-26 and 2028-29, to support the costs of establishing, mobilising and

operating the new body as well as reflecting the ongoing transfer of funds and functions from the Government to the Combined Authority over its first few years.

Core Funding for CA	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Minimum Over 30 yrs £000s
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Previously Assumed					
Investment Fund		10,000	20,000	20,000	600,000
Capacity Fund	1,000	TBC	TBC	TBC	1,000
Now confirmed					
Investment Fund		10,850	21,700	21,700	651,000
Capacity Fund *	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000

* The minimum scale of new capacity funding has been confirmed, but the profile across years will be shaped by the pace at which new functions transfer

Consequences of Funding Confirmation

Confirmation of the levels of the Mayoral Investment Fund and Mayoral Capacity Fund helps address some of the key risks and uncertainties in relation to the formation of a Combined Authority.

- a) The long-term nature of the commitment provides funding certainty and allows the Combined Authority, the Councils and the Mayor once elected, to develop sustainable investment strategies that both directly address local needs and leverage in wider investment for the benefit of local residents and businesses.
- b) The scale of the funding also ensures that the Combined Authority will be able to meet its costs and still make a significant net contribution to the local economy. As with any public body there will be an underlying cost to having a Combined Authority, including the costs of the mayor, a small core of staff, systems to allow it to operate effectively and holding a mayoral election every four years. Now that the level of core funding has been confirmed it can give confidence that after meeting such costs, the Combined Authority

will still have 85-90% of the funding available to support new investment into the region.

The funding now confirmed only represents the base funding for the Combined Authority and its investment programme. Additional strands of funding being devolved for functional areas such as transport, adult skills, employment support and housing will be separately confirmed by each of the relevant government departments, in advance of those activities transferring into the Combined Authority over its first few years.



OPEN

29 August 2025

Cheshire and Warrington Devolution and the Mayoral Combined Authority

Report of: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme Steering Group

Report Reference No: JC/11/25-26

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No	Definition (to be deleted once completed)
Cheshire West and Chester	No	Constitution Page 115.
Warrington	No	Constitution page 41
Cheshire East	No	Constitution Page 78

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report outlines the devolution powers, functions and future investment opportunity for Cheshire and Warrington, to be delivered via a newly created Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in early 2026, with a duly elected mayor in May 2027, as part of the UK Government's Devolution Priority Programme.
- 2 This report seeks strategic direction from the Joint Committee for the decisions of each council (Cheshire East Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council) [the Councils] in Cheshire and Warrington as part of the formal consenting process to proceed with a Combined Authority and



associated devolution powers, functions and investment. It should be noted that this report will form the basis for key decisions of the Councils and accordingly will be reflected on their Key Decision Forward Plans in accordance with their constitutions.

Executive Summary

- 3 In January 2025 the Joint Committee agreed to take forward a devolution development programme to assess the benefits of devolution and to undertake a significant engagement programme to seek the views of businesses and residents about the impact devolution might have for the future of Cheshire and Warrington. The results of this work have been reported to the Joint Committee over the period since and is summarised in the report. The work has concluded that progressing with devolution does offer a significant benefit for residents and businesses in Cheshire and Warrington, and, from an analysis of local engagement work, an overall positive balance of residents in favour.
- 4 Following a Government Statutory Consultation on the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority earlier this year, the Government confirmed on the 17th July 2025 that Cheshire and Warrington had passed the statutory tests to proceed with devolution. Officers have been working closely with officials in UK Government Departments to clarify the detailed arrangements for a future Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority with associated devolved powers and functions.
- 5 The next stage in the formal process is to seek approval to establishing secondary legislation from each of the Councils in Cheshire and Warrington. Subject to decision, these will be the future constituent councils of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. The report details the next steps if the Councils decide to proceed, as well as the consequences if one or more of the Councils do not approve.
- 6 The report details the initial proposed arrangements to create the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. It should be noted that this would be created under existing Government legislation.
- 7 The report also gives an overview of the future impacts of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill which would designate the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority as a Mayoral Strategic Authority and automatically confer additional devolution powers onto it, subject to the Bill's successful passage through parliamentary processes.



- 8 It should be noted that this report references draft Parliamentary Orders. These documents cannot be shared as this would breach parliamentary privilege. Statutory instruments are to be considered as 'confidential information' as defined in s100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, as information furnished to the Council by a Government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public. Statutory instruments are exempt from disclosure or publication before they are laid in Parliament to avoid infringing on parliamentary privilege or breaching Chapter nine of the Ministerial Code. However, while the documents cannot be shared themselves, detailed summaries can be provided, as below and in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with its function to provide strategic direction and oversight across potential devolution for Cheshire and Warrington, the Joint Committee is recommended to endorse the following recommendations for decision by each of the Councils in Cheshire and Warrington, in line with each Council's constitutional arrangements:

1. To approve in principle the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in accordance with existing legislation under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (as amended).
2. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officers (Head of Paid Service), or their authorised deputy, to consent to the making of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026 in accordance with s.110(1)(b) Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
3. To agree to hold inaugural mayoral elections in May 2027.
4. Subject to approval of the above recommendations, to create a new joint committee, to be known as the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board, to provide strategic direction and interim arrangements in the best interests of the establishment of a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.
5. To approve the Terms of Reference for the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board as outlined at Appendix B and to



delegate authority to the Constituent Members of the Shadow Board to carry out the roles and functions as set out in the Terms of Reference.

6. To note that the Constituent Members for the Shadow Board will be the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of each constituent council as set out in the proposed Terms of Reference.
7. To amend the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Terms of Reference as outlined at Appendix C to reflect the revised function of the Joint Committee following establishment of the Combined Authority Shadow Board.
8. To appoint new membership from each Council to the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee in accordance with the Joint Committee Terms of Reference.
9. To delegate authority to the Chief Executives, in consultation with the Leaders, of each constituent council, to take all other steps necessary to establish and implement the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.

Report Detail

A. Strategic rationale

- 9 Cheshire and Warrington Leaders are committed to achieve the shared vision for the area to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK by 2045. The 2045 Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy has recently completed its consultation and will be taken forward via the appropriate governance process after September 2025.
- 10 Cheshire and Warrington has one of the most productive economies in the UK, with output per head 25% higher than Greater Manchester and 50% higher than in Liverpool City Region. It also has a number of opportunities to build on that success by taking advantage of:



- (a) The Government's recent investment of £11 billion into hydrogen production and carbon capture and storage in Cheshire and Warrington and its investment into new nuclear power;
 - (b) the strong cluster of life science companies shared with Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Regions; and
 - (c) our strong advanced manufacturing cluster.
- 11 Notwithstanding these strengths, Cheshire and Warrington has large numbers of working age adults who are sick and disabled, a shortage of people with the skills needed by employers, 28,000 children living in poverty and a 16-year gap in healthy life expectancy between the least and most prosperous areas in the subregion.
- 12 The draft Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy proposes that Cheshire and Warrington should commit to a series of targets that, by 2045, would make the region the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing place in the country. These include having the highest rate of growth in the North, reducing carbon emissions to zero, improving life and healthy life expectancies so that they are above the national average everywhere and having no communities ranked in the bottom 20% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- 13 A report outlining the content and implications of recent UK Government strategy and policy was presented to this committee in July 2025. Members of the committee agreed that there is a clear emphasis for future Government investment and support on those areas with a strategic approach to delivering sustainable growth. Specifically, that those areas with devolved governance arrangements through Combined Authorities with a mayor are best placed to receive Government support, maximise private investment and to deliver maximum impact for businesses, communities and residents with the scale and focus that these devolved arrangements bring.
- 14 Devolution and the creation of a Combined Authority offers a key mechanism to help achieve this vision. New and innovative ways of working via the powers, functions and investment that a Combined Authority would have from 'day one', gives Cheshire and Warrington the best chance to deliver real and lasting improvements for residents and businesses. These include:



- (a) Investing the expected 30-year Mayoral Investment Fund to take advantage of key growth and investment opportunities, including in clean energy industries, life sciences and advanced manufacturing, as well as greater control over several funds currently managed by Government departments, including adult skills, employment support, brownfield land investment and business support.
- (b) Working in partnership (and in some instances via a statutory role) with key Government agencies and stakeholders, including Network Rail, train operating companies and National Highways. A 'strategic place partnership' with Homes England to align resources and focus. A strategic partnership with the Department for Business and Trade to bring together resources and interventions to boost business growth, exports and encourage inward investment, as well as new relationships with Great British Energy and UK Research and Innovation.
- (c) With these new partnership arrangements, devolved powers, a significant investment fund and other devolved funds, the Combined Authority could, in the first few years of being established for example, increase funding for training and support to tackle disadvantage by helping people back into work, deliver much-needed transport improvements, give additional support for growing businesses, unlock land for development and regenerate town centres.
- (d) Embed priority policies across all activities of the Combined Authority, including tackling health inequality, promoting inclusion, specific issues linked to rurality and building-in sustainability and climate change resilience.
- (e) The greater profile and voice that comes from a seat on the Council of Nations and Regions and the new Great North Mayoral partnership would amplify Cheshire and Warrington's work to, for example, gain Ministerial support for the regeneration of Crewe; make the case for further expansion of hydrogen production and CO² capture, cementing Cheshire and Warrington's position as a world leader in decarbonisation; and ensuring Ministers and Northern Mayors recognise the huge growth opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington.



- (f) Develop fully integrated public transport inspired by the Manchester Bee Network and Transport for London (TfL). Cheshire and Warrington would be able to make bus travel more convenient, reliable, affordable and attractive, better connecting rural areas and providing tickets that can be used on both buses and trains.
- (g) A Combined Authority's new role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network would provide greater influence in the Liverpool-Manchester and West Midlands-Manchester Railway discussions, including influencing the delivery of Crewe Hub Station improvements.
- (h) Help tackle poverty and improve healthy life expectancies by making homes warmer and more affordable to heat by accelerating the retrofit of properties with green, energy-saving technology such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps, funded through devolution and via the Government's Warm Homes Plan.
- (i) Invest in and support the growth of the Cheshire Science Corridor and transformational opportunities in life sciences, advanced manufacturing and clean energy (key sectors in the Modern Industrial Strategy).
- (j) Turbocharge promotion of Cheshire and Warrington as one of the best places to live, work, invest, learn and visit.

B. Timeline

- 15 It is important to outline and understand the anticipated timeline for the creation and development of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.
 - (a) **September 2025:** The constituent councils decide whether to consent to create a Combined Authority.
 - (b) **October 2025 – early 2026:** Subject to the decision to proceed across all three constituent councils, the UK Government will lay an Order before each of the Houses of Parliament referred to as the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026. As well as approval from each House, the making of the Order will require consent from each of the constituent councils to modify existing legislation and establish as a body corporate the Cheshire



and Warrington Combined Authority. It is anticipated this could be created as early as February 2026. During this period, via the shadow arrangements described below, there will be certain 'day one' functions that will need to be developed locally, including certain posts to be in place (statutory posts) and other pre-operational decisions related to set-up and governance.

- (c) **Early 2026:** The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will be operational and will receive powers and funding from Government under existing legislation.
- (d) **Mid-2026:** The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will complete its Parliamentary process through to legislation. Cheshire and Warrington will become a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) under the new legislation and the additional powers and functions contained within this legislation will be devolved to it.
- (e) **May 2027:** Mayoral elections will take place across Cheshire and Warrington.
- (f) **2028 onwards:** Subject to meeting assurance criteria, the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Strategic Authority can become an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority 18 months after the mayoral election, with further additional powers and flexibilities, including a fully integrated financial settlement from the UK Government.

C. Governance

- 16 Civil servants from key Government Departments (primarily the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport) have been working with officers from the three Councils to finalise draft regulations to establish the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority – this will be 'the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority Order 2026'. The exact wording of the Order must remain confidential until it is laid before Parliament. However, a summary of the provisions of the Order are attached at Appendix A.
- 17 The Order will establish a mayor for the area, to be democratically elected every four years from May 2027. As well as the board of the Combined Authority, two statutory committees must be established: a Scrutiny Committee and an Audit Committee. The chair of the Scrutiny Committee



must be from a different political party than the mayor with one to three elected Members appointed from each constituent council to ensure political balance, as well as co-opted independent members.

- 18 The Order will also establish the Combined Authority as the Local Transport Authority for Cheshire and Warrington, to enable the Combined Authority to perform its transport functions, such as the development of a local transport plan as well as passenger transport powers to support an integrated approach to delivering excellent transport services for the area.
- 19 The Order includes a **statutory constitution** setting out the framework on which the Combined Authority will be established. This provides consistency across all newly established combined authorities (and will also apply to existing combined authorities following the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill's passage through Parliament). The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority can also agree a local constitution, which must be based on the statutory articles.
- 20 Key aspects of the statutory constitution, which will be prescribed by the Order, are as follows:
 - (a) Membership: Each constituent council must appoint two elected members to the Combined Authority. Both members must also have one named elected member substitute appointed (i.e. two elected members and two named substitutes). Each member will have one vote. The proceedings of the Combined Authority are invalid if there are vacancies amongst the members and substitutes members. This has been determined as the most effective decision-making arrangement by Government under the statutory requirements.
 - (b) The appointed Combined Authority members must appoint a chair and vice chair from the constituent council members at their first formal board meeting. The chair and vice chair positions will end on the day before the first mayor's term of office begins.
 - (c) Once elected, the mayor will be the chair of the Combined Authority and has the statutory power to appoint a deputy mayor from the Combined Authority members (replacing the chair and vice chair positions above).



- (d) The deputy mayor must be chosen from one of the members of the Combined Authority in accordance with statutory requirements. If the deputy mayor is acting in the place of the mayor, the deputy mayor's substitute can be present.
- (e) The Combined Authority can have up to six non-constituent (stakeholder organisations) and associate (individual) members (as Combined Authorities cannot have more non-constituent and associate members than it has constituent members). All of these members/ organisations must nominate a named substitute.
- (f) All decisions of the Combined Authority will be made by a simple majority of the members present. Once the mayor's term of office has started, any majority must include the mayor or the deputy mayor in place of the mayor. There will be no casting votes and no tied votes.
- (g) Before the first mayor's term of office begins, all business of the Combined Authority must be transacted with the chair (or vice-chair in their absence) present, as well as at least three members appointed by the constituent councils. The legislation will not require representation from each constituent council to be quorate. After the mayor's term of office begins, the mayor (or deputy mayor acting in place of the mayor) must be present at all meetings, as well as four members appointed by the constituent councils.

