Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Agenda

Date:	**Tuesday, 13th April, 2021**
Time:	**1.00 pm**
Venue:	**Virtual Meeting**

For anybody wishing to view the meeting please click on the link below:

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Or dial in via telephone: 141 020 3321 5200 and input Conference ID: 129 517 29# when prompted.

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and in the 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 and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Public Speaking Time/Open Session - Virtual Meetings**

    In accordance with paragraph 3.33 of the Cabinet Procedure Rules, a period of 10 minutes is allocated for members of the public to address the meeting on any matter relevant to the work of the Cabinet. Individual members of the public may speak for up to two minutes. The Chairman or person presiding will have discretion to vary this requirement where he/she considers it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to ask a question or make a statement at the meeting should provide at least three clear working days' notice in writing and should include the question with that notice. This will enable an informed answer to be given.

4.   **Questions to Cabinet Members - Virtual Meetings**

A period of 20 minutes is allocated for questions to be put to Cabinet Members by members of the Council. A maximum period of two minutes will be allowed for each member wishing to ask a question. The Leader will have discretion to vary this requirement where he considers it appropriate. Members wishing to ask a question at the meeting should register to do so in writing by not later than 4.00 pm on the Friday in the week preceding the meeting. Members should include the general topic their question will relate to and indicate if it relates to an item on the agenda. Questions must relate to the powers, duties or responsibilities of the Cabinet. Questions put to Cabinet Members must relate to their portfolio responsibilities.

Where a question relates to a matter which appears on the agenda, the Leader may allow the question to be asked at the beginning of consideration of that item.

5.   **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2021.

6.   **Covid-19 - Update on Response and Recovery** (Pages 13 - 42)

To consider an update report on the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

7.   **Household Waste Recycling Centre Provision** (Pages 43 - 182)

To consider a report on the provision of Household Waste Recycling Centres in Cheshire East.

8.   **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025** (Pages 183 - 252)

To consider a report on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025.

9.   **Consultation on the Assistive Technology Charging Policy** (Pages 253 - 260)

To consider a report seeking authority to consult on a proposed change to the Assistive Technology charging policy.

10.   **Tree Risk Management Strategy** (Pages 261 - 292)

To consider a report seeking approval of a Tree Risk Management Strategy.

11.   **Cheshire Archives: A Story Shared** (Pages 293 - 300)

To consider a report which provides an update to the 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project and provides the context for submission of a second stage application to National Lottery Heritage Fund.

12. **Cheshire East Council Corporate Peer Challenge Report - One Year On** (Pages 301 - 332)

To consider a report on progress to date, and the delivery of key actions to respond to the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations.

13. **Refreshed Equality Objectives and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025** (Pages 333 - 378)

To consider a report on refreshed equality objectives and an updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

Membership: Councillors C Browne (Vice-Chairman), S Corcoran (Chairman), L Crane, K Flavell, T Fox, L Jeuda, N Mannion, J Rhodes, A Stott and M Warren

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Cabinet**
held on Tuesday, 9th March, 2021

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chairman)
Councillor C Browne (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Crane, K Flavell, T Fox, L Jeuda, N Mannion, J Rhodes, A Stott
and M Warren

Councillors in attendance
Councillors Q Abel, S Akers Smith, R Bailey, J Barber, M Benson,
L Braithwaite, S Brookfield, D Brown, J Buckley, C Bulman, J Clowes,
A Critchley, T Dean, D Edwardes, B Evans, H Faddes, J P Findlow,
R Fletcher, S Gardiner, P Groves, S Holland, M Houston, M Hunter,
D Jefferay, A Kolker, A Moran, D Murphy, J Nicholas, K Parkinson, S Pochin,
B Puddicombe, J Saunders, M Simon, L Smith, J Weatherill, P Williams and
J Wray.

Officers in attendance
Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place
Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services
Jill Broomhall, Direct of Adult Social Care
Nichola Thompson, Director of Commissioning
Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Paul Mountford, Executive Democratic Services Officer

90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

91 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION - VIRTUAL MEETINGS

David Mayers asked about the format and timescale of the speed
management strategy review and how members of the public could be
involved.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that the speed
management strategy review was in its early stages. It was anticipated
that a wide range of stakeholders would be included in the review and it
was hoped that the new Strategy would be ready for implementation in the
Spring of 2022.

Robert Douglas referred to an email from the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste, advising residents that instead of using the recycling site, they could take items to charity shops.

The Portfolio Holder apologised if her message had been misunderstood. Her intention had been to ask residents to think carefully before simply throwing away items that charity shops could put to good use. Any general waste items would continue to be accepted at all the Council's household waste recycling centres.

Richard Hamilton asked for an update on the review of the crossings on the Middlewich Road/London Road in Elworth, and an indication of when the Toucan crossing at School Lane, Sandbach could be implemented.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste undertook to provide a written response.

92 **QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS - VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

Councillor S Akers Smith asked if the Council would review its policy regarding paths on housing estates with a view to removing barriers to accessibility to allow both cycling and walking, and providing appropriate signage to support all travel modes.

The Deputy Leader responded that the Council's preference would be against the use of access controls unless there was a persistent and significant problem of antisocial moped or motorcycle usage or regular incursions leading to fly-tipping. Where a level of access control was required, the provision of bollards would be considered that still allowed all types of cycle and mobility scooter to gain access. He would advise against unnecessary advisory signing as it led to additional maintenance costs and had a very limited legal basis and it problematic to enforce effectively.

Councillor R Bailey referred to her Notice of Motion at the February Council meeting asking for an open letter or media release from the Mayor and group leaders thanking all those who had worked in reponse to the Covid pandemic.

The Leader responded that a press release would be released shortly and he took the opportunity of this meeting to praise the local vaccination programme.

Councillor M Benson referred to the Active Travel tranche 1 scheme for Sandbach and asked when a decision would be taken to abandon the scheme. He also referred to the revised 20mph speed limits proposed for Sandbach and sought an indication as to when a decision would be taken on that proposal.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that the feedback from the consultation on the scheme was being reviewed and a decision would be made in the coming weeks. She added that the intention was not to abandon the scheme but to make changes.

Councillor J Buckley asked how much of the waste collected by the Council was recyclable, garden or residual waste. She asked if a task and finish group could be set up to consider how to encourage residents to reduce waste.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste provided a breakdown between garden/food, recycled and residual waste, and suggested that the question of a task and finish group be raised with the appropriate committee under the new committee system.