D. Powers and functions: 'Day One'

21 Initially, the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would have those core powers and functions associated with existing legislation. These powers and functions will take effect from the creation of the Combined Authority in 2026. Specifically:

- (a) **Economic development and regeneration functions:** This will empower the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority to exercise the functions of the constituent councils under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, known as the General Power of Competence, to the extent that those functions relate to economic development and regeneration. This power will be held jointly with the constituent councils.
- (b) **Transport functions:** The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will become the Local Transport Authority for the



Cheshire and Warrington area and will exercise a number of functions under both the Transport Act 2000 and Transport Act 1985 as below: -

- (i) Transport Act 2000: Exercising a number of powers jointly with each constituent council for a transition period, expected to be one year. The major function being that the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will be responsible for the development and adoption of a Local Transport Plan. After the transition period such powers will be exercisable only by the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority
- (ii) Transport Act 1985: These functions are proposed to be exercised jointly with the constituent councils in perpetuity and include: -
 - 1. Hold passenger transport functions;
 - 2. allow the formation and running of companies to run bus undertakings;
 - 3. hold the power to pay grants for transport facilities and bus services.

E. Powers and functions: English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

- 22 At the 25th July 2025 Joint Committee, members received a report on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. This report gave an overview of the Bill and implications for Cheshire and Warrington.
- 23 It explained that the Bill outlines a consistent approach to devolution across England, giving greater consistency across both existing and new devolved areas in terms of governance and powers. It creates a new category of authority in England, 'the Strategic Authority', and aims to make it quicker and easier to devolve powers away from Westminster to local government, outlining the routes to achieve further devolved powers over time.
- 24 The Bill sets out a clear framework with a standardised set of legal powers, governance arrangements, funding commitments and partnership/collaboration arrangements with Government. It is a clear



move away from negotiated deals and inconsistencies across devolved areas.

- 25 It should be noted that the Bill would also enable the Secretary of State to establish a new Strategic Authority or expand existing institutions without the consent of local areas. Whilst the Government has been clear it would limit the use of this power to instances when other routes had been exhausted, it should nonetheless be noted that this power would exist.
- 26 Subject to its passage through the Parliamentary process, Appendix A details all the powers and functions which are anticipated to be devolved to the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority – which would at this same time become the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Strategic Authority. These functions extend across seven competencies and include:
- (a) Additional transport powers including the ability to progress with bus franchising, oversight of the most important local roads in the area (a Key Route Network) and (via other legislation) a statutory role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network and local stations;
 - (b) skills and employment support via the transfer of adult education functions and the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund. This fund will be non-ringfenced so that the Strategic Authority can determine how best to use the fund via the creation of a local skills plan. Employment support funding would also be devolved to support those furthest from employment to find and sustain a job. The Joint Committee has previously agreed the development of a 'Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan' to support the prioritisation of these funds;
 - (c) housing and strategic planning including the power to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) which would align with the Councils' Local Development Plans but with a focus on strategic development opportunities across the whole subregion. Following agreement of the SDS this would give the Strategic Authority additional powers to intervene in planning applications of strategic importance (currently the power to 'call in' sits with the Secretary of State – this would transfer to the mayor), the option to charge a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy on new major developments to support infrastructure requirements and the ability



to designate Mayoral Development Areas and establish Mayoral Development Corporations to support delivery of large, complex development and regeneration projects;

- (d) economic growth and regeneration, including producing a local growth plan and investment pipeline – which would agree shared priorities with Government and other public organisations such as UK Research and Intelligence. The Bill also requires Strategic Authorities to work with the Local Government Pension Scheme to jointly invest in local projects which deliver social and/or economic benefits to local communities (as well as financial return);
- (e) the Bill does not transfer statutory environmental or climate-related functions to Strategic Authorities, but it gives the responsibility for the development and delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and does commit to explore future opportunities for devolution in this area;
- (f) Strategic Authorities will have a legal requirement to ‘have regard’ to the need to reduce health inequality and improve people’s health in the area. Health impacts should be considered in all Strategic Authority policies;
- (g) because a future Strategic Authority and the Cheshire Constabulary have different boundaries, a future mayor would not be responsible for exercising police functions.
- (h) The Bill also outlines further general mayoral powers under the General Power of Competence.

27 It is anticipated that there are areas that a future Strategic Authority would want to pursue additional devolution powers and functions. For example, the Bill is largely silent on rural affairs and specific devolved opportunities from DEFRA.

F. Shadow Arrangements

28 Subject to a decision to proceed, arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure that Cheshire and Warrington will be ready for a ‘go live’ operational date which could be as early as February 2026.

29 As noted below, there will be specific ‘day one’ functions that need to be in place for this schedule, requiring certain staffing (including statutory



posts) and other pre-operational decisions related to set-up and governance. For example, the Combined Authority will require at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one Audit Committee in line with the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Shadow arrangements will also ensure that the values and principles that constituent councils want to embed in the Combined Authority can be developed early to shape future decisions and operations, as well as the initial creation of a local constitution. The local constitution, which must be based on the statutory articles, can include more bespoke arrangements to suit local circumstances.

- 30 The Governance Workstream for the devolution work programme, comprising Monitoring Officers from each constituent council, has considered options for shadow arrangements and recommends creating a new formally constituted joint committee under Part VI of the Local Government Act 1972 and Part I Chapter 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. This will be referred to as the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board (the Shadow Board).
- 31 The shadow arrangement would operate collaboratively from within the constituent councils in an advisory approach to oversee the implementation programme of establishing the Combined Authority. It is important therefore that the shadow arrangements mobilise as soon as possible after a decision to proceed with devolution.
- 32 The Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the three constituent councils would be appointed to the membership of the Shadow Board, with the option to appoint other members on a non-voting basis as may be considered necessary to achieve the business of the Shadow Board.
- 33 The Terms of Reference for the Shadow Board set out the decision-making powers and roles and functions of the Shadow Board. This report seeks a delegation from each of the constituent councils to the Shadow Board to carry out the roles and functions in paragraph nine of the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference are appended at Appendix B.
- 34 Alternative options have also been considered for the shadow arrangements including:
 - (a) a sub-committee of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee; or



- (b) a committee in common of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee.
- 35 On an appraisal of the advantages and disadvantages of all options, the above options (a) and (b) were considered to generate risk of potential conflicts of interest, more complex administration, and lack of opportunity to develop an independent culture for the new Combined Authority.
- 36 The decision to create a Shadow Board would require the existing Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee to remain, focusing on its role as the shareholder board for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington. The Terms of Reference for the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee, Part Two, are recommended for amendment accordingly as set out in Appendix C.
- 37 If the decision is not to proceed with devolution, it is recommended that the current arrangements and functions for the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee remain in place with no amendment to the current Terms of Reference.

G. Operating Model

- 38 The Governance and Finance Workstreams of the devolution programme have undertaken some early analysis of future operating models for the Combined Authority. Analysis focused on overarching principles of cost, achievability and quality across the future likely functional competencies of a Combined Authority. The potential phasing of any operating model was also considered – noting that a number of future functional competencies will be reliant on the passage of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill through Parliament.
- 39 Whilst any decisions on future set-up will need to be agreed in detail initially with the shadow arrangements described above, the following headlines from the initial analysis of options should be noted:
 - (a) The Combined Authority should be a predominantly strategic, commissioning body.
 - (b) Any operational model must be delivered within available Combined Authority resources and have no call on additional council resources.



- (c) A proportionate and flexible 'day one' structure should be agreed that avoids making long-term assumptions.
 - (d) Any model must be flexible enough to allow additional functions as required – and optimises Cheshire and Warrington's ability to deliver its regional and local priorities.
 - (e) The initial phase of the Combined Authority (to mid/late 2026) would need to be a small, core organisation that includes statutory posts and a minimum number of other core posts that can deliver demonstrable value from 'day one'. It is anticipated the following may form a day one staffing structure, subject to agreement of the Shadow Board:
 - (i) Head of Paid Service (statutory)
 - (ii) Section 73 Officer (statutory)
 - (iii) Monitoring Officer (statutory)
 - (iv) Scrutiny Officer (statutory)
 - (v) Administrative support
 - (vi) Communications support
 - (vii) Policy support
 - (f) Additional staffing requirements would follow as functions were devolved to the Combined Authority – some of which may be transitional in nature. This is described in more detail under the Workforce and Financial sections below.
- 40 Between October 2025 and formal set up of the Combined Authority in early 2026, the final agreed posts will need to be recruited on a secondment or interim basis. These postholders will put all required operational arrangements in place to ensure its ability to practically fulfil its day one functions and responsibilities.
- 41 There will be various options available to ensure operational readiness; these options may include the Combined Authority securing its own service arrangements (for ICT, HR, Procurement support for example) or arranging "buy back" to access these services from one of the Councils. Available options will be appraised and recommendations made for



decision by the Shadow Board as early as possible, to allow time for the arrangements to be put in place. Once the Combined Authority is operational, they will be better placed to make longer term decisions around how they wish to organise themselves, including the level of ongoing support they require.

- 42 It is envisaged that while the shadow arrangements are in place the seconded or interim posts (which will either be filled by current staff from across one of the three Councils or Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington or alternatively by an external interim) will be hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council. Any support required by the Combined Authority as part of this hosting (for example payroll, access to facilities and equipment) may be provided through formal "buy back" arrangements which will be documented in Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the relevant support services in the Council. Arrangements will also need to be made to ensure the shadow Combined Authority is able to access any buildings or meeting room facilities they require across the sub region (again within SLA arrangements).
- 43 **Workforce:** Key workforce issues for the Combined Authority from inception will be its Pay and HR policies, the potential TUPE of staff aligned with the functions of the Combined Authority and the recruitment to statutory and other posts on a temporary or permanent basis. Direction and decisions will need to be made by the Shadow Board and/or new Combined Authority, with engagement and consultation with the Trade Unions and staffing representatives of all impacted staff as required.
- 44 In respect of the statutory posts, it is expected these will be filled by day one of the Combined Authority on a secondment or interim basis which will enable the new authority to consider the timing and process of recruitment for its own independent statutory officers.

H. Financial position

- 45 **Financial Governance:** While a new Combined Authority would be separate from the three constituent councils, the four entities will need to work together under a broader financial framework being established under the new Statutory Instruments and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. A key aspect of that framework will be an obligation on the three constituent councils to ensure that the Combined Authority can access the necessary funding to discharge its functions effectively. In effect, this means that the Councils could be asked to



- financially support the Combined Authority, if it was unable to discharge its functions from other available funding streams.
- 46 The constituent councils cannot be liable for any expenditure, unless the Combined Authority has approved such a request in accordance with its budget decision-making processes (either as per the Finance Order 2017 for mayoral budget or simple majority including the mayor for Combined Authority budget). As the constituent councils hold six votes on the Combined Authority, they would have significant influence over any such request. None of the existing Combined Authorities have needed to call on their constituent councils for additional funding under this provision.
 - 47 The financial position outlined above should be viewed in the context of the functions, responsibilities and funding position of the Combined Authority. It is a strategic body that will largely determine its own plans and priorities, rather than facing the statutory demand-led pressures that cause most Council budget challenges. Council representatives on the Combined Authority will help shape those priorities and the scale of any investment. The Mayoral Investment Fund gives the Combined Authority a substantial funding stream with significant discretion as to how it is used, providing the Combined Authority with the flexibility to align plans with funding and operate within its financial means.
 - 48 If managed effectively the Combined Authority should not create a significant additional financial risk to the Councils, but to minimise that risk it is critical that the Combined Authority is set up with effective governance, a robust financial assurance framework and strong financial management. Key safeguards will include the establishment of an Audit Committee and a statutory Chief Financial Officer post (otherwise known as a Section 73 Officer). This post is similar in nature to a Council Section 151 officer and will have a legal responsibility to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs, including establishing adequate controls and setting a balanced budget each year.
 - 49 The Combined Authority will need to set out its arrangements for ensuring strong financial governance in a published Assurance Framework. This will set out the key roles, governance, controls and procedures for ensuring the Combined Authority uses public money in a transparent, responsible and effective manner. This document will need to be submitted to Government by the Combined Authority and approved before 2026-27 funding is released.



- 50 **Funding:** Details of the initial funding and investment package available for the Combined Authority on ‘day one’ are expected to be confirmed by the Government in early/mid-September 2025. Therefore, at this stage, it is only possible to give broad indications of likely funding in most areas, drawing on information available in the Government’s 10-year Spending Review, Modern Industrial and Infrastructure strategies as well as the experience of existing Combined Authorities.
- 51 Those funds are likely to include a combination of specific mayoral investment funding, devolved Government funding, existing funding linked to services that will become the responsibility of the Combined Authority and local income sources (such as Enterprise Zone funding). The mayor, subject to relevant governance and approvals, will also have the power to raise funds through precepts.
- 52 **Mayoral Investment Fund:** The Mayoral Investment Fund will provide a major source of additional funding for the Combined Authority that would otherwise not be available to the area. Based on precedents in other areas, Cheshire and Warrington could expect to receive a 30-year investment fund (illustratively, an allocation of c.£20 million per year would secure over £600 million over 30 years). Allocations for the first year (2026-27) are likely to be at a lower level (c.£10m) given the mayor will not be elected until May 2027.
- 53 This fund will provide a mixture of capital and revenue funding to support the Combined Authority’s long-term investment strategy and priorities. Long-term priorities for the fund will ultimately need to be agreed with the elected mayor once in place, but an initial investment framework will be developed to help evaluate and demonstrate how different investments could generate positive and sustainable benefits for the sub-region.
- 54 **Funding for Combined Authority Functions:** The Combined Authority will gain control over a number of specific functional areas currently managed by Government Departments, including adult skills, employment support, brownfield land investment and business support. The funds to deliver these programmes will be devolved to the Combined Authority, but the pace at which such funds will be incorporated into the Combined Authority will vary by Department, with the full transfer being phased in over the first two to three years of the life of the Combined Authority.
- 55 The Combined Authority will also take on some roles currently delivered directly by the Councils and will become the primary recipient of any



- Government funding linked to those roles. In the first year this would include taking on the Local Transport Authority role for the area, and responsibility for administering funding such as the Local Transport Grant. Transitional arrangements would give the Councils a period of joint control over how such funds are used.
- 56 **Capacity funding:** If the Councils confirm they wish to proceed with devolution in mid-September, then the Government will release £1m of Capacity Grant funding for 2025-26. As approved by Joint Committee on 25 July 2025, this initial £1m grant will be applied to meet Combined Authority set up and preparatory costs in the period leading up to February/March 2026. This activity is expected to be deliverable within that funding allocation.
 - 57 Further Mayoral Capacity Funding is expected to be paid to the Combined Authority over its first three years. This will be used in concert with the investment fund and specific grants to support the costs of mobilising the Combined Authority, embedding initial functions and preparation for mayoral elections in 2027.
 - 58 The deferral of the mayoral election to May 2027 will mean it would coincide with Council elections in Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, reducing costs to both the Combined Authority and the respective Councils. However, it would still be a substantial cost that would need to be borne by the Combined Authority. It has been confirmed that the cost of the election can be met from the Mayoral Investment Fund and this cost would be factored into planned usage of those funds.
 - 59 **Enterprise Zone funding:** On 26 June 2025 the Government wrote to the local Councils indicating that the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone (EZ) should form part of the new Combined Authority once it had been established. The EZ is currently managed by Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) and generates retained business rates income of approx. £3m per year which is used to part fund the economic growth activities of ECW and Marketing Cheshire, as well as meeting loan repayments back to the Councils.
 - 60 The EZ activities currently provided by ECW are expected to be subsumed into the Combined Authority once the body has been established. The EZ funds and responsibility to fund any ongoing activities and ongoing loan repayments would transfer to the Combined Authority from that point. ECW also hold an EZ reserve (currently £2.8m)



that would transfer. This provides a backstop in case of financial loss or failure from any of the EZ funded schemes, but also potentially provides the Combined Authority with some additional capacity and resilience.

- 61 Without reducing existing services funded from the EZ funding, there would be limited scope for the Combined Authority to draw on EZ funds to support new activities or functions. However, other established Mayoral Combined Authorities have been given permission to increase their retained business rate income, through measures such as extending Enterprise Zones and increasing their retention shares e.g. Greater Manchester Combined Authority retains 99% of business rates to fund investment in transport infrastructure, housing and skills. The Councils have sought support from Government to explore similar options for Cheshire and Warrington, although this is not expected to be part of the initial devolution process.
- 62 **Precept:** Once in office, the mayor would have the power to set a council tax precept, with 2027-28 being the first financial year to which this could apply. A precept could only be raised if approved by both the mayor and the overall Combined Authority, and if approved would be collected via the local Councils. Voting arrangements for the precept vary, depending on whether the precept is on mayoral functions, or wider Combined Authority functions:
 - (a) Mayors will continue to be subject to voting rules set out in previous legislation on precepts raised against mayoral functions. This is commonly that a mayor can propose a precept, but that request can be amended or rejected by a 2/3 majority of constituent authorities.
 - (b) A Mayor wanting to raise a precept on wider Combined Authority functions would be subject to the standard voting arrangements of a simple majority including the mayor.
- 63 Locally, the Liverpool City Region levied a precept of £24 per Band D property, to raise approx. £10.5m to invest in Mayoral priorities such as ultra-fast digital connectivity, a Mayoral Transport Plan and an apprenticeship portal. Other Combined Authorities such as the Tees Valley Combined Authority have chosen not to levy a precept to date.

I. Final changes to Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order



- 64 This report has highlighted that the Order to create the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority is in draft and is a confidential document. As it goes through the initial stages of the Parliamentary process there may be small technical changes to the wording of the Order. It is not expected that these will fundamentally change the content of the Order.
- 65 It is therefore recommended that any minor technical changes are delegated for approval to the Chief Executive Officers (Head of Paid Service), or their authorised deputy, to consent to the making of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026 in accordance with s.110(1)(b) Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 66 This report seeks strategic direction from the Joint Committee for the decisions of each council (Cheshire East Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council) [the Councils] in Cheshire and Warrington as part of the formal consenting process to proceed with a Combined Authority and associated devolution powers, functions and investment.
- 67 From the results of the work developed via Cheshire and Warrington's Devolution Programme, it is clear that devolution will offer a key mechanism to help achieve the subregional vision and to deliver real and lasting impacts for residents and business.
- 68 The recommendations also set out the arrangements that will need to be put in place should the Councils decide to proceed, including finalising technical amendments to the Statutory Instrument, the creation of shadow arrangements to support effective set up and concurrent changes to the terms of reference the existing Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee.
- 69 There is an option not to proceed. This would mean that the current Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee would remain in place and its terms of reference would not be amended. This option has not been recommended. In a previous report to the Joint Committee (National Strategy: Update Report, 25th July 2025) it was noted that Government policy and funding is, on the whole, targeted to devolved areas – devolution is the default position across England. Not proceeding with devolution increases the risk that investment and support will not be



forthcoming. I.e. there is an opportunity cost if devolution is not taken forward as investment will be prioritised to Combined Authority areas.

- 70 It should also be noted that under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, the Secretary of State would be able to establish a new Strategic Authority or expand existing institutions without the consent of local areas. Whilst the Government has been clear it would limit the use of this power to instances when other routes had been exhausted, it should nonetheless be noted that this power would exist. Under such circumstance, or if the Councils decided to progress with devolution at a later date, Cheshire and Warrington would not be part of the Devolution Priority Programme which gives access to additional support, including specific capacity funding as outlined in the report.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board (BAB)

- 71 The Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board (BAB) unanimously supports the establishment of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority and the progression of the devolution agreement. The Board is clear that this is the single most critical activity to reshape the future of the subregion—unlocking the powers, investment and freedoms needed to deliver long-term, inclusive growth. Devolution offers an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate business-led innovation, tackle structural challenges and improve the prosperity and wellbeing of residents across Cheshire and Warrington. The BAB urges all partners to commit fully to this agenda as the foundation for transformational change.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 72 A comprehensive strategy has underpinned Cheshire and Warrington's approach to communications and engagement since September 2024, and engagement has been undertaken, at key milestones, with councillors, staff, MPs, relevant committees/boards, businesses, and partner organisations, as well as our residents through a programme of community engagement. A summary of activity is included at Appendix E.
- 73 **Local communications:** A series of press releases and media features have been issued, focusing on the potential benefits of devolution, the decision-making process, and other key updates along the Cheshire and Warrington devolution journey.



- 74 There has been a sustained social media campaign, with a dedicated focus on targeting younger people, to ensure that any age demographic “gaps” have been addressed.
- 75 Part of the communications campaign has focused on ensuring a broad spread of local voices have been amplified, offering their views on devolution. To that end, through the engagement programme, a number of devolution “ambassadors” have shared their views about the potential benefits – this includes people across business, community services, housing, education. and beyond. Equally, through dedicated face-to-face community engagement events across Cheshire and Warrington, public views about devolution have been sought and shared, ensuring that authentic local voices have been able to share their views on the benefits of devolution.
- 76 Raising awareness of devolution, what it means and what its benefits are, is an intensive ongoing challenge. While there has been a sustained “myth busting” element to the overall communications and engagement plan, it is accepted that many communities and individuals are yet to understand what devolution could mean for Cheshire and Warrington. To that end, work on the communications plan continues in earnest, to ensure as many people and communities as possible understand what devolution could mean for Cheshire and Warrington.
- 77 **Local community engagement:** To support with local engagement work, an agency has been commissioned, Social, to facilitate a programme of in-person community engagement across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington, with a key focus on targeted youth engagement. The local engagement programme delivered by Social ran for an approximate six-week period, from 4 May to 13 June 2025.
- 78 The community engagement programme identified three strands of activity with tailored engagement methods and approaches designed to meet the needs of three key local audiences:
 - (a) Local residents and communities
 - (b) Businesses and stakeholders
 - (c) Young people



- 79 Resident and youth engagement activity was replicated in all three council areas, ensuring a representative and reflective view from across the area, and that local nuances could be captured and presented to the respective councils.
- 80 The three councils and partners, including Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, have already undertaken substantial briefings and engagement with key stakeholders and business representatives across the area. Given this, , it was decided that the stakeholder and business engagement strand of activity would be more effectively undertaken later in the year, once details of specific devolved powers and investment for Cheshire and Warrington have been confirmed by Government.
- 81 **Activity to date includes:**
- (a) Launch of Cheshire and Warrington devolution website: [Cheshire and Warrington Devolution](#)
 - (b) Sustained media campaign (including promotion of Government consultation, key updates, and myth busters linked to devolution) - more than 1million reads of coverage so far
 - (c) Launch of ambassador programme – sharing testimonials and continued engagement with identified ambassadors
 - (d) Devolution newsletter – [first issue July 2025](#)
 - (e) Social media – improving visibility/engagement across Cheshire and Warrington devolution accounts, myth-busting/dispelling misinformation, sharing FAQs etc. (more than 1.1 million impressions to-date)
 - (f) Internal communications – with staff across the three councils/ECW
 - (g) Business engagement – in partnership with the Business Advisory Board/ECW
 - (h) Member engagement – programme of activity across three councils
 - (i) Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations and town and parish councils - programme of activity across three council areas.



- 82 **Summary of member engagement:** Each of the three Councils has established a cross-party member group to understand, consider and advise on devolution. This has taken the form of the Devolution Member Reference Group in Cheshire East Council, the Devolution and Subregional Working Taskforce in Cheshire West and Chester Council, and the Devolution Taskgroup in Warrington Borough Council. These groups have been meeting regularly throughout the development of the devolution programme.
- 83 The three cross-party groups also came together to invite individuals with practical experience of devolution. Discussions were held with Ben Houchen (Mayor of Tees Valley), Oliver Coppard (Mayor of South Yorkshire), and Cllr Liam Robinson (Leader of Liverpool City Council and member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority).
- 84 All Members have been informed and engaged in the developing devolution programme through regular written briefings and All-Member Briefing Meetings for each council. These have allowed Members to hear presentations on progress and raise questions with Leaders and senior officers.
- 85 A cross-council All-Member Briefing also allowed members to hear from a range of local business representatives on their views on devolution, as well as to raise any questions on the programme.
- 86 **Statutory consultation analysis:** Following confirmation of Cheshire and Warrington's inclusion on the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), Government launched its own statutory consultation into the area's devolution proposals (which ran from 17 February to 13 April 2025). During this time, DPP areas were asked not to carry out their own localised community engagement work until the end of the statutory consultation period. Therefore, while local effort was made by the three councils and key partners to promote the consultation, this was a consultation led by Government, with a set number of fixed questions across all six DPP areas.
- 87 The statutory consultation, which asked a number of detailed questions about devolution, closed in April 2025. The consultation outcome was published by Government in July 2025. 1,663 responses were received overall across Cheshire and Warrington.



- 88 Respondents in favour said that devolution would provide opportunities to:
- (a) Improve the local economy: attracting further investment into the region and allowing for investment decisions to be shaped by local priorities
 - (b) Improve local governance: with greater potential for more decisions to be made locally by people who know the region
 - (c) Improve public services: Enabling better public transport and connectivity and enhancing local public services.
 - (d) Promote local identity and collaboration: Building on and further reinforcing the existing track record of joint working across the area.
- 89 Respondents who had concerns about the proposal cited:
- (a) Worries about bureaucracy and costs: with concerns around additional layers of bureaucracy and whether it would add another layer to the infrastructure
 - (b) Geographical and structural issues: perceptions that the area is too big, and that market towns and rural areas could be disadvantaged compared to larger towns and cities.
 - (c) Financial and resource concerns: concerns that funding the Combined Authority would increase costs and taxes on local businesses and individuals
 - (d) Confidence in delivery: some respondents demonstrated a lack of confidence in the local government sector's ability to deliver
- 90 The consultation elicited a mixed response to devolution in Cheshire and Warrington, although compared to the other five devolution priority areas, Cheshire and Warrington scored more favourably across a number of questions. Importantly, while the survey response was mixed, Government remains satisfied that Cheshire and Warrington can continue to seek a devolution agreement.



- 91 **Next steps for communications and engagement:** Subject to approval of the three councils, the focus of the Cheshire and Warrington devolution communications and engagement plan will shift to focus on:
- (a) Engaging meaningfully on more detailed discussions about key themes and priorities of the combined authority. This will in-part be through facilitated group discussions and workshops, alongside public engagement more broadly to seek views and opinions on the key areas that devolution will support
 - (b) Helping to clarify what powers the CA will have “from day one” alongside what emerging priority themes and areas will be delivered via the CA in time
 - (c) Helping people to understand the governance around establishing the CA locally, but also ensuring people understand the “seat at the table” that an elected Mayor for Cheshire and Warrington would have nationally
 - (d) Listening to people’s views about where agreed funding as part of establishing the CA could be spent on
 - (e) Raising awareness of the Mayoral election planned for 2027

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 92 The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would be established in accordance with existing legislation, primarily being the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (as amended) (‘2009 Act’).
- 93 Under s110(1)(b) of the 2009 Act, the Secretary of State may make an order establishing a combined authority only with the constituent councils’ consent.
- 94 The Governance workstream, including Monitoring Officers and legal services from each constituent council, have worked with Central Government civil servants to develop the draft Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026.



- 95 The proposed Shadow Board Terms of Reference have been drafted to align as far as possible with the statutory constitution in the Schedule to the draft Order.
- 96 Any powers in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill that pass into legislation will be 'auto transferred' to the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.
- 97 Each council report will contain a covering report clarifying any specific legal implications for that council.

Finance implications

- 98 The financial implications are set out within the main body of the report.
- 99 Each council report will contain a covering report to include any additional information subsequently received from the Government on the initial funding and investment package available to the Combined Authority. Where appropriate and required, each report will also clarify any specific financial implications for that council.

Risk implications and management

- 100 The report highlights programme risks and their mitigations. In particular, priority risks and mitigation include:
- (a) **Rationale:** In a previous report to the Joint Committee (National Strategy: Update Report, 25th July 2025) it was noted that Government policy and funding is, on the whole, targeted to devolved areas – devolution is the default position across England. Not proceeding with devolution increases the risk that investment and support will not be forthcoming. I.e. there is an opportunity cost if devolution is not taken forward as investment will be prioritised to Combined Authority areas. Constituent councils will be central to the development of the policies and plans of the Combined Authority, ensuring that key priorities are embedded in future delivery. This will include alignment to council plans such as Local Development Plans, and specific priorities for Cheshire and Warrington, including transport and rural communities.
 - (b) **Timeline:** The overall programme timeline as part of the Devolution Priority Programme is a challenging one. However, key decision dates have been agreed at each Council to ensure that,



subject to decision, the timescales for the Parliamentary process to establish the Combined Authority can be met. Holding the mayoral election in 2027 also allows more time to prepare, supporting compliant and well-run election processes.