Councillor R Fletcher referred to the problem of flooding in Linley Lane, Alsager and asked if the Council would arrange a meeting with the five landowners to discuss the matter.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor S Gardiner asked if the way in which parking contravention notices were being issued had changed in response to Covid Regulations.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor P Groves referred to the need for a stimulus to attract shoppers and visitors back into town centres. He suggested that free parking be provided for the months of May, June and July this year.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that the Council was working with town councils on a town centre recovery plan. 30th March was Cheshire Day and the Council would be using the event to mount a campaign to promote towns throughout the Borough. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste added that the Council would have to consider carefully the implications of any parking proposals for the highways budget.

Councillor S Holland asked for a breakdown of the £4m cost of a replacement Household Waste Recycling Centre for Congleton.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor D Murphy referred to the possible closure of the household waste recycling centre in Congleton and asked if the Council had produced an equality impact statement on the effect of the closure on residents who did not have use of a vehicle.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that this issue was due to be considered by the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15th March, and an impact statement was included with the agenda papers.

Councillor S Pochin raised a number of questions in relation to the ARG funding process, and also asked what the Council was doing to support Alderley Park in securing continuance of their Enterprise Zone status past March 2021.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration undertook to provide a written response, and to make it available to other members.

Councillor P Williams referred to the Council's engatement with residents through various consultations and asked what could be done to allay what seemed to him to be a lack of public confidence in the consultation process.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Communication responded that the Council's approach to consultation and engagement had been affected recently by Covid-19 restrictions and consultations were currently undertaken predominantly online. This still enabled the Council to obtain valuable feedback from residents and other stakeholders. She assured Councillor Williams that all feedback was considered and taken into account. The Leader referred to the impact that the consultation response had made on the Corporate Plan and the Budget.

93 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

   RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

94 **COVID-19 - UPDATE ON RESPONSE AND RECOVERY**

Cabinet considered an update report on the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leader reported that the rate of cases in Cheshire East had fallen further since the report was written and was now under 70 per 100,000. He also reported that the number of hospital admissions had fallen significantly, which he attributed to the vaccination programme. He thanked all those involved with the vaccination programme, both medical professionals and volunteers.

The Leader also reported that following the throttling back of the vaccination supply in Cheshire East by the Government to enable other areas to catch up, the supply in Cheshire East was once again increasing

and the over 55s should shortly be receiving a letter offering them a vaccination.

The Deputy Leader added that the Alderley Park mass vaccination centre was currently delivering 650 vaccinations a day, with an expectation to increase this to 1,000 vaccinations a day by the end of the month.

The Deputy Leader also reported that with regard to support grants to eligible businesses, the Council was in the top 5% of authorities for mandatory grants and the top 13% for discretionary grants in terms of both the number of payments made and their value. He thanked the officers and in particular the Business Support Team.

Councillor A Critchley asked if the Council was issuing fines for non-attendance at school. The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families responded that this had not occurred yet but that it could if the Department for Education directed that such action be taken. She undertook to provide a written response if requested.

Following a request by Councillor J Clowes, the Leader agreed to include information on the care market in future reports.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the issues outlined in the report.

95 **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021/22 TO 2024/25**

Cabinet considered a draft Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 as a basis for consultation with key stakeholders.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. notes the issues with the level of DSG high needs funding received by the Council and the potential impact on the Council's DSG Reserve in terms of the position before and after mitigations;

2. approves the underlying assumptions and strategies in the Draft DSG Management Plan for 2021/22 to 2024/25;

3. notes the mitigations that have been included and the necessary steps to deliver those projects;

4. agrees the Draft DSG Management Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 as a basis for consultation with key stakeholders; and

5. agrees to an annual update of the DSG Management Plan to enable progress to be monitored leading to necessary adjustment to plans.

96 FLOWERPOT JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Cabinet considered a report on proposed improvements to the Flowerpot junction to the south-west of Macclesfield town centre.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. approves the delivery of the scheme shown in Appendix B to the report;

2. approves delivery of the scheme through the Highway Service Contract, subject to the Ringway Jacobs target costs for the Scheme satisfying the contract's value for money requirements;

3. approves the preparation of a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of land and/or rights required to deliver the Scheme, where such land and/or rights cannot be acquired by agreement. If this is required a further Decision Report will be prepared and submitted seeking authority for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order but this recommendation is not being sought at this stage;

4. approves the preparation of a Side Roads Order in respect to stopping-up and/or amendments to private means of access, and re-provision of private means of access (in the event land is acquired under a Compulsory Purchase Order);

5. authorises the Head of Estates to negotiate terms and to acquire land and/or rights required for the Scheme by agreement and to pay such reasonable and proper professional costs as are associated with those agreements and to instruct the Director of Governance & Compliance to draft, advise upon and enter into the legal agreements necessary to complete such acquisitions including but not limited to licences, leases, transfers, easements, wayleaves, deeds of release and/or variation and the making and submission of applications to HM Land Registry to affect the registration of any unregistered land within the Scheme;

6. authorises the Head of Estates to negotiate and agree terms for the necessary legal agreements required to document any apparatus diversion works required by Statutory Undertakers or other utility providers in order to deliver the Scheme and to instruct the Director of Governance & Compliance to draft, advise upon and enter into the legal agreements necessary in relation to any such diversions;

7. authorises the Head of Estates to dispose of any land currently in the ownership of the Council or to grant rights over the Council's land, as

may be necessary in respect of any element of "land swap" which may be agreed as part of the assembly of land required for the Scheme. In the event that any such land is open space the Head of Estates is authorised to commence the statutory disposal process, to consider all objections and representations to the disposal of open space and to make the final decision (after having considered all objections and representations) as to whether or not to dispose of any part of land which is open space;

8. if no objections are received to the statutory notices, authorises the Executive Director of Place to dispose of the open space;

9. notes that if objections are received the decision regarding the disposal of open space will be taken by the relevant service committee; and

10. approves the forward funding of the developer contributions in accordance with the capital programme (noting that the council is one of the potential developers that would contribute to the scheme and that the funding for this is included in the council's capital programme).

97 **LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS (LCWIP) FOR CREWE, CONGLETON, MACCLESFIELD AND WILMSLOW**

Cabinet considered a report on local cycling and walking infrastructure plans for Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. approves the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow as the basis for future development and planning of sustainable transport infrastructure within Cheshire East; and

2. notes that the Plans will be an integral part of the Council's local transport strategy, alongside the Cycling Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.

98 **HOME REPAIRS AND ADAPTATIONS FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

Cabinet considered a report on the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Financial Assistance Policy 2021-2026, the purpose of which was to enable vulnerable residents to live independently in suitable, well-maintained homes.

RESOLVED

That the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Financial Assistance Policy 2021-2026 be approved.

99 **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY**

Cabinet considered a report on the adoption of a Customer Experience Strategy, which aimed to ensure that customers' needs were central to the services the Council delivered.