- (c) **Governance:** Much of the governance arrangements, including voting, will be statutory requirements as part of the Order to create the Combined Authority. These will be consistent to all Combined Authorities in England, minimising the risk of non-compliant governance processes. It should be noted that, to date, three Best Value notices have been issued to combined authorities (including the West of England, Cambridge and Peterborough and Tees Valley). These have been related to governance issues and, for Tees Valley, the way that a Mayoral Development Corporation was run. A future Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will establish its own local constitution but will need to adhere to the statutory constitution set out as a Schedule to the Order.
- (d) As well as forming the Combined Authority Board, the three constituent councils in Cheshire and Warrington will form part of the overview and scrutiny as well as audit arrangements for the Combined Authority. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) of a Combined Authority, This will ensure a comprehensive oversight and scrutiny of the board and the mayor, including decisions made, actions taken, the discharge of general functions and the ability to make reports or recommendations to the board and the mayor on matters that effect the authority's area and residents.
- (e) Setting up a shadow board in advance of the creation of the Combined Authority will minimise the risk of not being ready for a 'go live' date in early 2026 once the Order to create the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority has passed through Parliament. It will oversee initial set-up, including initial staffing, governance readiness and shaping future values and principles.
- (f) **Financial governance:** Whilst it should be noted that the Statutory Instrument obliges the constituent councils to ensure that the Combined Authority can access the necessary funding to discharge its functions effectively, the constituent councils cannot be liable for any expenditure that the Combined Authority has not



agreed to. This risk to the constituent councils is also mitigated by the fact that the Combined Authority would set up with effective governance, a robust financial assurance framework and strong financial management. Key safeguards will include the establishment of an Audit Committee and a statutory Chief Financial Officer post (otherwise known as a Section 73 Officer). This post is similar in nature to a Council Section 151 officer and will have a legal responsibility to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs, including establishing adequate controls and setting a balanced budget each year.

- (g) **Budget:** It is proposed that a small, strategic operating model is established from day one. Whilst a detailed funding and investment package is yet to be confirmed, using interim arrangements and supporting a 'minimum viable product' approach will mitigate against an untenable budget position.

- 101 The Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority would manage its own risk register. Statutory officers will have specific tasks to manage risk as part of overall operational management and performance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 102 An Equality Analysis is attached at Appendix D.

Policy

- 103 The outline devolution agreement will support and better enables the achievement of Cheshire and Warrington's vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK.
- 104 Cheshire and Warrington sits within the Cheshire and Merseyside Marmot Region and all partners have recognised the impact that social, economic and environmental conditions have on health, particularly within our most deprived communities. Devolution will support subregional planning and delivery that better aligns to the 'All Together Fairer' strategy and that can affect health outcomes locally by focusing on improving the social determinants of health across Cheshire and Warrington.
- 105 All three constituent councils declared a climate emergency in 2019 and are working towards becoming net-zero councils within net-zero boroughs. Industrial, as well as domestic and transport emissions,



remain key contributors to carbon emissions across the sub-region. The outline devolution agreement brings significant opportunity to support and drive reduced emissions across those key sectors.

- 106 Stronger local decision making on subregional strategic planning and delivery will also support the delivery of the agreed strategic plans and priorities of each constituent council: the Our Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 vision of 'Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East'; the Cheshire West and Chester Borough Plan 2024-28 vision of 'A stronger future where we all play our part in thriving, caring and sustainable communities'; and the proposed Warrington Corporate Strategy 2025-29 vision of 'to shape a thriving Warrington by focusing on what matters most with three core focuses: our people, our place, and the quality of our public services.'
- 107 The attached EIA also gives a comprehensive overview of the wider policy alignment that devolution will impact upon.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Gemma Davies, Chair, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Steering Group/ Director Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council Gemma.Davies@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Appendices:	<p>Appendix A: Summary of the Statutory Instrument and English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.</p> <p>Appendix B: Cheshire and Warrington Shadow Board Draft Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Appendix C: Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Amended terms of Reference.</p> <p>Appendix D: Equality Analysis</p> <p>Appendix E: Summary of local consultation and engagement</p>
Background Papers:	National Strategy: Update Report (Joint Committee 25th July)

Appendix A – Summary Headlines

Statutory Instrument - Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Order 2026

What is the Statutory Instrument?

A Statutory Instrument (SI) is a form of secondary legislation.

It outlines changes to existing legislation without needing to create a new Act.

The SI will then form the ‘Order’ which establishes the rules and procedures that govern how the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority (C&W CA) will operate as a public body.

When the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (EDB) becomes an Act, these additional functions will apply to what will then be the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Strategic Authority (C&W MSA).

What does it do and when will it come into force?

It clarifies that Cheshire and Warrington have met the statutory tests – and that establishing the C&W CA will likely improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of people who live and work in the area.

It is reliant on all three councils in Cheshire and Warrington giving their consent to establishing the creation of the C&W CA.

Subject to consent and the parliamentary process to make the Order, the C&W CA would come into force on the day after the Order is made.

The table below sets out some key elements within the Order:

The Mayor

- Mayoral election date to be confirmed and set out in the Order
- To take place every 4 years
- The mayoral term of office commences 4 days after the day of the election (or nearest working day)
- The mayor may appoint a political advisor who will be employed only as long as the mayor is in office. This would be a politically restricted post.
- Functions set out below.

Governance

- As part of the SI, a statutory constitution is included as a schedule to the Order.
- Whilst C&W can add a local constitution with additional bespoke sections, it must maintain the following core governance arrangements.
- The SI confirms the following:

Membership:

- 2 x elected members from each constituent council
- Each member to have 1 named substitute

Chair/Vice-Chair:

- The mayor will be the chair of the C&W CA.
- Before the mayor is elected, the C&W CA will appoint a chair and vice-chair from the constituent council members
- No meeting can happen without the chair or vice chair present

***Non-constituent and associate members:**

- A maximum of 6 (no obligation to appoint the maximum)
- Non-constituent bodies must nominate a member and named substitute
- Associate members must nominate a named substitute

**Non-constituent: Representatives of an organisation (e.g. PCC/VCFSE/NHS)*

Associate: Named individual

Decision-Making

- **Simple majority** of the members present (*pre-May 2027 mayoral election*)
- **Simple majority plus mayor** or deputy mayor (*post-May 2027 mayoral election*)
- **Before the mayor's term of office**, no business can be conducted unless the chair or vice-chair and at least 3 members appointed by the constituent councils are present.
- **After the mayor begins in office**, no business can be conducted unless the mayor (or deputy mayor) and at least 4 members appointed by the constituent councils are present.
- **A member of the C&W CA will be the deputy mayor.** If a member is acting in this capacity, they can bring in their substitute.
- **No member has a casting vote.** Tied votes are not carried.
- **Before the mayoral election**, specific mayoral functions will be conferred on the MCA. As soon as the mayor's term of office begins, they will transfer to the mayor:
 - Development of a Local Transport Plan
 - The power to pay (transport) grant
 - General powers of competence

Day 1 Functions

- **The same functions as constituent councils to deliver economic development and regeneration.** (*These powers/functions will run concurrently with councils*).
- **Transport:**
 - The C&W CA will become the **Local Transport Authority** for Cheshire and Warrington.
 - This will be established via a **1-year transition period** (from the date that the C&W CA is established by the Order). After the transition period, the exercise of this function will be exercisable by the C&W CA only.

- The C&W CA will be responsible for the development of the Local Transport Plan. This requires the local transport authority to develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their area, and to implement those policies.
- The Local Transport Grant for C&W will come via the C&W CA.
- The C&W CA will be responsible for **passenger transport** as the local transport authority:
 - This places a duty on the local transport authority to identify public passenger transport needs that would not be met on a purely commercial basis i.e. without local transport authority intervention.
 - The local transport authority has the power to tender and enter agreements with providers for subsidised services. The local transport authority will also become by default the franchising authority.
 - There will be a permanent concurrent arrangement where a constituent council already runs its own municipal bus company. This is the case for WBC.
 - The C&W CA can pay grants to anyone in respect of the running of transport facilities and services as well as bus services but must seek consent from each constituent council whose area those functions are proposed to be exercised.
 - Concessionary fares process and permits.
- **Constituent councils remain as the highways authority for their area.**

Decisions about funding and budgets

- Constituent councils must ensure that C&W CA costs are aligned to the exercise of its functions.
- Constituent councils must meet reasonable costs of the Combined Authority and/or mayoral functions if they are not funded via the resources of the C&W CA (including any precept). All mayoral costs must first be agreed by the C&W CA. The mayor cannot incur any expenditure unless agreed by the C&W CA.
- Constituent councils cannot be liable for any expenditure, unless the Combined Authority has approved such a request in accordance with its budget decision-making processes (either as per the Finance Order 2017 for mayoral budget or simple majority including the mayor for Combined Authority budget).

- The C&W CA must establish an Audit Committee and a statutory Chief Financial Officer post (otherwise known as a Section 73 Officer).

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

What will it mean for C&W devolution?

What does the Bill do?

1. The Bill seeks to describe a consistent approach to devolution structures – and as far as possible gives increased consistency to new and existing governance arrangements.
2. It outlines and expands powers for Mayors and authorities
3. It explains the routes to get further devolved powers over time

Structures

The Bill will create in law a new category of authority in England – the ‘**Strategic Authority**’, the aim of which is to ‘make it quicker and easier to devolve powers away from Westminster to local government’. This will replace the term ‘Combined Authority’ once the Bill becomes legislation.

Each Strategic Authority would belong to one of the levels of devolution outlined

1. Foundation Strategic Authority (non-mayoral)
2. Mayoral Strategic Authority (C&W ‘day 1’ – an MSA)

3. Established Mayoral (A Mayoral Strategic Authority with additional governance requirements that enable greater flexibilities across devolved powers and investment. New Mayoral Strategic Authorities can become established after 18 months in operations if they meet these requirements).

Devolution Framework

- The Bill sets out a clear framework with a standardised set of legal powers, governance arrangements, funding commitments and partnership/collaboration arrangements with government.
- It is a clear move away from negotiated deals/ and inconsistencies across devolved areas.
- This is already reflected in the C&W statutory constitution within the SI.
- The Bill also:
 - Creates the power to extend the framework. i.e. there will be more powers that will be devolved over time (e.g. DEFRA and other Departments who are somewhat 'silent' on devolution at this time).
 - The power to 'pilot' new powers for specific MSAs.
 - Established MSAs will have a 'right to request' new powers.

Operation of the MSA

- Constituent council members can be paid by the MSA. Levels of pay will be determined by the MSAs independent remuneration panel that will need to be established.
- Mayors will be able to appoint and remunerate 'Commissioners' to lead on MSA areas of competence. They will not be members of the MSA.

- The post of mayor cannot also hold a position as a Member of Parliament.
- If mayors decide to raise a precept, it must be specific. The Bill extends the range of functions a precept can be used for to all MSA functions.
- A supplementary vote system will be used for mayoral elections.

Overview of devolution functions and powers within the Bill

The table below sets out the functions and power within the Bill that would transfer to a C&W MSA once legislation is in place (anticipated in 2026).

<p>Transport & local infrastructure</p> <p>In addition to the powers and functions under the Order...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ MSAs will be required to set up and coordinate Key Route Networks (KRN) (oversight of most important local roads) ➤ Mayors will hold a ‘Power of Direction’ over councils’ use of local highway and traffic powers on the KRN to deliver against the agreed LTP. ➤ Mayors will have a legal power to set Traffic Reduction Targets on the KRN. ➤ The MSA can regulate on-street micromobility schemes through a licensing regime (e.g. e-bikes). ➤ MSAs can apply to take on Penalty Charge Notices powers (as long as they have the consent of their constituent councils). ➤ Additionally (not in the Bill but via other legislation) - The mayor will have a statutory role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network and local rail stations
<p>Skills & employment support</p>

- The Bill will transfer adult education functions to MSAs, including the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (19+).
- This funding will be non-ringfenced which means the MSA can determine how best to use the fund via the creation of a Local Skills Plan.
- Devolution of the 'supported employment funding' to support those furthest from employment to find and sustain a job.

Housing & strategic planning

- The Bill will give mayors new planning powers similar to those exercised by the Mayor of London. Including:
- Publish a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) setting out the vision for development across C&W. Once this is agreed and in place, the mayor will then have...
 - The ability to direct refusal of planning applications of potential strategic importance
 - The ability 'call in ' these sort of applications
 - The option to charge a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy on new developments to support infrastructure requirements. (Any CIL charging schedule will need a majority agreement from the constituent council).
- Mayors will also be able to prepare Mayoral Development Orders (MDO) – which streamlines planning permission processes. Any MDO must be consulted with and approved by the relevant local planning authority.
- And... designate a Mayoral Development Area and establish a Mayoral Development Corporation to support delivery of large, complex development and regeneration projects.

Economic growth & regeneration

- A statutory duty to develop a Local Growth Plan which will also outline shared priorities with Government and an investment pipeline.
- There will be a legal responsibility for certain public organisations to 'have regard' to the shared priorities of the Local Growth Plan.
- The Bill will require MSAs to work with the LGPS to jointly invest in local projects which deliver social and/or economic benefits to our local communities (as well as financial return).

Environment & Climate Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Bill does not transfer statutory environmental or climate-related functions to Strategic Authorities, but it gives the responsibility for the development and delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and does commit to explore future opportunities for devolution in this area
Health, wellbeing and public safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ MSAs will have a legal requirement to ‘have regard’ to the need to reduce health inequality in C&W and improve people’s health in the area. Health impacts should be considered in all policies of the MSA. ➤ The mayor in C&W will not be responsible for exercising police functions.

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Appendix B

Cheshire & Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board is to provide a strategic direction and a forum to make arrangements in the best interest of the establishment of the new Cheshire & Warrington Combined Authority.

1. Interpretation

In these Terms of Reference:

“Constituent Councils” means Cheshire East Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council

“Constituent Member” means the elected members of the constituent councils appointed to the Shadow Board as set out in these Terms of Reference including Substitutes where relevant.

“Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Board” means the formal board for the newly created Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority on its commencement

“Shadow Board” means this joint committee for the shadow arrangement for the future Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority

2. Constituent Membership

2.1. Membership of the Shadow Board will be the following elected members from the Constituent Councils:

- Leader and Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Borough Council
- Leader and Deputy Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council
- Leader and Deputy Leader of Warrington Borough Council

3. Substitutes

3.1. A substitute may be nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Constituent Member and the substitute member shall have full voting rights where the member for whom they are substituting does not attend.