RESOLVED

That the Customer Experience Strategy attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.30 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chairman)

Cheshire East Council

Working for a brighter future together

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2021

Report Title: Covid-19 – Update on Response and Recovery

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sam Corcoran - Leader of the Council

Cllr Craig Browne - Deputy Leader of the Council

Senior Officer: Lorraine O'Donnell - Chief Executive

1. **Report Summary**

1.1. Cabinet have received eight detailed reports since June 2020 on how the Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for the recovery from it.

1.2. In view of the enduring nature of the national and international public health emergency, this report provides a summary of key developments and by exception reporting since 1 March 2021.

1.3. On 22 February, the Government published a document called "COVID-19 Response Spring 2021" which includes a "roadmap" for easing restrictions in England, starting with schools and colleges on 8 March. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf

1.4. At the time of writing steps 1a and 1b have been instigated, including the re-opening of schools to all pupils, and allowing care homes residents to have one visitor.

1.5. The report also summarises the latest information on infection rates which have fallen considerably since last reported.

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1.6. The financial impact of the pandemic on the council continues to be significant. A further update is provided in section 6.2. It is important to note that over £200m has been provided in ringfenced grants for specific purposes, the majority of which has been or is to be <u>passported directly</u> to other organisations. This may create an incorrect impression that all the council's COVID pressures are funded. Furthermore, the administration costs of passporting money directly to other organisations fall directly on the Council. This is significant in the case of business grants and infection control in care homes grants, for example.

1.7. The report will also be of interest to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Audit and Governance Committees.

1.8. It is important to note that there may be other new developments following the publication of this report. Verbal updates will be given at the meeting, as appropriate.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 That Cabinet note the issues outlined in the report.

2.2 That Cabinet recommend to Council a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £1,561,000, fully funded from the Covid-19 Emergency Grant, to increase the budget for Leisure Services Commissioning. This reflects reported spending in 2020/21 in support of the provision of leisure services in the borough.

2.3 That Cabinet approve a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £881,340, fully funded from the DFE Holiday Activity Fund Grant to increase the 2021/22 Early Help & Prevention Service Budget. This grant will enable the Council to pass on grant funding to local organisations to deliver school holiday activity and food for children who are pre-school and school age and eligible for Free School Meal entitlement.

2.4 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services to distribute the DFE Holiday Activity Fund Grant and to approve a temporary and limited variation to the Corporate Community Grant policy to extend the scope of payments made under the policy to include Holiday Activity Grants made under the DfE grant determination half programme 2021 No 31/5325. That for this limited period section 3.9 of the policy will be amended to enable private businesses who provide holiday club activity to apply for this grant between March 2021 and April 2022 only.

3. **Other Options Considered**

3.1. Not applicable.

4. Background

4.1 The WHO Weekly Epidemiological Update issued on 16 March 2021 showed an increase in infections with 3.03 million new cases of Covid-19 reported in the previous week (a 10% increase from the previous week).

4.2 As of 16 March, there have been nearly 120 million Covid-19 cases worldwide and 2.66 million deaths.

4.3 The latest international, national and local statistics are available from the following data dashboards:

https://covid19.who.int/

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/coronavirus/latest-covid-19-figures-for-cheshire-east.aspx

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-number-in-the-uk

https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/

4.4 Three vaccines to protect against Coronavirus are being rolled out nationally to priority groups. By the week ending 11 March, the total number of people vaccinated was 24,196,211. 159,533 people, 74.56% of the eligible population of Cheshire East residents who are registered with Cheshire GP Practices have received their 1st Dose.

4.5 The UK Government National Restrictions continue at the time of writing. The Prime Minister announced changes on 22 February. Details of this change are found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home

4.6 The respective administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have introduced measures that have been tailored to their country's circumstances.

4.7 In the last full week of data until 14 March 2021, 190 people in Cheshire East tested positive. The local infection rate was recorded as 50 cases per 100,000 population. This represents a 23% reduction in cases from the previous week.

4.8 Initially rates for Cheshire East were falling more rapidly than the England average; they have now converged. Hospital capacity is improving with fewer patients requiring hospital care. As of 16 March, East Cheshire NHS Trust had 14 occupied COVID beds (5% of capacity) and Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust had 29 occupied COVID beds (6% of capacity). This indicates that the

national lockdown introduced in January has been successful in reducing the epidemic and its impacts on the NHS.

4.9 Case rates in Cheshire East have decreased. However, data for the 7 days up to 14 March show infection rates for the 4-11 and 12-16 age groups increased by 29% and 71% respectively compared to the previous week. 17-18 year olds increased from 0 to 49.7 per 100,000. As the number of infections continue to fall, we will see a small number of cases causing large swings in percentage change. Rates are falling in all age bands for the 60+ group. As before, the highest rates were recorded in the working age population - 20-29 age group (105 per 100,000) and the 30-39 age group (94 per 100,000).

4.10 With the planned return of all pupils to school on 8 March, enhanced Lateral Flow Testing measures have been put in place to assist all seconary schools implement the national programme. After the initial two week school based testing programme, pupils will be expected to carry out twice weekly home testing. A report of the school based programme will be prepared for members.

4.11 Infection prevention and control within Care Homes and the weekly testing of care home staff has helped detect people who may not have symptoms and as a result reduces the risk of a serious outbreak. As of 8 March, care homes have begun to offer the Government's new LFT programme to enable a designated family member to visit a loved one.

4.12 Financial support for Local Authorities at Local COVID Alert Level Medium and High is to fund the following activities:

a. Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.
b. Additional contact tracing.
c. Enhanced communication and marketing e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging.
d. Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.
e. Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.
f. Harnessing capacity within local sectors (voluntary, academic, commercial).
g. Extension/introduction of specialist support (behavioural science, bespoke comms).
h. Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance.

5.   Update and by exception reporting on Council actions

5.1   Cheshire East Council continues to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time the Council has continued to strive to:

- deliver essential local services

- protect our most vulnerable people

- support our communities and local businesses.

5.2   A summary of the key changes since the March update that have continued to be delivered by the Council is provided below.

5.3   *Test and Trace and Outbreak Management* – In total, between the national, and subregional contact tracing teams, 86% of positive cases are successfully contacted and closed in Cheshire East. Our local contact tracing team increases this proportion significantly, but due to data collection methods, this is not reflected in the national data. The local contact tracing team makes four attempts where possible to contact individual cases at various times daily between 8.30am and 7.00pm (Saturday 10.00am–1.00pm). They also use texts, letters and emails as methods of contacting individuals. However, there are some cases where the team are unable to successfully contact trace certain individuals due to the following factors: (1) incorrect or no contact details for the case (including on internal databases), (2) no response from the case, (3) case refuses to speak to the team, and (4) incorrect data sent from the national team and no requirement to contact trace.