3.2. The substitute must be nominated in accordance with the constitutional arrangements operated by each body represented on the Shadow Board, and the details notified to the clerk 2 clear working days in advance of the meeting, where possible.

4. Non-constituent members and Associate members

4.1. The Shadow Board may appoint by majority agreement other members onto the Shadow Board as they see fit to achieve the business of the Shadow Board.

4.2. Non-constituent members and associate members shall have no voting rights.

5. Chairing

5.1. The Shadow Board will appoint a Chair and a Vice Chair of the Shadow Board to conduct the meetings.

6. Decision making

6.1. The Shadow Board has decision-making powers to the extent delegated from the Constituent Councils in accordance with their own processes and as set out in these Terms of Reference for the purpose of establishing the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority and providing strategic direction for devolution in Cheshire and Warrington.

6.2. No business is to be transacted at a meeting of the Shadow Board unless the Chair or Vice-Chair acting in place of the Chair and three Constituent Members appointed by the Constituent Councils are present.

6.3. Matters are to be decided by simple majority, with each of the Constituent Members having one vote.

6.4. If a vote is tied on any matter, it is deemed not to have been carried.

7. Meeting frequency and location

7.1. Meetings will be monthly, or as otherwise agreed by the Shadow Board.

7.2. Meetings will take place at the offices of one of the Constituent Councils, or a location agreed by the Shadow Board. If a meeting is non-decision making, it may be held as a virtual meeting.

7.3. Agendas will be published 5 clear working days before the meeting, but if matters need to be urgently referred to the Shadow Board this requirement may be waived by agreement of the Chair.

7.4. The meeting will be open to the public in accordance with s100A Local Government Act 1972 and administrated accordingly.

7.5. The public may be excluded from a meeting during an item whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the item that, if members of the public were present during that item, confidential information as defined in section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 or exempt information as defined in Sch12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed to them.

8. Officers

8.1. The Shadow Board will be supported by the Chief Executives of the Constituent Councils, and/or their representatives, as appropriate.

8.2. Meeting support and administration will be provided by Cheshire West Borough Council.

9. Roles & functions

9.1. The role of the Shadow Board is to act in the best interests of the new Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority and, in so doing,:

9.1.1. to oversee the development and creation of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority;

9.1.2. to develop proposals and arrangements to deliver effective devolution in Cheshire as part of central government's Devolution Priority Programme and to engage with central government on matters related to devolution;

9.1.3. to engage with stakeholders in accordance with the Cheshire and Warrington devolution programme engagement plan;

9.1.4. to propose any governance structure, local constitutional arrangements, and assurance framework for the new Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority and either obtain relevant approval in principle of the same from the Constituent Councils or, where appropriate, recommend to the newly established Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Board for approval on its commencement;

- 9.1.5. to ensure that interim staffing arrangements are in place for the commencement of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority to meet any statutory requirements;
- 9.1.6. to agree the Combined Authority Returning Officer and related election arrangements and recommend to the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Board for approval on its commencement;
- 9.1.7. to make decisions on any funding that may be awarded prior to the formal establishment of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority;
- 9.1.8. to provide a coherent single position on major strategic issues across the region;
- 9.1.9. to receive reports from the Business Advisory Board and Devolution Steering Group;
- 9.1.10. to oversee the delivery of the in-year capital schemes agreed with central government within the devolution deal;
- 9.1.11. to review, agree and effect proposed changes to the functions of the Shadow Board where appropriate;
- 9.1.12. any other such functions as are necessary to meet the statutory requirements to establish the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority in accordance with the legislation and central government's Devolution Priority Programme.

Appendix C

CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON JOINT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE (AS AMENDED)

1. Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Council have established an Executive Joint Committee known as the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee ('the Committee') for the purpose of discharging the functions mentioned in Annex A. The Councils are enabled to set up Joint Committees under Part VI of the Local Government Act 1972 and Part I Chapter 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

2. Each Council is entitled to appoint one voting member in respect of the business to be carried out in Part One of Appendix A (Subscriber Members), and one further voting member in respect of the business to be carried out in Part Two of Appendix A (Joint Committee Members). In the event of a voting member of the Committee ceasing to be a member of the Council which appointed him/her, the Council shall forthwith appoint another voting member in his/her place. Only a voting member is entitled to be elected as Chair or Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. Each Council may appoint members as substitute for the members appointed under (i) above to attend meetings of the Committee in the absence for any reason of the members appointed under (i) above, in accordance with their own constitutional requirements. The substitute members shall be treated in all respects if they were appointed under (i) above.

4. The Chair of the Business Advisory Board ('BAB') shall be an ex officio member of the Committee and may speak at meetings of the Committee but not vote. The Chair of the Business Advisory Board may present reports to the Committee from the BAB.

5. The Committee shall maintain a two-year rolling Chair and Vice-Chair from among the Subscriber Members. The Chair will rotate every two years in the following order CWaC (until May 2025), CEC (until May 2027) WBC (until May 2029) and shall continue in that rotation. The Vice-Chair shall be from CEC (until May 2025) and shall rotate in the same order as the chairmanship every two years.

6. Three voting members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the business set out in Part One of Appendix A. Four voting members shall constitute a quorum for the business set out in Part Two of Appendix A. Except as otherwise provided by statute, all questions shall be decided by a majority of the votes of the voting members present, the Chair having the casting vote in addition to his/her vote as a member of the Committee.

7. The Committee shall meet as agreed at its AGM and at least three times each year. However, a meeting of the Committee may be convened at any time by the Committee Clerk in consultation with the Chair. A meeting of the Committee must also be convened by the Chair within 28 days of the receipt of a requisition of any two Subscriber Members of the Committee addressed to the Committee Clerk. The Chair of the Board may request a meeting of the Committee by notice in writing addressed to the Committee Clerk, but may not requisition one. All requisitions shall be in writing and no business other than that specified in the requisition shall be transacted at such a meeting.

8. The Committee shall adopt the standing orders of Cheshire East Council but it may agree to vary these and from time to time make such standing orders for the carrying on of the business of the Committee as the Committee shall deem necessary and or desirable.

9. For the avoidance of doubt and subject to there being no changes to the law on this issue, where a Council is operating executive arrangements pursuant to the Local Government Act 2000 (and any regulations made under it), it will be a matter for the Executive of the Council to appoint any voting member, or substitute member of the Committee as long as that member is a member of the appointing Councils Cabinet. Where a Council is operating committee system arrangements pursuant to the Local Government Act 2000, it will be a matter for the Council to appoint any voting member and substitute member to the Joint Committee.

10. The Committee shall from time to time appoint such sub-committees to consider and deal with any of the functions of the Committee as may be thought desirable.

11. The Committee Clerk and such other officers as may be deemed necessary for the due conduct of the business of the Committee shall be provided by Cheshire East Council and the costs of this shall be met by the Council-owned company (Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington – NB: name subject to Member approval).

12. The first meeting of the Committee shall be held at Cheshire East Council and the venue shall then rotate between the Councils in alphabetical order, unless otherwise directed by the Committee.

13. As and when required by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or other Committee or an Audit Committee of any of the Councils, the Subscriber Member for the Council whose Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Committee or Audit Committee has instigated an investigation shall take the lead responsibility for accounting for the activities of the Committee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Committee or Audit Committee and shall attend such meetings of those committees of its Council as necessary, and no other member of the Committee shall be required to attend.

14. The Committee Clerk shall:

a. Be responsible for preparing the agenda and submitting reports prepared by either the Councils or other bodies to the Committee and minutes of the Committee.

b. Be responsible for making arrangements for publishing in accordance with Access to Information requirements all meetings, agenda, agenda items and minutes as appropriate.

15. The relevant Standing Orders for the Committee are those of Cheshire East Council.

16. In the event that an urgent decision is needed for the discharge of any of the functions of this Committee, other than those functions which by law can be discharged only by the Councils or a specific Committee, then the Growth Director of each Council is entitled to act on behalf of the Committee. A decision will be urgent where any delay would seriously prejudice the legal or financial position of the Councils or the interests of residents. This delegation is subject to the conditions that any urgent action:-

(a) should be reported to the Committee

(b) shall take the advice of the Monitoring Officer and S151 officer of each Council

(c) shall be exercised in consultation with the three Subscriber members of the Committee

(d) shall be exercised within each Council's own financial and other constitutional requirement

Part One - Shareholder Functions of the Committee

1. To approve the business plan and budget of LEPCo/Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) and any required variations

2. Ensuring that LEPCo/ ECW deliver against their business plan and budget, holding them to account for such delivery and directing the LEPCO/ECW Board to take remedial action where necessary;

3. To appoint directors to the LEPCo/ECW Board

4. To approve any capital expenditure to be made in excess of £100k unless agreed under the business plan
5. To approve the entering into of any lease or licence for the occupation of land or premises
6. To approve the appointment of members of LEPCo/ECW management team
7. To approve the entering into of any contract in excess of £100k unless agreed under the Business Plan
8. To approve the entering into or giving of any loan, guarantee, surety or indemnity by LEPCo/ECW other than the giving of grant by LEPCo/ECW as part of its business plan
9. To approve the opening or closing of any bank account by the Company
10. To approve any changes to the Articles of Association of the Company
11. To approve any staffing or other material policy changes or new policies to be implemented

Part Two - Other Functions of the Committee

1. To receive reports from the Business Advisory Board, any Sub Committee of the Joint Committee and the Growth Directors (management) Group.
2. Any time review and agree proposed changes to the Functions of the Committee and seek approval of the same from the three Councils.
3. To agree and approve any proposed governance and or reporting structure that the Committee sees fit.

Equality Analysis (EA) Form

(formally known as Equality Impact Assessment)



Appendix D

Cheshire+
Warrington

This is an equality analysis of the proposal for the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority and associated devolution deal.

Sections in this form:

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure

Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

Section 3 – Who will be affected?

Section 4 – Consultation and engagement

Section 5 – Equality analysis

Section 6 – Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Section 7 – Monitoring and review

Section 8 – Help and support

This form has been completed in conjunction with reading the EA Guidance from each Council. For more information on EA's, please see the links below.

- Cheshire East Council - [Equality Analysis Impact Assessments](#)
- Cheshire West and Chester Council - [Equality Analysis | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- Warrington Borough Council - [Equality, diversity and inclusion | warrington.gov.uk](#)

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function, or procedure

Title of the EA	Devolution – The set up of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority
Assessment lead officer	Gemma Davies (Growth Director, Cheshire West and Chester Council)
Councils	Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council & Warrington Borough Council
Date of assessment	August 2025
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function, or procedure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the service, strategy, function, or procedure <p>Cheshire and Warrington has been selected by government as one of six areas in England included within its Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). Part of the government's commitment to expanding devolution to all parts of England – as set out in its 2024 Devolution White Paper – the DPP identifies those areas that could form the next wave of strategic mayoral authorities, benefitting from similar devolved powers and investment to the 15 mayoral authorities already established. Subject to statutory consultation, ratification by individual councils, and the laying of an Order in Parliament, this could see the first Mayor for Cheshire and Warrington elected by residents in May 2027.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose or aim. <p>Devolution for Cheshire and Warrington would mean shifting additional powers and funding from central government– enabling local decision-making on various priority areas including transport, business growth, employment and skills and regeneration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the service/strategy/function/procedure being commissioned/changed/decommissioned? <p>Devolution is about national government transferring powers and resources away from central government departments into regions. The establishment of Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would be to facilitate this transition. In</p>

	<p>an announcement made on Thursday 17 July 2025, the government confirmed that Cheshire and Warrington had passed the necessary statutory tests for devolution in the area, subject to the Council's consent.</p>
<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions, or procedures.</p>	<p>Does the proposal link to other areas of the council's work? Could the proposal impact on other services, functions, or procedures?</p> <p>Cheshire East Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolution meets Cheshire East's vision about enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East. It furthers support to the three commitments made by Cheshire East which include unlocking prosperity for all, improving health and wellbeing and being an effective and enabling council Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 Devolution supports the delivery of the The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the population of Cheshire East 2023 - 2028 by meeting these visions which include: engaging effectively with the public, enabling people to be happier, healthier, and independent for longer, supporting people to take personal responsibility and make good lifestyle choices, achieving evidence-based outcomes within a holistic vision of health and wellbeing. <p>Cheshire West and Chester Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolution supports Cheshire West and Chester's Borough Plan, which has 6 missions: Starting well, Tackling hardship and poverty, Resilient people living their best lives, Opportunity in a fair local economy, Neighbourhood pride & Greener communities. Borough Plan 2024-2028 Devolution links in with the Place Plan which is also known as the borough's statutory Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It sets out an ambition to achieve excellence and sustainability in the future to improve the health and wellbeing of residents living in our borough. Cheshire West and Chester Place Plan 2019-2026 (Pubn 1.4.25) Cheshire West and Chester Council also have the West Cheshire Inclusive Economy Action Plan - https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/asset-library/west-cheshire-inclusive-economy-prospectus-july2295.pdf <p>Warrington Borough Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolution aligns with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2024, supporting priorities such as tackling poverty and helping those in greatest need, building empowered, resilient and independent communities, and creating a place that provides opportunity for all. Devolution supports the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028 by improving equity of access to advice and support and helping address inequalities in areas such as employment and housing.

- Devolution will make a significant contribution to Warrington Borough Council's strategic objectives, particularly in improving health and wellbeing - [Living Well in Warrington Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

Further Context and Information

- **English Devolution Bill** - The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will deliver on the government's commitment to widen and deepen devolution across England, providing Mayors with unprecedented powers to deliver growth. The Bill will support the government's plan to rebuild and reform local government, as the foundation for devolution, and give communities stronger tools to shape their local areas. [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - GOV.UK](#)
- **Joint Committee** - The Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee is an executive body formed by Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council. [Key Documents - Cheshire and Warrington Devolution](#)
- **Cheshire and Warrington: Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** – Cheshire and Warrington Local Authorities and Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington are working on a strategy which sets out to deliver our ambitions to be the UK's healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and fastest-growing economy by 2045. [Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable & Inclusive Economic Strategy - Consultation June - early July 2025 - Cheshire and Warrington](#)

Subject to Council's consent, the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority would bring additional powers and resources to the local area, which are likely to impact on a broad range of services, strategies, functions, or procedures.

Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

<p>What do you know?</p>	<p>What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to arrive at the decision to commission/ change/ decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?</p> <p>Devolution is a priority of National Government, Cheshire and Warrington have worked together successfully as a sub region for many years and were selected to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme in 2025. Much of the research conducted locally has been through significant local engagement (see section 4 below) and the statutory consultation.</p> <p>On 11th June 2025 the Government concluded their multi-year Spending Review. As well as outlining the focus for Government investment for both departmental budgets to 2029 and capital investment to 2030, the Review was also a trigger for key national strategies including the Modern Industrial Strategy and 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy. Together these form a suite of key drivers to deliver on the Government’s ‘Plan for Change’ – with a specific focus on “kick-starting economic growth”. It should be noted that a number of other strategies are due to be released later in the year, including business support and skills.</p> <p>A key mechanism underpinning ‘Plan for Change’ is the Government’s continued commitment to “widen and deepen devolution across England... to deliver growth”. July 2025 saw the introduction of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill to Parliament.</p>
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Section 3 – Who will be affected?

<p>Include details of all those affected by the proposal, in some cases, this could be all Cheshire and Warrington residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on Cheshire East’s population can be found here: Current Facts and Figures and Insight Cheshire East Information on Cheshire West and Chester’s population can be found Datasets and statistics and Insight and Intelligence Cheshire West and Chester Council Information on Warrington’s population can be found here: Insight and intelligence, this includes ward demographics. Information by protected characteristic on Warrington’s residents can be found in the Public Sector Equality Duty Report.
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Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	
Age e.g. children, older people etc	<p><i>Source: Mid-year 2024 population estimates, Office for National Statistics</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-15 years: 73,497 (17.4%) 16-64 years: 252,888 (60.0%) 65+ years: 94,913 (22.5%) - higher than England (18.7%). <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-15 years: 63,122 (17.0%) 16-64 years: 228,247 (61.4%) 65+ years: 80,283 (21.6%) – higher than the England average (18.7%) <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-15 years: 39,473 (18.3%) 16-64 years: 133,233 (61.9%) 65+ years: 42,685 (19.8%) – higher than the England average (18.4%)
Carers ¹	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90.9% (344,383) of the population provide no unpaid care 4.9% (18,703) of the population provide 19 hours or less per week of unpaid care

¹ A **carer** is anyone, including children and adults who provides unpaid care for a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The Equality Act 2010 protects carers against direct discrimination or harassment because of their caring responsibilities this is called “discrimination by association”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.6% (6,138) of the population provide 20 to 49 hours per week of unpaid care • 2.5% (9,615) of the population provide 50 or more hours per week of unpaid care <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90.4% (306,894) of the population provide no unpaid care • 4.8% (16,421) of the population provide 19 hours or less per week of unpaid care • 1.9% (6,312) of the population provide 20 to 49 hours per week of unpaid care • 2.9% (9,905) of the population provide 50 or more hours per week of unpaid care <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90.5% (181,242) of the population provide no unpaid care • 4.9% (9,837) of the population provide 19 hours or less per week of unpaid care • 1.9% (3,801) of the population provide 20 to 49 hours per week of unpaid care • 2.7% (5,461) of the population provide 50 or more hours per week of unpaid care
Care experience as a child or young person and care leavers ¹	<p><i>Source: Education statistics at gov.uk</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 542 Children in the Council's care (March 2024) • 187 care leavers aged 22-25 supported by the Council (2024) <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 570 Children in the Council's care (March 2024) • 210 care leavers aged 22-25 supported by the Council (2024)

¹ **Experience of the care system as a child or young person** – This refers to people who have spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g., a children's home) or in kinship care with relatives or friends as a child or young person. A **care leaver** is a young person aged 16-25 years old who has been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, were in care on or after their 16th birthday. The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) highlighted the significant levels of discrimination and disadvantage faced by care experienced people. In January 2024 this Council decided to treat "care experience" as if it were a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010".

	Warrington <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 345 Children in the Council's care (March 2024) 149 care leavers aged 22-25 supported by the Council (2024)
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021) – For comparison, England (17.8%), North West at (19.8%)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17.3% (67,819) of residents have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18.5% (65,897) of residents have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17.3% (37,266) of residents have a disability under the Equality Act 2010
Gender reassignment	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 675 (0.2%) of resident's gender identity is different to that assigned at birth. <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 389 (0.1%) of resident's gender identity is different to that assigned at birth. <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 273 (0.2%) of resident's gender identity is different to that assigned at birth.
Neurodivergent conditions¹	<p><i>Source: (Year group, by type of SEN provision and type of need - 2016 to 2025 DofE)</i></p>

¹ **Neuro divergent conditions** include Autism/Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyspraxia Dyslexia, as well as many other conditions.

	<p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2024/5 there were 1,293 children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2024/5 there were 1,383 children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2024/2025 there were 741 children with Autistic Spectrum disorder
Pregnancy and maternity	<p><i>Source: Live births in England and Wales: birth rates down to local authority areas, ONS Crown Copyright</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,615 live births in 2024 <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,032 live births in 2024 <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,763 live births in 2024
Race/ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers etc.)	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.66% of people identified their ethnic group as 'non-white', this includes 1.8% who identified as 'mixed or multiple'. <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.7% of people identified their ethnic group as 'non-white', this includes 1.5% who identified as 'mixed or multiple'.

	<p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.5% of people identified their ethnic group as 'non-white', this includes 1.6% who identified as 'mixed or multiple'.
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No religion – 150,257 (37.7% of the population) • Christian -216,629 (54.3% of the population) • Buddhist -1,314 (0.3% of the population) • Hindu -2,046 (0.5% of the population) • Jewish – 640 (0.2% of the population) • Muslim – 4,140 (1.0% of the population) • Sikh – 371, (0.1% of the population) • Other religion –1,558 (0.4% of the population) <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No religion – 135,025 (37.8% of the population) • Christian -194,705 (54.5% of the population) • Buddhist -1,074 (0.3% of the population) • Hindu -1,551 (0.4% of the population) • Jewish – 288 (0.1% of the population) • Muslim – 3,506 (1.0% of the population) • Sikh - 251 (0.1% of the population) • Other religion –1,238 (0.3% of the population) <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No religion - 73,042 (34.6% of the population). • Christian - 119,650 (56.7% of the population) • Buddhist - 605 (0.3% of the population)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindu - 1,495 (0.7% of the population) • Jewish - 190 (0.1% of the population) • Muslim - 3,686 (1.7% of the population) • Sikh - 478 (0.2% of the population) • Other religion – 794 (0.4 of the population)
Sex	<p><i>Source: Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, June 2024 (ONS)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49.0% of the population of Cheshire East are male and 51.0% of the population are female. <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48.9% of the population of Cheshire West and Chester are male and 51.1% of the population are female. <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49.4% of the population of Warrington are male and 50.6% of the population are female.
Sexual orientation	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LGB - 8,102 people • Straight or Heterosexual - 301,391 (91.5%) <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LGB - 8,313 people • Straight or Heterosexual - 269,319 (91.2%) <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LGB - 4,349 people • Straight or Heterosexual - 158,539 (91.8%)

<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p><i>Source: ONS Census Data (2021)</i></p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31.6% of Cheshire East residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership • 49.7% are married/ civil partnership <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34.9% of Cheshire West and Chester residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership • 46.9% are married/ civil partnership <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34.9% of Warrington residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership • 46.8% are married/ civil partnership
<p>Rural communities</p>	<p>Rurality is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. In 2001, 23.3% of people lived in rural areas with the combined authority area. In 2025, ONS have re-defined rural areas and categorised this into sub-definitions to take account for proximity to larger centres with services and amenities, as well as taking into account edge of settlement housing developments. An accurate residential count is not available at this time.</p>
<p>Areas of deprivation (include any impact on people living in poverty who may not live in areas identified as deprived)</p>	<p>Areas of Deprivation is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Cheshire East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 34,183 (8%) residents in Cheshire East living in neighbourhoods in Quintile 1 of the IMD 2019. • 9.7% (17,506) of households in the borough are living in fuel poverty • 15.2% (11,024) of children aged under 16 in Cheshire East were living in low-income families in 2023/24. (DWP) <p>Cheshire West and Chester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 55,555 (15.4%) residents in Cheshire West and Chester living in neighbourhoods in Quintile 1 of the IMD 2019.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11.4% (18,147) of households in the borough are living in fuel poverty 17.8% (11,164) of children aged under 16 in Cheshire West and Chester were living in low-income families in 2023/24. (DWP) <p>Warrington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 39,407 (19%) residents in Warrington living in neighbourhoods in Quintile 1 of the IMD. 9% (8,380) of households in the borough are living in fuel poverty 17.6% (6,898) of children aged under 16 in Warrington were living in low-income families in 2023/24. (DWP)
Human rights	<p>The key Human Rights principles are: right to life; prohibition of torture; prohibition of slavery and forced labour; right to liberty and security; right to a fair trial; no punishment without law; right to respect for private and family life; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly and association; right to marry; prohibition of discrimination; protection of property; right to education; right to free election</p>
<p>Health and wellbeing and Health Inequalities (consider the wider determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime and transport, plus impacts on lifestyles and effects on health and care services)</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Combined Cheshire data (at new combined authority geography)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male life expectancy at birth 79.5 at birth, (significantly higher than England – 79.1) - Calculated using ONS LA mid-year population estimates 2021-2023 and ONS LA death registrations 2021-2023 Female life expectancy at birth 83.3 at birth, (Higher but not statistically significantly different to England – 83.0) - Calculated using ONS LA mid-year population estimates 2021-2023 and ONS LA death registrations 2021-2023 Gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities female 8.8 years -life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities' (Slope index of inequality) 2021-2023 Gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities male 11.7 years -life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities' (Slope index of inequality) 2021-2023 Adult smoking prevalence 9.6% - Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), Annual Population survey(APS) (18+) (3-year range)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception children excess weight and obesity prevalence 21.4% - Source: NHS England (NHSE), National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) (3-year range) • Year 6 children excess weight and obesity prevalence 33.9% -Source: NHS England (NHSE), National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) (3-year range)
Procurement/partnership (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)	Not Applicable.

Section 4 – Consultation and Engagement?

Details and date of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>Please include details of all consultation and engagement activities. This should include the date, type of consultation i.e. online survey, focus group, virtual consultation, face to face (please exclude personal information), customer satisfaction surveys etc and the number of respondents. Please include details of any consultation/engagement activities that were carried out with specific groups and/or protected characteristic/s.</p> <p>The government has undertaken a statutory consultation across each of the six areas that are part of the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), looking at the benefits of establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority in the area. (Cheshire and Warrington devolution consultation - GOV.UK) The consultation asked local people about the potential benefits of devolution. The consultation findings helped to inform the government about whether Cheshire and Warrington met the necessary statutory tests, demonstrating the area's readiness to deliver a devolution programme.</p> <p>This consultation closed on 13 April 2025 and the government has confirmed that Cheshire and Warrington has passed the statutory tests and can progress with a devolution agreement.</p> <p>To promote awareness of the government consultation, they undertook a series of engagement and promotional activities, including:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issuing a press notice at the start and towards the end of the consultation for local and regional media • a visit by the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution to Ellesmere Port on 13 February which included meeting with local leaders • a social media advertising campaign promoted the consultation on Facebook and Instagram. Across these platforms, a collective 1.65 million impressions and 9,213 video views were reported • distributing physical assets (2,000 flyers, 200 posters, and 100 hard copy consultation documents) <p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ran an in-person event on 26 March in Crewe. Officials from MHCLG attended a further 4 stakeholder run events to provide information on the consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire and Warrington Business Board • Warrington Annual Property Review • Cheshire Association of Local Councils • Cheshire West Voluntary Action <p>In addition, the three constituent authorities also conducted Community Engagement seeing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 560 individuals engaged • 453 via community pop-ups • 64 people engaged via community events • 43 young people targeted
Feedback received	<p>Please provide a summary of all feedback received. Please include comments relating to specific protected characteristic/s if this has been received. Feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations can also be used to assess the impact of your proposal on different protected groups.</p> <p>The government's consultation attracted 1,663 responses from individuals and organisations across Cheshire and Warrington (1,574 from members of the public and 89 from organisations). There was no feedback relating to impact on people based on their protected characteristics.</p>

	<p>As part of the government-led statutory consultation, respondents in favour of the proposal cited the potential for better public transport and public services. Some respondents raised concerns about whether an agreement could deliver benefits to market towns and rural areas.</p> <p>The top devolution priorities from community engagement were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 44% - transport 28% - economy 16% - environment 12% - skills <p>Further information can be found here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages 67-90 (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee, 25/07/2025 10:30 • Cheshire and Warrington devolution consultation response - GOV.UK
Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback	<p>Please identify any gaps in consultation/engagement activities and actions to fill these gaps?</p> <p>Who else do you need to engage with?</p> <p>If the proposal is likely to have a significant disproportionate impact, you should ensure that you have engaged with those likely to be affected by your proposal.</p> <p>The Government led on this statutory consultation which included personal data collection relating to protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act. They have confirmed that Cheshire and Warrington have met the statutory tests, but have not provided a breakdown of individual responses due to data protection.</p> <p>It is not envisaged that devolution would have any significant disproportionate impact upon any specific group with a protected characteristic. The purpose of devolution is to bring decision making closer to the people being impacted by these decisions and therefore in theory, the principle impacts of devolution are likely to positively enable people with protected characteristics to more equally access services and fully participate in economic opportunities than if those decisions were made by central government departments.</p>

Section 5 – Equality Analysis

Using the information from sections 2 and 3 please assess the impact of your proposal by protected characteristic. In many cases it is likely that your proposal will impact more significantly on some protected characteristics i.e. age, sex, or disability. Your proposal may not impact on some protected characteristics at all i.e. marriage or civil partnership. If this is the case, please state “no impact” on the template.

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a positive, negative or neutral impact, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a high, medium or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

- High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.
- Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence
- Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
Age	Positive	<p>Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 is a core requirement of the Combined Authority.</p> <p>Through local decision making, devolution offers the opportunity for projects and programmes to specifically address age-related challenges in Cheshire and Warrington such as transport, accessibility or skills and employment.</p>	
Carers*	No impact	No negative impact is anticipated, and the Combined Authority has the potential to provide early, targeted support that helps reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for residents with disabilities and their families.	