5.4   To attempt to increase the number of successfully contacted cases, the TTCE Programme team are looking to pilot an enhanced contact tracing model in April to support the local contact tracing team. This pilot will utilise the Cheshire East Swab Squad and will involve deploying a small number of 'door knockers' to try and contact those individuals who have not been successfully contacted by telephone. Risk profiling will be undertaken to establish which individuals should be contacted by this team. If this is successful, it will be fully implemented in March/April 2021. Discussions are also underway with Cheshire Constabulary as an ultimate escalation point to refer cases to if the team are aware or concerned that an individual is not self-isolating. In addition, a new Microsoft Dynamics 365 case management system has also been implemented to improve local data and information sharing across the organisation. Finally, from April 2021 a new self-isolation framework will be implemented, which will see the role of the local contact tracing team evolve from a purely contact tracing role and into a welfare case management role. This new role will see the team supporting individuals throughout their self-

isolation period with a range of touchpoints to support with their physical, social, and emotional needs.

5.5   Alongside the Cheshire East Swab Squad, several testing initiatives have now been introduced in Cheshire East:

- From 1 March 2020, the national government rolled out the 'Community Collect' programme to support members of households, childcare or support bubbles of school staff and pupils. The local testing sites in Crewe and Macclesfield were turned into collection points where individuals could collect lateral flow test (LFT) kits between 1.30pm-7.00pm every day. To support this initiative, Local Authorities have been asked to take part in a 'Local Community Collect' programme by offering collection points in their areas. Cheshire East Council is currently awaiting a stock of approximately 18,000 LFT kits and will use a number of asymptomatic testing sites as collection points. In addition, home testing kits can also be ordered online.

- From 15 March 2020, local residents were able to access LFT's at six dedicated asymptomatic testing sites, as well as at a number of community pharmacies. These require pre-booking and the full list of sites can be found on the Cheshire East booking portal: https://cheshireeast.zipporah.co.uk/LFT.Bookings.

- From 5 April 2021 (subject to change at time this report was written), Cheshire East was chosen by the DHSC to pilot a dual use testing site using the Crewe local testing site. If successful, this will see testing sites being use for both LFT and PCR testing.

5.6   *Covid-19 Mass Vaccination* – The COVID vaccination programme continues to be rolled out with the focus on Priority groups 5 and 6. The uptake rates in the the priority groups remains high. The Council is currently working with Health colleagues and the commissioned local Carers Hub to identify unpaid carers who are eligible for the vaccination under Priority Cohort 6 and are not already known through other means such as GP register, SALT returns and carers assessments/allowance.

5.7   At the time of writing, data obtained from care homes suggest that 96% of care home residents have been vaccinated and 77% of care home staff, there are variations in uptake across this sector. This is in part due to homes where there were outbreaks having to delay the vaccination process. Local Authority staff are working closely with NHS colleagues to follow up those homes and to encourage staff who may be reluctant to be vaccinated.

5.8 Uptake rates amongst social care staff is also high with 83% of eligible staff already vaccinated. Local Authority staff are working closely with the NHS to address vaccine hesitation. Factors such as individuals being pregnant or seeking fertility treatment, along with concerns regarding allergies, have been highlighted as the most common reasons for vaccine hesitation.

5.9 *Communities – Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) Support*: People Helping People was a service created by Cheshire East Council 12 months ago. It works collaboratively with new and existing Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector partners and local volunteers to channel community-based support to meet the needs of our residents. This service is recognised amongst all residents across the borough as an essential community service. Some key recent updates associated with this service are as follows:

5.9.1 The Shielding guidance with the 'Stay at Home' message for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable became effective on the reintroduction of the National Lockdown on 5 January 2021 and last until 31 March 2021. 25,143 residents in Cheshire East have been contacted by MHCLG informing them to take extra precautions and that if they require additional support to contact their Local Authority.

5.9.2 By 18 March, 1,400 residents who asked for support were contacted though the Council's People Helping People service, with the main request being linked to accessing food. During the calls to residents, other support needs were identified which often related to mental health, social isolation, fuel poverty and digital exclusion.

5.9.3 From 31 March, the Council is expected to provide similar support to those who are being asked to self isolate. The intention is to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by providing practical, emotional and social support to those who need to self-isolate. The expectation is that local authorities will develop a support offer alongside effective communications to improve awareness of when people need to self-isolate, how long for, what this involves, its importance in stopping the spread of the virus, the support available and the consequences of breaking the rules.

5.9.4 The government is providing £12.9 million funding per month for the next four months (starting in March and continuing until June), with a review point in May, to help councils meet the costs involved in assessing people's practical support needs and helping them access support. Details on the funding for Cheshire East Council is not yet confirmed. This support will be provided through the Council's Communication, Local Contact Tracing, and People Helping People teams.

5.10 *Adult Social Care* – The Commissioning Team have provided significant support for the Adult Social Care Market during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure market stability and the safe service delivery and provision of care for the residents of Cheshire East. This includes Care Homes, Care at Home (Domiciliary Care), Complex Needs, Extra Care Housing and Supported Living schemes.

5.11 *Care homes* - Of all care sectors, care homes have been the most significantly impacted by the pandemic with many homes having experienced at least one Covid-19 outbreak. Care homes have been supported throughout by the Council's Quality Assurance team as set out in previous Cabinet reports.

5.12 The number of homes currently in an active outbreak situation (within 14 days of a confirmed case) is declining, and as at 17 March 2021 was at two. A further 21 homes had a last confirmed case between 14 days and 28 days ago. Confirmed cases are highest among care home staff which accords with lower vaccination rates for staff than residents.

5.13 As of 8 March, care home residents have been allowed one designated regular visitor provided the home is not in an outbreak situation. Local visiting guidance has been updated for the homes in accordance with national guidance. Feedback from care homes is that the visiting arrangements are going well with no reported issues of visitors not abiding by the requirements around PPE and testing. Care homes report visits have been welcomed with emotional reunions with family members.

5.14 All care homes have now received government funding via the Infection Control Fund (Rounds 1 and 2) and the Rapid Testing Fund to support infection control, workforce resilience and Lateral Flow Testing regimes. Care homes were also invited to apply (along with other care providers) for additional funds under the Workforce Capacity Fund which, as the name suggests, is designed to increase staffing capacity to support continuity of care and hospital discharge. Unlike other funding streams there was no requirement to passport the funding directly to providers and so a decision was taken to award the limited available funding to those providers that were able to demonstrate a clear plan on how the funds would be used to increase capacity within the short timeframe of 31 March 2021. 14 care homes were successful in being awarded funding.