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
Care Experience as a child or young person and Care Leavers*	Positive	Care leavers and care experienced young adults are recognised nationally as a group that may face significant disadvantage, including increased risks of financial hardship, housing insecurity, and poorer mental health and access to the job market. The flexibility of the Combined Authority to support care leavers and NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) means that bespoke programmes could be supported to address local challenges using appropriate funding mechanisms.	
Disability	Positive	<p>No negative impact is anticipated, and the Combined Authority has the potential to provide early, targeted support that helps reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for residents with disabilities and their families.</p> <p>Positive impacts could be further enhanced by continuing to ensure that information remains available in accessible formats and that the Combined Authority remain responsive to a range of needs, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health-related disabilities. The Combined Authority should remain responsive to local intelligence which highlights those most in need. Transport and housing have the potential to deliver significant accessibility improvements.</p>	
Neurodivergent Conditions*	Positive	The Adult Skills budget will be devolved to the Combined Authority, which will then have the ability to adapt	

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
		programmes to better support people with neurodivergent conditions to access the labour market.	
Gender reassignment	No impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	No impact		
Race/ethnicity	Positive	<p>Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 is a core requirement, and devolution emphasises the importance of promoting equality, challenging discrimination, and supporting community cohesion.</p> <p>The Adult Skills budget will be devolved to the Combined Authority, which will then have the ability to adapt programmes to better support any specific ethnic or protected group to enable them to access employment and skills.</p> <p>If appropriate, the Combined Authority could seek to address barriers to integration or economic inclusion to further support community cohesion.</p>	

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
Religion or belief	No impact		
Sex	Positive	<p>Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 is a core requirement, and devolution emphasises promoting equality, challenging discrimination, and tailoring support to individual needs.</p> <p>Through local decision making, devolution offers the opportunity for projects and programmes to specifically address sex-related challenges in Cheshire and Warrington such as access to high paid jobs in growth sectors and safe public transport.</p>	
Sexual orientation	No impact		
Marriage and civil partnership	No impact		
Rural communities*	Positive	Through local decision making, devolution offers the opportunity for projects and programmes to specifically address rural deprivation and access to services in Cheshire and Warrington.	

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
		The powers and funding available could allow the Mayoral Combined Authority to tailor training, support for adults to access jobs available locally and enhance transport connectivity.	
Areas of deprivation* (include any impact on people living in poverty who may not live in areas identified as deprived)	Positive	Through local decision making, devolution offers the opportunity for projects and programmes to specifically address pockets of deprivation or barriers to services in Cheshire and Warrington. The powers and funding available could allow the Mayoral Combined Authority to tailor training, support for adults to access jobs available locally and enhance transport connectivity.	
Human rights*	No impact	Devolution is inclusive of the key Human Rights principles. Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 is a core requirement, and devolution is expected to promote equality, challenge discrimination, and tailor support to individual circumstances.	
Health and wellbeing and Health Inequalities* (consider the wider determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime and transport, plus	Positive	Devolution aligns with the Council's Plans and Strategies to address health, wellbeing and inequalities. The Mayoral Combined Authority could play a key role in improving health and wellbeing, underpinned by a new bespoke duty in relation to health improvement and health inequalities. This would mean that the Mayoral Combined Authority would need to have regard to the need to	Positive impacts could be supported by continuing to ensure devolution remains inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all groups. The Combined Authority should remain responsive to local

Protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and other areas that may be impacted	Potential Impact Positive/Negative Not Applicable	Summary of Impact.	Actions and recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts.
impacts on lifestyles and effects on health and care services)		improve health, and reduce health inequalities, in the exercise of its functions. Combined with an expectation that the Mayor would be appointed to one or more of the relevant Integrated Care Partnerships in the area, this could help strengthen the focus and increase the join-up of action to address issues around ill health and inequalities across the area.	intelligence which highlights those most in need.
Procurement/partnership* (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)	Neutral	Devolution and the subsequent set up of the Combined Authority will follow all the procedures and guidance as laid out by the Statutory Instrument.	

* **NOTE: This is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.**

Section 6 – Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Mitigation	What can you do to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts?
<p>Please provide justification for the proposal if negative impacts have been identified? Are there any actions that could be undertaken to mitigate, reduce or remove negative impacts?</p> <p>Have all available options been explored? Please include details of alternative options and why they couldn't be considered? Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?</p>	<p>There are no negative impacts identified. The proposed plan and service model for a Combined Authority are principally a devolution of powers and public money from central government departments.</p> <p>Impacts will be regularly monitored once the Combined Authority is in place, as detailed in Section 7 of this form.</p> <p>The alternative is not to progress with devolution via the establishment of Combined Authority. This would mean that the powers and funding will remain with central government departments and there would be no access to some funding streams such as Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) which are restricted to established Combined Authorities. If devolution were not to take place, the status quo would remain but there is a risk that understanding of the needs of protected groups in the local area may not be fully understood in the longer term.</p> <p>The set up of a Combined Authority allows residents to elect a Mayor, with a mandate that can take forward the needs of the sub-region. The Mayor would also take a seat at the Prime Minister's Council of Nations and Regions as well as the Deputy Prime Minister's Mayoral Council, which would give the area a stronger voice with the government. Cheshire and Warrington is currently one of only 3 areas in the North of England not currently represented.</p>

Section 7 - Monitoring and review

How will the impact of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function, or procedure be monitored? How will actions to mitigate negative impacts be monitored? Date for review of the EA	
Details of monitoring activities	<p>Please include details of how the impact of the proposal will be monitored e.g. performance monitoring, analysis of complaints, equality monitoring data etc. Monitoring should include information on whether actions to mitigate negative impacts have achieved their desired outcome.</p> <p>The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will be required to undertake appropriate monitoring to assess quality and impact. This will include performance data, equality monitoring, and other relevant indicators in line with devolved funding streams requirements. All ongoing monitoring activities will be carried out in accordance with the terms agreed once the Combined Authority has been established and will inform ongoing service development.</p>
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EA	<p>Please include the date, responsible officer, and department. It is recommended that the EA be reviewed approximately 12 months after it has been signed off.</p> <p>Date: August 2026 Responsible Officer: Gemma Davies Department: Growth Director, Cheshire West and Chester Council</p>

Section 8 - Help and support.

For support and advice please contact:

Cheshire East Council: equalityandinclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Cheshire West and Chester Council: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Warrington Borough Council: equalities@warrington.gov.uk



Cheshire +
Warrington

Communications and engagement highlight report

Bringing better jobs,
better transport,
smarter investment
- **now's**
the time.

August 2025



Background



Our communications strategy is focused on ensuring that regional stakeholders are informed of the process, how they get involved, and what they can influence.

We have had a planned approach to engaging core stakeholders since September 2024, and we have engaged, at key milestones, with councillors, staff, MPs, relevant committees/boards, businesses, and partner organisations, as well as our residents through a programme of community engagement.

Activity to date – highlights



- Promotion of the government's consultation
- **Launch of ambassador programme** – sharing testimonials and continued engagement with identified ambassadors
- **Devolution newsletter** – [first issue July 2025](#)
- **Social media** – improving visibility/engagement across Cheshire and Warrington devolution accounts, myth-busting/dispelling misinformation, sharing FAQs etc.
- **Internal communications** – with staff across the three councils/ECW
- **Business engagement** – in partnership with the Business Advisory Board/ECW
- **Member engagement** – programme of activity across three councils/town and parish councils

Communications and engagement –

Key insights



Media coverage

- **52** pieces of news coverage
- **1.07 million** estimated views

Social media

- **1.1 million** impressions
- **386.7k** total reach

Cheshire and Warrington devolution website

- 8.8k active users

Page views:

- [Homepage](#) – 8.2k
- [Devolution](#) – 1.8k
- [Get involved](#) – 1.2k
- [Latest updates](#) – 1k

Social media – organic posts

LinkedIn (July/August):

- 9.5k impressions
- 4.8k members reached
- 6.4% engagement rate
- Followers have grown by 74 to 718
- Account growth is steady, with a positive monthly follower increase

Facebook (July/August):

- 752k impressions (up by 297%*)
- 310k reach (up by 281%*)
- 438 interactions

*all % figures compared to May/June



Social media – paid for advertising



Promotion of devolution explainer animation

- 51.4k video plays
- 34.8k reach
- 68.2k impressions

Younger people campaign

- Targeting people aged 21 to 40
- 437k reach
- 957k impressions
- 1k link clicks

'Now is the time' campaign

- Ongoing – running a series of ads from 8 August until 13 September 2025
- Initial ad set is targeting people aged 18 to 30
- Ads will run across META (Facebook/Instagram) and LinkedIn – currently only META is running to ensure best cost per result and good budget utilisation
- 36.8k reach
- 95.4k impressions
- 86 link clicks
- Campaign will be evaluated on 26 August and adjusted accordingly

Community engagement programme



Community engagement is a key part of our overall communications and engagement strategy.

To support with this work, we commissioned an agency – **Social** – to facilitate a programme of community engagement across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington, with a key focus on targeted youth engagement.

During some of our events, we asked our residents about their thoughts on devolution – [Watch the video on the Cheshire and Warrington website](#)

Community engagement programme

We have directly engaged with

- 560 individuals
- 453 via community pop-up events
- 64 people engaged via community events
- 43 young people targeted

Top devolution priorities from community engagement

44% - transport

28% - economy

16% - environment

12% - skills



Next steps

- Following this initial phase of communications and engagement activity, we have refreshed our strategy
- We have sharpened our approach to focus on key audiences, including younger adults, elected members, and other communities of influence, and giving key advocates the opportunity to have their voice heard
- We are continuing with myth busting/work to dispel misinformation – this is still common in the feedback we receive, so we must be relentless in correcting misinformation/raising awareness of the benefits of devolution
- Work is focusing on an intensive PR campaign and broadening our community and member engagement
- **This means...**

Updated strategy



- **Residents, businesses and partners** will understand what devolution is and isn't, the potential benefits, the process and timeline, and how it affects them
- **Staff** will understand what devolution is and isn't, how it affects their roles, the process, and what it means for their organisation
- **Members** will understand what devolution means for their authority and area, and the stages of the devolution process and decision-making, so they are equipped and supported to talk about devolution using consistent messaging
- **Members** will see the feedback of residents, businesses and communities in the evidence base for decision making and devolution priorities
- **All stakeholders** will know how to get involved and have their say and will be able to see that their responses are reflected in local decision-making

OPEN

Council

Date: 17 September 2025

The Council's Decision-Making Arrangements

Report of: Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Report Reference No: C/11/25-26

All Council wards are affected

For Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 To secure a resolution of Council upon whether the Council should move to a Leader and Cabinet form of decision-making, with effect from the Council's Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2026.

Executive Summary

- 2 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill proposes a number of changes and new powers including devolution and the creation of new strategic authorities. In addition, for local government, it proposes the abolition of the Committee system and that all local authorities which operate committee systems of decision-making will be required to move to Leader and Cabinet systems within one year of enactment of legislation.
- 3 It is anticipated that the effective date of the legislation will be in or around Autumn 2025, thereby necessitating a change to the Council's decision-making arrangements around Autumn 2026. This Council, and other local authorities will have no choice but to implement new Leader and Cabinet arrangements by the deadline, but there are clear and important benefits in doing so in advance of the legislative deadline.

- 4 The Council may choose to move to a Leader and Cabinet system before that date within the requirements of existing legislation, and this report seeks a resolution to that effect, if this is the will of Council. Such a decision would proactively and positively respond to the non-statutory Best Value Notice received in May 2025 which requires the Council to ensure it has effective governance processes in place that enable decisions and improvements to be made at pace; and also to the LGA Peer Review recommendation to urgently review its decision-making framework, streamline current decision-making arrangements, and give more time and emphasis to scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is recommended to resolve to:

1. Approve a change in the Council's governance arrangements from a Committee System to a Leader and Cabinet system, pursuant to Section 9K of the Local Government Act 2000, with this change taking effect at the Council's Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2026;
- and, subject to Council resolving to agree recommendation 1;
2. Agree the design principles set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
 3. Appoint a member Task and Finish Group:
 - a. the membership of which to be determined by the Council's political group leaders, which will be empowered to drive-forward necessary arrangements associated with the introduction of a Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making; and
 - b. with powers to make recommendations to the Council's Corporate Policy Committee upon required constitutional and other arrangements related to this.
 4. Note the key constitutional documents and tasks, as set out at Appendix 3 to this report, which will need to be prepared in advance of the formal change of governance arrangements being implemented.
 5. Approve a budget of no more than £194,180 to fund the project, and for this to be funded from the Council's agreed reserve for Transformation created at July Full Council and the associated 2025/26 supplementary estimate and reserves virement of £136,091 in line with the Financial Procedure Rules (FPR).

Background

- 5 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill was introduced on 10 July 2025 by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government:

[English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

- 6 Section 2 (b)(1A) of Schedule 25 of the Bill will amend Section 9K of the Local Government Act 2000 requiring local authorities operating committee systems to cease do so and to start to operate Leader and Cabinet executive systems no later than one year after the date upon which the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2025 takes effect.

- 7 In a letter of 10 July 2025 from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, to Council Leaders and Chief Executives, the Minister stated:

“.....we must also simplify local governance too. The Bill will introduce new measures to improve local government structures and accountability. It will streamline local authority governance arrangements by abolishing the “committee system” still used by a small number of councils, and preventing the creation of any new local authority Mayors, instead standardising to the leader and cabinet model of executive governance. This will provide clear accountability and remove duplication, delivering more efficient decision making and effective delivery for places.”

- 8 Guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 10 July 2025:

[English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

includes the following under the heading “Local Government”:

“1B. Local authority governance

“Previously, councils in England were able to choose between 3 different governance models: Mayor and Cabinet, Leader and Cabinet, and the committee system. As a result, councils are left with complicated governance arrangements.

“The Bill will move away from this arrangement by abolishing the committee system and preventing the creation of any new local authority Mayors. Those councils operating a committee system will move to operate a leader and cabinet model, whilst the remaining

councils with existing Mayors will have the option to continue with an elected Mayor, or transition to a leader (and therefore the leader and cabinet model) should they wish.

“The committee system can be unclear, duplicative and wasteful. Requiring all councils which operate the committee system to transition to the leader and cabinet model (which the vast majority of councils currently operate) will simplify the governance system and ensure all councils operate an executive form of governance. This will provide clarity on responsibility and accountability and improve efficiency in decision making. To avoid the potential confusion caused by the establishment of new Mayors for Strategic Authorities and for councils, we will prevent the establishment of any new council mayoralities, but we will not abolish the existing 13 council mayoralities.

“For the majority of councils this means no change, as around 80% of councils already operate a Leader and Cabinet model, and the majority of councils currently operating a committee system would be moving to leader and cabinet as part of local government reorganisation.

“Councils still operating the committee system who are not part of local government reorganisation will be given one year from the date of the legislation coming into force to make the transition”.