5.15 Whole home and Lateral Flow Testing continues in care homes. Revised guidance on testing for professionals visiting care homes was published on 17 March. The main changes to the guidance are:

- The default position is that without a negative test, the professional should not be allowed into the care home (unless in an emergency, unless

overridden by the care home manager following a risk-based decision, or unless their entry is required by law such as CQC inspectors).

- For NHS professionals, care homes should see evidence from the professional of a negative rapid Lateral Flow Test within the last 72 hours, which shows they are following the NHS staff testing regime.

- As per the previous guidance, professionals who are not part of regular testing for NHS staff or CQC inspectors (for example professionals such as podiatrists or engineers) will need to be tested at the care home in the same way as visitors.

- If they are visiting multiple care homes in one day, they will now only need to be tested at the first care home they visit that day and can use evidence of this test at the next care home they visit that day.

- CQC inspectors will now test at home using a Lateral Flow Test on the day of a care home inspection, in addition to their weekly PCR.

- Like care home staff, visiting professionals are exempt from testing for 90 days following a positive PCR test, unless they develop new symptoms.

5.16 *Domiciliary care* - On the whole domiciliary care providers have coped well with the additional demands of the pandemic. There have been some isolated staffing issues due to sickness or the need for self-isolation but commissioners have worked closely with the care providers to help them resolve these issues and some providers have experienced an upturn in recruitment levels due to the prevailing economic circumstances.

5.17 More recently there has been an upturn in demand for domiciliary care which is impacting on the number of people awaiting a suitable package of care. Particular pinch points are double handling packages of care. An increase in carer breakdown also represents a risk factor impacting on the demand for domiciliary care. Additional capacity is currently being sought for the Care Brokerage team to facilitate more timely care sourcing and to explore creative solutions to care provision e.g. split or shared care packages. It is envisaged that the Workforce Capacity Fund will help to increase capacity within the sector as 19 domiciliary care providers successfully applied for the funding.

5.18 Domiciliary care staff are eligible for the Covid-19 vaccination under Priority Cohort 2 – Frontline Health and Social Care Workers. Latest available data which is collated directly from care providers suggests that vaccination rates are 83% for frontline care workers but 73% when including back office staff (who are sometimes required to deliver care).

5.19 *Complex care/ Supported Living -* Like domiciliary care, there have been a relatively small number of issues related to complex care and supported living. Someday services were unfortunately forced to close at the start of the pandemic.

5.20 Regular testing of staff is now taking place at Supported Living and Extra Care Housing schemes.

5.21 Providers of complex care were eligible to apply for funding from the Workforce Capacity Fund. A total of nine providers were successful.

5.22 *Extra Care Housing -* Although sadly there have been a small number of Covid related deaths of residents at Extra Care Housing schemes since the start of the pandemic, there have been no major outbreaks. Housing and care staff now receive regular Lateral Flow Tests.

5.23 The major area of concern for residents of the Extra Care Housing schemes at Oakmere and Willowmere was the temporary closure of the restaurant facilities in line with Government regulations. An alternative meal delivery service was put in place.

5.24 The Local Authority have been supplied with some PPE via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) since the 24 March 2020. This arrangement with the LRF has been extended to the end of June 2021, with the Council receiving fortnightly deliveries of PPE directly to our offices in Sandbach on a fortnightly basis. The Council continue to distribute PPE to eligible organisations across Cheshire East. So far, the Council has distributed just over 5 million items of PPE locally. This includes schools who have been supported to access PPE prior to re-opening, and with the change in national guidance the LRF PPE supplies are also now being distributed to Carers of family members (who do not live with the person that they care for) via the Carers Hub and Wishing Well.

5.25 PPE stock has also been locally purchased and we have a sufficient supply in stores. As part of the Council's recovery and outbreak planning, we will continue to supply providers with PPE on a mutual aid basis as and when required.

5.26 *Children's Social Care –* We are continuing to see that families' needs are more complex as a result of the pandemic, which is increasing demand and providing additional challenges to services.

5.27 On 9 March the government laid The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 following a public consultation. The regulations will come into force on 30 March 2021 and will see an extension of the current flexibilities for medical reports (for fostering and adoption), virtual visits and Ofsted inspection cycles.

5.28   Rapid progress has been made in permanency planning for children, and our cohort of cared for children is reducing. We have now achieved 25 adoptions this year. We recently attended a regional leadership event where we presented on the positive impact we have achieved for children and young people through the Mockingbird project which provides a peer support network to foster carers. Fostering was included on the annual leaflet which goes to all Cheshire East residents which will hopefully result in an increase in inquiries on becoming a foster carer.

5.29   We celebrated social work practice with all our teams on World Social Work Day on 16 March in an online staff workshop. Some social workers shared their experience of having the Covid-19 vaccine in Team Voice to encourage colleagues to receive a vaccination. Foster carers have now been offered vaccinations which is very positive as it will support children and young people to continue to access family homes and to experience stability in where they are living.

5.30   *Prevention and Early Help* – Over 22,600 vouchers have been distributed to families and young adults in need through the Winter Grant Scheme since the beginning of December. The grant is continuing to be used as intended - to offer practical support in the form of food and utilities payments for vulnerable children, young people and adults, as agreed by Cabinet on 1 December. This has included provision of food vouchers for families eligible for free school meals over the Christmas period, February half term, and will also include the Easter holidays. In January, the scheme was extended to include support for vulnerable families to replace or access white goods. A referral process is in place for professionals to refer families who need this support which is working well. One parent said, "We are incredibly grateful for your help; it feels like a weight has been lifted."

5.31   Holiday activities will be taking place for families over Easter using the DfE holiday activity fund. The aim is to provide healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged young people. The DfE have confirmed that they are happy with our proposal for the use of the fund.

5.32   *Education and Skills* – The return to school and college for all pupils has been a success. The attendance in schools across Cheshire East on Monday 8 March was 80% with 97.7% attendance in primary schools. This is against a national attendance rate of 68% overall and 95.69% attendance in primary schools. Schools, colleges, and the Education Service have worked extremely hard to ensure all arrangements are in place for the safe return of all pupils. We provided all schools with template letters for children and parents to reassure them about the return to school and the expectations around attendance. We

produced a guide for professionals who were working with families to support the transition back to school, help to address anxieties and any barriers to attendance. Guidance was also provided to schools and colleges on updating risk assessments and reducing transmission.

5.33 Full attendance data from secondary schools was phased over the first week to allow for the rapid testing of pupils. Rapid testing of secondary aged pupils is going well, and we have a robust system in place to monitor incident rates in schools and put the right support in place. The Education team have visited a number of secondary schools and have been very impressed with the calm organisation that has been seen with implementing the testing arrangements.