- 9 The effective date of the legislation is expected to be in or around Autumn 2025, thereby requiring the change of decision-making arrangements to be implemented by Autumn 2026.
- 10 Irrespective of the legislation, Section 9K of the Local Government Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”) empowers local authorities to make such changes to their decision-making arrangements of their own volition. Section 9KC of the 2000 Act requires “a resolution of a local authority” (a simple majority) to make the change. Under these powers, a resolution passed by a local authority may then be implemented only during the first annual meeting of the local authority which is held after the resolution is passed; or a later annual meeting of the local authority specified in the resolution. In practice, if Council resolves to move to a Leader and Cabinet system of governance, this means that the change must take place at the Council’s Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2026.
- 11 Whilst a remote consideration (it is highly unlikely that, once Council had resolved to move to a Leader and Cabinet system, it would then chose to reverse this prior to the legislation taking effect which would compel it to do so anyway), once a local authority has passed a resolution under Section 9KC of the 2000 Act, it may not pass another resolution to change from one form of governance to another, or to change to a different form of executive for five years. However, local

authorities are permitted under the legislation to make a proposal to the Secretary of State within that period to change their governance arrangements, but must specify how such a change is likely to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of some or all of the people who live or work in the area of the local authority.

Changing decision-making arrangements in advance of the legislation

- 12 It is right for careful thought to be given to the benefits or otherwise of making changes to the Council's decision-making arrangements in advance of being required by legislation to do so. Appendix 1 to this report sets out some key points to consider in making this judgement, including the recommendations made following the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge with regard to urgently reviewing and streamlining its current decision-making framework and arrangements. The non-statutory Best Value Notice received in May 2025, stated that the Council should *"ensure that it has effective corporate governance and scrutiny processes that enable decisions and improvements to be made at pace, and performance to be accurately monitored. This should include improvements to the council's committee system as recommended by the LGA following its corporate peer challenge."*
- 13 If Council agrees that a change to its governance arrangements should be made, this taking effect at the Council's Annual General Meeting on 13 May 2026, much work will need to be done to achieve this. Members and officers will need to work together, collaboratively, to ensure that this ambitious proposal can be met.
- 14 Whilst it will be most important to ensure that the Council has robust and effective arrangements in place on the date of any change, it should be accepted that such arrangements must be reviewed, post implementation, to ensure that necessary changes and improvements are quickly made, once identified.
- 15 The work which would need to be completed, in time for the 2026 Annual General Meeting, should Council be minded to make this change, will be "fast-paced". Special and unscheduled meetings of the Corporate Policy Committee and Council would be likely to be required to ensure deadlines are met.
- 16 The work of the proposed Task and Finish Group would be time-limited and would cease upon agreement by Council of the requisite constitutional and other arrangements which need to be put in place to facilitate Leader and Cabinet decision-making.

Design Principles

- 17 Proposed Design Principles for the new arrangements are set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

Consultation and Engagement

- 18 There is no requirement to consult, in respect of the options set out in this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 19 To enable Council to determine whether it wishes to move to a Leader and Cabinet form of decision making in advance of being compelled to do so under forthcoming legislation. The reasons which support the recommendations are set out in the report.

Other Options Considered

- 20 To await the deadline date by which the legislation will compel the Council to move to a Leader and Cabinet form of decision-making governance.
- 21 If the Council resolved not to change its decision-making arrangements prior to the deadline date set out in the legislation, this change would be required to take place in any event, within around three committee cycles, halfway through the municipal year. This would be undesirable from an organisational perspective and might lead to confusion amongst members of the public and the Council's partners.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The change would be made as a requirement of legislation, during the same municipal year.	The benefits of an early change to the Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making, as set out in this report, would not be realised quickly.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 22 The legal implications of this decision are set out within this report. Changes to the Council's governance arrangements are a matter for decision of full Council. As noted within the report, the bill is not in force at the present time and so any proposed changes are based upon earlier legislation. However, once the new legislation is implemented, as currently worded, there will be a duty to move to a Leader and Cabinet model and therefore a failure to resolve to make changes at this time will result in its imposition by law in due course. The risks associated with the decision and any failure to progress, are set out below.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 23 The proposal sits outside the Council's approved budget. As such it requires decisions on the funding of proposals.
- 24 There are currently no expected ongoing costs or savings associated with the change in governance model proposed reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 25 Should there be any costs or savings arising from a final governance model these must be subject to future reporting, be that standalone or transparently reported in the budget setting reports to both Corporate Policy Committee and Budget Council.
- 26 Any financial changes are revenue in nature and borne by the General Fund. It is therefore important that the final model of governance meets the value-for-money tests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 27 Additional, dedicated officer resource is required to undertake the governance review. It would be best practice to obtain external assurance over the final proposals alongside a period of independent scrutiny through wider member engagement.
- 28 The additional capacity would be timebound in nature until the adoption of a new governance model at Annual Council in May 2026.
- 29 The table overleaf outlines the costs estimated for the change in governance and informs the recommendations in this report around supplementary estimates and reserves virements. Given the level of uncertainty on rates for backfill, a 20% contingency has been calculated. This should require additional decision reporting from the MO and CFO for its use, in the public domain, or through Corporate Policy Committee and Finance Sub-Committee should they be available in a timely manner to progress the project works.

- 30 To note, the estimated costs associated with these decisions are within the delegations of the Interim Director of Law and Governance and the Executive Director of Resources but, for speed, these delegations are being rolled up to Full Council as the sovereign body for decision making.

Item	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
Backfill at Head of Service 1st October 2025 - 31st May 2026	61,091	25,726	86,816
External Support	75,000	-	75,000
SUBTOTAL	136,091	25,726	161,816
Contingency at 20%	27,218	5,145	32,363
TOTAL	163,309	30,871	194,180

Human Resources

- 31 When the Council moved to the committee system of decision-making, there was an approximate increase of 30% in decision-making meetings. Whilst Democratic Services vacancies were held open, there was a significant pressure on this resource, which will be removed upon a change to the Leader and Cabinet model.

Risk Management

- 32 Legislation is not enacted: highly unlikely now that the Bill has embarked upon its Parliamentary journey. If the legislation did not come into being, the Council could not resolve to adopt a different model of executive arrangements, or to retain/go back to the committee system for 5 years, without the consent of the Secretary of State.
- 33 The risk of a lack of progress and delivery of the Council's improvement activity at the required pace could result in further measures and an escalation from MHCLG beyond the non-statutory Best Value Notice issued in May 2025. This is identified as a risk and will be added to the Strategic Risk Register.

Impact on other Committees

- 34 Clearly, any decision of Council to move to a Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making would result in the dissolution of the existing service committee structure, with decisions which are currently being made by those committees, being made by a Cabinet and, possibly, by individual Cabinet members.

Policy

- 35 The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 includes a commitment to be an effective and enabling council with reference to effective and responsive governance, compliance and evidence-based decision-making. The Council understands the improvements it needs to make and has made progress in addressing the challenges with a focus on delivering value for money, continuous improvement and better outcomes for Cheshire East's residents.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 36 The assessment of impact upon Cheshire East communities who share one or more protected characteristic will be undertaken during the future stages of change for the local authority. Nationally an assessment of impact has been undertaken and can be found here [hcb283_ia.pdf](#).

Other Implications

- 37 There are no identifiable additional implications at this stage, but the project will be kept under review and such implications will be carefully considered as and when they arise.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brian Reed Brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendices 1,2 and 3, which set out: issues for Council to take into account when making its decision, proposed design principles and key constitutional documents and tasks which would need to be adopted and undertaken in advance of any move to a Leader and Cabinet model.
Background Papers:	Legislation, as referred to in the body of this report.

Appendix 1

Issues to take into account when deciding whether to make changes to the Council's decision-making arrangements in advance of being required by legislation to do so

- (a) As legislation will compel the Council to change to a Leader and Cabinet form of decision-making by around November 2026, what benefit would there be in waiting for the legislation to trigger the change?
- (b) It is clear that, from an organisational and decision-making perspective, the best time to make such a change is at the Council's Annual General meeting, which marks the beginning of the Municipal Year. At this meeting, the Council's Committees are appointed, and its Calendar of Meetings is agreed. There would seem to be little point in appointing committees to operate under a committee system of governance which, within around three cycles of meetings, would need to change to a Leader and Cabinet system. Indeed, this could lead to confusion and may result in organisational challenges.
- (c) The Council's Annual General Meeting elects the Council's Leader and Deputy Leader for the Municipal Year. Again, appointing to these offices, which have no formal decision-making powers, then to change to a completely different system of governance in which the Leader and Cabinet members would have individual decision-making powers, would appear to have little point and could lead to confusion amongst officers, members of the public, and possibly elected members.
- (d) The current budgetary cycle is founded upon the determinations of service committees in respect of the MTFS, with recommendations being made to the Corporate Policy Committee, and then on to Council. It would seem that there would be significant complexity and potential confusion if these arrangements had to change during the course of the Municipal Year, rather than at the beginning of the year.

(e) The LGA Peer Challenge

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/your-council/cheshire-east-corporate-peer-challenge-final-issued-report.pdf>

recommended that the Council should:

- (i) urgently review its decision-making framework;
- (ii) streamline current decision-making arrangements to avoid siloed working across committees, ensure that committees are working through effective work programmes, and reduce confusion and lost capacity. It stated that this should include consideration of governance structures, schemes of delegation.....etc;
- (iii) give more time and emphasis to scrutiny across the Council

Whilst a task and finish group gave detailed consideration to potential solutions which would address these recommendations, no progress has been made so far in making tangible changes to the Council's decision-making arrangements.

Further work could be undertaken to address the recommendations, but careful consideration needs to be given to whether utilising the Council's officer and member resource, which is able to make recommendations upon governance changes for this purpose, represents the best approach. Such resource would effectively be diluted, as it would partly be seeking to transform and improve existing arrangements, which would be in place for a limited time, at the same time as seeking to make recommendations upon the creation of the best possible Leader and Cabinet arrangements, required to be introduced under the emerging legislation.

- (f) As referred to in paragraph 7 of this report, the letter of 10 July 2025 from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to Council Leaders and Chief Executives recognises that the introduction of Leader and Cabinet models of decision-making will streamline local authority governance arrangements, will provide clear accountability, and will remove duplication, delivering more efficient decision making and effective delivery for places.

- (g) As referred to in paragraph 7 of this report, the guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 10 July 2025 states that *the committee system can be unclear, duplicative and wasteful; further, that a move to the Leader and Cabinet system will simplify governance, providing clarity on responsibility and accountability and improve efficiency in decision making.*
- (h) Should Council choose to do so, a resolution to move to a Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making could be seen, by the LGA, the Assurance Panel, and MHCLG, as a decisive step by the Council in addressing the above recommendations, as well as moving to a change in decision-making ahead of being required to do so by legislation.
- (i) It would seem to be beneficial to introduce new decision-making arrangements one full Municipal Year ahead of the proposed establishment of the Combined Mayoral Authority. This would embed new decision-making arrangements in Cheshire East around six months ahead of the requirement in legislation, providing a preferential approach.

Proposed Design Principles

Openness

The Council's decision-making and governance arrangements will be easy to understand and will include arrangements that enable people to easily find out about how decisions are made and when forthcoming decisions will be made.

Meetings will be held in public in accordance with legislation. However, as is the case in all local government decision-making, there will be rare occasions upon which a particular report (or part) is private or confidential. In these instances, the decision will need to be made in private and members of the public will not be able to be present during the meeting (or part of it).

There will be the opportunity for Councillors and members of the public to ask questions at public decision-making meetings, and it will be clear how complaints can be made about services, and the behaviour of Members.

Quick Decision Making

The Council's arrangements will ensure that decision-making is streamlined and that decisions are made quickly, to meet the needs of the Council and local community. The number of decision-making bodies and the number of meetings will be kept to a minimum, and technology will be used to provide instant access to information and avoid unnecessary paperwork. Paper copies will, exceptionally, be provided upon request by Members. There will be a process to deal with urgent decisions, which will be clear and, in most cases, open to the public. The need to make urgent decisions is, however, rare.

Decision-making will be driven through the use of effective work-programming

Affordability

Through the use of technology and a quick, streamlined decision-making process, the cost of the Council's arrangements will be kept to a minimum.

Legal Requirements and Financial Considerations

The Council must comply with all legal requirements and must take account of financial matters and relevant legislation. Where required, legal and financial advice will be available to all meetings, to make sure that these requirements are met. The Council will also follow best practice.

A Modern Decision-Making System

The Council's arrangements will be modern, open and transparent and will not be siloed. Public participation will be encouraged. There will be the opportunity for public speaking and petitions. There will also be a work programme outlining what decisions will be made and by which decision-making body.

Clarity and efficiency

The Council's decision-making arrangements will reduce confusion and lost capacity. Officers seeking formal decisions will be clear in respect of reporting arrangements and of how to obtain decisions, with appropriate delegation of decision-making powers to officers.

Overview and scrutiny

There will be appropriate Scrutiny arrangements which will comply with legislation, and which will make provision for future proposed decisions to be scrutinised and influenced. The importance of scrutiny will be championed by officers and Members. Forward-planning and agenda-setting will be improved and prioritised so as to maximise Member input into the decision-making process.

Appendix 3

The key constitutional documents and tasks which will need to be prepared and worked upon in advance of the formal change of governance arrangements being implemented

The following documents are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the documents in question:

1. Cabinet member decision-making powers (for the Leader to determine but potential options can be prepared in advance)/local choice functions.
2. Cabinet member decision-making arrangements
3. Cabinet Procedure Rules.
4. Meeting dates for Cabinet.
5. Forward Plan arrangements.
6. Officer delegated powers and urgency provisions.
7. Scrutiny committee arrangements and procedure rules (including call-in provisions). Essential focus on robust scrutiny arrangements to ensure executive is held to account, and for scrutiny committees to undertake roles in policy development/pre-scrutiny.
8. Members' Allowances Scheme (Independent Remuneration Panel would need to undertake a review based on the agreed arrangements, so the Scheme might not be agreed in advance of the transition to the new arrangements).
9. Area Committee arrangements. Important to have a focus on area and locality working, and the options for this. Desirable to have these in place from the outset but could potentially be developed following the change.
10. Commitment to work with town and parish councils on the "double-devolution" agenda.
11. Style of reports to Cabinet and Cabinet Members.
12. Council committee structure generally.
13. Leader/Deputy and Cabinet member role descriptions.
14. Local Choice Functions

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