5.34 In the run up to the return to school of all pupils in March, secondary schools, special schools and colleges were asked to carry out three Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) on each student as they returned, and to prepare them for twice weekly home testing once these had been completed, to help control the spread of the virus. Participation by students is voluntary and while most schools have reported very high levels, there have been some schools where students have been more reluctant to be tested. In these cases, staff have tried to encourage students to participate, pointing out the advantages and helping to reduce any anxieties.

5.35 Schools were able to start testing from 1 March and this is now almost complete. The number of tests carried out by each school ranges from 2,000 to almost 7,000. Concerns about the accuracy of the tests have been raised but there have been less than 20 'void/ inconclusive' results reported, all of which gave a conclusive result on re-testing.

5.36 A total of 23 positive cases in pupils have been found since the start of March, of which 17 have not shown any symptoms and so would have been in school were it not for the tests.

5.37 Home testing has now been rolled out to nursery setting. Kits have been delivered and colleagues in this sector started home testing from 22 March.

5.38 The council has dedicated resource to the roll out of LFT across Cheshire East. This has enabled schools to have access to advice and support when setting up the testing sites and has enabled the council to have some oversight of the process through ongoing dialogue with schools and by visiting test sites, while they are in operation.

5.39 Our focus is on pupil wellbeing and catching up on learning, and we are continuing to assist schools in supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing,

so they can help those who are most anxious. Plans are also being discussed for summer schools and catch up programmes. We are working with schools to develop a recovery plan, which will focus on how schools need to adapt the curriculum to address gaps in knowledge and the curriculum during the last year.

5.40   At the beginning of March, parents across the borough received offers of secondary school places for children starting in September 2021, with the majority getting their first choice of school. The council has worked with the local schools to offer preference places to 98% of Cheshire East residents (an increase from 97% in 2020) with 92% being offered their first preference of secondary school (compared to 91.6% in 2020). These figures are expected to increase before pupils start in September 2021, as some parents will decline places as their circumstances change and places become available. The school admissions process has continued during the coronavirus outbreak, with the council co-ordinating this for most state schools in Cheshire East. Schools have adapted well, offering virtual tours to help parents in making preferences for their child's school and they will now be working with primary schools and parents to prepare children for their move to secondary school. The number of applications for school places in Cheshire East continues to increase. In 2021, the total number of applications was 4621 with 470 applications received from families living outside the borough, an indication of the popularity of Cheshire East schools.

5.41   *Business Support*

The Council is continuing to support those businesses required to close due to lockdown or similar measures through distribution of grants. The table below provides a breakdown of the allocation of the current grants available to businesses.

The council is continuing to engage with businesses throughout this period and is developing longer term support plans for the local economy to support economic recovery.

Total received @ 16 Mar 2021:		
	Applications Approved	**Payments Made**
Mandatory Grants via Rates:	**18,263**	**£ 36,544,406**
LRSG (open)	3,190	£ 2,254,435
LRSG (closed)#1 November	2,916	£ 4,685,024
LRSG (sector)	3	£ 2,286
CSP (wet led)	271	£ 271,000
LRSG (closed)#2 December	8,965	£ 15,246,661

CBLP	2,918	£	14,085,000
Discretionary Grants:			
ARG	2,053	£	4,370,973
TOTAL	**20,316**	**£**	**40,915,379**

5.42 *Leisure Centres* – the council's leisure centres have been closed during the third national lockdown. In accordance with government's roadmap to recovery, outdoor sports facilities, can re-open on 29 March. Indoor leisure facilities can re-open for individual use, e.g. gyms and swimming pools, from 12 April. Group exercise classes and indoor sports, such as badminton and 5-aside football, can re-start no earlier than 17 May.

5.43 There has been significant reductions in income during the pandemic with income effectively reduced to zero during the periods of closure under lockdown rules.

5.44 It has been necessary, therefore, for the council to provide further payments to council's commissioned leisure operator, ESAR. This has been through advance payments of the 2021/22 management fee of £1.561m during 2020/21. Cabinet approved a Supplementary Revenue Estimate of £500,000 in December 2020 to increase the Leisure Commissioning Budget for 2020/21 which was used to provide additional financial support to Everybody Sport and Recreation. Further detail on the financial support provided during 2020/21 is provided in **appendix 1**.

5.45 Based on the latest forecast of Everybody Sport and Recreation's income and costs, reflecting the third lockdown and phased re-opening, it is no longer appropriate to provide advance payments for the 2020/21 financial year, but instead to recognised that this will be an unrecoverable cost of the pandemic. It is, therefore, recommended that a Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £1,561,000, fully funded from the Covid-19 Emergency Grant, is provided to replenish the budget for the payment of the management fee to Everybody Sport and Recreation in 2021/22.

5.46 In addition, the council has been awarded £961,000 through the National Leisure Recovery Fund which will be passed on to the Trust. If there is no further funding for public leisure facilities announced by Government, it will be necessary to further increase the Leisure Services Commissioning Budget to ensure the council's leisure centres can remain open to enable local people to access cost-effective health and wellbeing facilities that will be so important as we recover from the pandemic.

6. **Implications of the Recommendations**

6.1 **Legal Implications**

6.1.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 has been supported by a multiplicity of regulations which provide a legal basis for enforcement etc. Supported by copious and frequent guidance notes which purports to assist in the interpretation of the regulations.

6.1.2 Any necessary urgent decisions made by the Council in response to the pandemic have followed the relevant process set out in the Constitution.

6.1.3 As amendments are made to adapt to changing social circumstances, infection rates, new COVID variants and the vaccination programme, the definitive legal position is time-specific and subject to frequent change.

6.1.4 The tier restricition regulations (The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020) came into force on 2 December 2020 and four substantive amendment regulations were made in rapid succession on 16, 19, 26 and 31 December 2020. The lockdown regulations came into force on 5 January 2021 which provide the legal framework for the implementation and enforcement of national restrictions. The key elements are the restrictions on individual freedom to associate, restrictions on travel, closure of non-essential retail and entertainment venues.

6.1.5 There have been significant new regulations prohibiting international travel, quarantine provisions for overseas visitors, increased fines for unlawful gatherings and regulations designed to clarify and extend the enforcement provisions, powers of police constables and PCSOs which have been extended from 2 February to 31 March 2021.

6.1.6 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authorty and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 remain in force and make provision for the conduct of local authority meetings up until 7th May 2021. On 25 March, the Government announced that this provision will not be extended. This is very disappointing. Alternative arrangements are being considered.

6.1.7 The vaccination programme success is likely to result in changes to the regulatory regime. On 22 February 2021, the Prime Minister set out a 'roadmap' to the easing of lockdown restrictions in England, with four 'steps' setting out greater freedoms, subject to scientific data endorsing further relaxation. From 8 March with all children and students (on practical courses) returning to face-to-face education. There will be twice-weekly rapid testing for secondary and college pupils as well as regular testing of teachers.

6.1.8 From 8 March, people are also allowed to leave their home for recreation and exercise outdoors with their household and support-bubble (if eligible), or with one other person from their household. Care homes residents are also allowe to have one regular visitor.

6.1.9 Step 1 also provides, from March 29, outdoor gatherings of up to 6 people or 2 households will be allowed. Outdoor sports facilities will be allowed to reopen and peoplr allowed to participate in formally organised outdoor sports.

6.1.10 Whilst the 'stay at home' rule ended on March 29, the advice to continue working from home remains and travel abroad is still proibited except for a small number of permitted reasons.

6.2   Financial Implications

6.2.1 The potential financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are regularly reported to members via Cabinet with additional briefings provided via Audit and Governance and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Member written briefings.

6.2.2 This report presents the latest financial position and identifies Government funding already provided or claimed to date. Significant levels of uncertainty remain over the final projected financial implications for local authorities and the approach to funding costs and income losses associated with the pandemic, continue to change as the severity of the pandemic has changed. This creates issues with producing an accurate forecast of financial consequences compared to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

6.2.3 The returns to Central Government identify three main types of financial pressure:

(i)   **Un-ringfenced Expenditure and Income Losses**
The most recent forecast of financial pressures from COVID-19 on the Council's 2020/21 budget for Services is £33.9m. The figures are under frequent review. Grant funding to support expenditure and income losses is detailed in Table 1 below, in a format consistent with previous reports. £25m of un-ringfenced Support Grant has been allocated to date for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years; and £3.5m has also been claimed so far under the Income Compensation Scheme. The Government also announced that £100m had been top sliced from national grant provision totals to provide support to keeping leisure centres open; the Council has been allocated £964,000 (as shown in Table 2). Table 1a identifies funding announcements provided as

part of the Spending Review 2020, which will feature as part of the management of COVID related financial impacts in 2021/22 and potentially beyond.

(ii)   Collection Fund
Potential losses on the Collection Fund relate to Council Tax and Business Rates income. The Government requires councils to spread the deficit over the next three years, although a compensation scheme has been announced, to cover up to 75% of irrecoverable losses. Cash shortfalls in-year are currently expected to be in the region of £10.7m. The Council will continue to recover late payments where practicable, however some losses will be permanent; for example, where businesses have ceased trading, individuals are now entitled to Council Tax Support Payments, or where growth in the tax base has slowed down compared to forecasts.

(iii)   Ringfenced Expenditure
Table 2 provides information about the activities the Council has been undertaking which have received specific Government funding.

Table 1: The approach to un-ringfenced funding for 2020/21 has changed over time

Announced	Funding for CEC (England total)	Notes
19th March	£9.150m (£1.6bn)	Adult Social Care based payment
18th April	£10.539m (£1.6bn)	Payment per capita to help reflect lost income
Sub-Total	**£19.689m (£3.2bn)**	
2nd July	£2.712m (£0.5bn)	Adult Social Care / deprivation based payment
12th October	£2.578m (£1bn)	To provide resources for winter. This tranche of funding has been used to equalise all payments using the same approach as the July payment,now referred to as the COVID Formula.
Total	**£24.979m (of £4.6bn)**	

2nd July	£6m (£n/k) for Income Compensation	Estimated total – subject to claims process. £3.5m claimed so far, in 2 of 3 data collection rounds Compensation at 75p in £1 for losses above 5% of sales, fees and charges budgets
2nd July	£nil for Collection Fund	Compensation at 75p in £1 for losses (to be received in 2021/22); and defer residual Collection Fund deficit over 3yrs

Table 1a: Un-ringfenced support announced for 2021/22

Announced	Funding for CEC (England total)	Notes
18th December	£8.508m (£1.55bn)	5th Tranche of Emergency Funding Grant
18th December	£1.5m (£n/k) for Income Compensation	Sales, Fees & Charges compensation scheme extended for April-June 2021

6.2.4   Un-ringfenced government funding received to date as detailed in Table 1 (above) is currently **£25m**, **of which £1m was utilised in 2019/20**; and the income compensation scheme is anticipated to bring in **£6m**, if settled in full. There is potential that there could be a shortfall in funding compared to the overall financial impact on the Council. The MTFS reflects that costs that are deferred, such as capital spending impacts (of £8.7m) and Collection Fund losses are managed through existing risks provisions within the Capital Programme or through use of the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve. By taking this approach the Council is creating flexibility by carrying-forward unspent COVID revenue Grant funding at year-end that can support the outturn position or provide financial support in the 2021/22 financial year. This position will be subject to ongoing analysis and review as part of the outturn reporting.

6.2.5   Returns to central government now include estimates for potential costs, and losses from sales, fees, and charges, in the 2021/22 financial year. The budget approved by Council in February 2021 was balanced on the understanding that COVID related financial impacts would be managed from additional COVID funding. Early estimates for the full year indicate the potential financial impact in 2021/22 could be as much as £17.6m.

This is set against the potential funding identified in Table 1a above of £10m.

6.2.6 Mindful of the possibility for further expenditure/net cost pressures going forward, it will be important to continue to review, understand and mitigate the potential shortfall between additional financial impacts and the funding provided by Government. The Council continues to engage in several activities:

1. Managing and reviewing the financial forecasts in response to guidance and the local response to the emergency, and how this affects the Council's revenue budget.
2. Further analysing the Government proposals to compensate losses from Sales, Fees and Charges.
3. Analysing the level of Collection Fund losses across the three financial years 2021/22 to 2023/24; and
4. Reviewing the consequences of funding shortfalls on the Council's Capital Programme and how this impact on the Council's long-term funding of capital expenditure.

Table 2: Specific Grants are valued at c.£250m

Activity (National Total)	Spending forecast*	Funding	Variance
Test & Trace (£300m)	£1,533,331	£1,533,331	*£0*
Towns Fund (Capital £5bn)	£750,000	£750,000	£0
Dedicated Home to School and College Transport (£67m)	£625,506	£625,506	£0
Rough Sleeping/ Next Steps Accommodation (£3.2m+£10m) **	£157,648	£68,400	£89,248
Active Travel (£225m)	£743,050	£743,050	£0
Re-Opening High Streets (£50m)	£339,533	£339,533	£0
Culture Recovery Fund (£1.57bn)	£180,000	£180,000	£0
Infection Control in Care Homes (£600m)	£5,320,292	£5,320,292	£0

Infection Control in Care Homes (£546m) 2nd Tranche	£4,712,872	£4,712,872	£0
Business Grants (£12.3bn)***	£87,445,000 (spending to date)	£95,514,000	Awaiting guidance
Discretionary Business Grants (£617m)***	£4,357,000 (spending to date)	£4,372,250	
Local Restrictions Business Support Grants (£3.3bn) ***	£59,181,176	£59,181,176	
Christmas Support Payment (Wet-led pubs)	£236,800	£236,800	
Lockdown Grants (Businesses) (£4.6bn)	tba	tba	
Business Rate Holiday (£10.7bn)	£62,339,000	£60,561,068	£1,777,932
Council Tax Hardship (£500m)	£2,691,326	£2,062,635	£628,691
Local Bus Network (£167m)	£229,632	£229,632	£0
Emergency Assistance Food and basic necessities (£63m)	£326,293	£326,293	£0
Contain Outbreak Management Fund (£per/ head, based on Tier) (5 tranches to 23 Feb)	£7,024,494	£7,024,494	£0
School Condition Grant (Capital) (£n/k)	£589,604	£589,604	£0
Wellbeing for Education Return(£8m)	£55,403	£55,403	£0
Compliance and Enforcement Grant (£60m)	£158,572	£158,572	£0
Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme	£671,101	£675,474	(£4,373)

(£n/k)			
Self Isolation Test and Trace Support Payment (£110m)	£498,790	£498,790	£0
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (£73m)	£452,136	£452,136	£0
Covid Winter Grant Scheme (£170m)	£880,472	£880,472	£0
Domestic Abuse Building Capacity Fund (£6m)	£50,000	£50,000	£0
Leisure Centres (£100m)	£963,513	£963,513	£0
Workforce Capacity Fund (£120m)	£725,319	£725,319	£0
Rapid Testing Fund (£149m)	£1,361,266	£1,361,266	£0
Vaccine Roll-out Funding (n/k)	tba	tba	£0
Community Testing Funding (£11m)	£356,076	£356,076	£0
Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 (grant is split £88,630 for 2020/21 and £792,710 for 2021/22)	£881,340	£881,340	£0

* Note: where 'Spending Forecast' equals 'Funding' this does not necessarily indicate the full extent of spending to date but does demonstrate the expectation that funding will be fully utilised.

** Whilst spending in relation to Rough Sleeping/ Accommodation exceeds specific Covid grant funding in this respect, the balance is being met by other Housing grants/ reserves, and as such there will not be an additional pressure on the Revenue Account.

*** Business Grant scheme funding has been combined to date. Scheme totals can also vary if payments are subject to review or appeal.

6.2.7 Further specific grants may become payable and require local administration in response to the emerging status of the pandemic response.

6.2.8 LGA and CCN collate returns from all member councils, though the types of financial pressure vary from council to council depending on their circumstances. For example, whether they provide social care, have a strong tourist economy, or the extent of deprivation. The overall impacts are similar across councils and Cheshire East Council is not an outlier. The Council will continue to support lobbying by the LGA and CCN in their aim to ensure fair settlement of the financial pressures facing local authorities.

6.3   Policy Implications

6.3.1 COVID-19 is having a wide-ranging impact on many policies. Any significant implications for the Council's policies are outlined in this report.

6.4   Equality Implications

6.4.1 Implications of any changes and restrictions will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

6.4.2 Vaccination programmes are prioritising people by age (50 years and older) and those who are clinically vulnerable. The Government published the QCovid risk calculator created by the University of Oxford to support the NHS coronavirus response. It is an evidence-based model that uses a range of factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, and existing medical conditions to predict risk of death or hospitalisation from COVID-19. The model is being used to fast-track vaccinations and encourage more at-risk people to shield until 31 March 2021.

6.4.3 As mentioned in paragraph 5.30, over 21,500 vouchers were distributed over the Christmas period to families and young adults in need through the Winter Grant Scheme. The grant is to offer practical support in the form of food and utilities payments. The scheme was originally due to end March. It will now be extended in 2021/22.

6.4.4 We carried out individual risk assessments for staff with protected characteristics, particularly in relation to BAME colleagues and staff with a disability and are issuing regular reminders to keep these under review as circumstances may change.

6.4.5 We hosted a workshop on 4 March to understand how to improve our communications about the COVID-19 vaccine in targeting local under-served communities. This forms part of the ongoing work that is taking place with the NHS Cheshire CCG in dispelling myths and rumours about the vaccine and to encourage take up of the jab. Iinformation shows there is a lot of hesitancy amongst some local communities including some ethnic groups, asylum seekers, Travellers, homeless

people, boating and multi-faith groups. The session was hosted by our communications team, our local community engagement team and a representative from the NHS Cheshire CCG. Members of the community who attended included a freelance translator, the Waterways Chaplaincy, the Arch Deacon of Nantwich (subbing for the Bishop of Chester) and the manager of a homeless shelter in Crewe. The session was very insightful, with discussions around worries and fears amongst our underserved communities about the vaccine. It was noted that there is a need to support and represent our Bulgarian, Slovakian, Czech, Portuguese, East Timor, Polish and Romania communities more than we do currently. Discussions developed around how this could be achieved.

6.4.6 It was also noted that more work needs to be done around the accessibility of the vaccine. Many communities would be willing to have their jab if medical teams were able to come to them – e.g. those in the homeless shelter who aren't registered with a GP, the boating community, Travellers, older residents living in rural areas and many of the BAME community, as they can struggle to access services. The session was extremely uplifting, with an overwhelming feeling of positivity for the work the vaccination programme has done to date. All community representatives on the call were extremely keen to work with the council and the CCG to help further the scope of the work being done and to raise vaccination numbers amongst our underserved audiences. Actions have been noted and work is underway. Updates will be shared on this work in due course.

6.5 Human Resources Implications

6.5.1 The latest data on staff absences on 18 March 2021 are 23 (28 *last month*) staff self-isolating and working from home, 27 (34 *last month*) staff self-isolating and not working from home (role doesn't allow), 4 (9 *last month*) Covid-related absences, and 102 (106 *last month*) non-Covid-related absences.

6.5.2 Staff vaccinations: as at 18 March 1864 staff are eligible for vaccinations due to their role. Of these, 85.6% have had a first vaccination.

6.5.3 There continues to be regular communication with staff and good co-operation with the Trade Unions.

6.6 Risk Management Implications

6.6.1 The risk environment around COVID-19 remains dynamic. Risk registers have been maintained as part of the Council's response to date and the plans for recovery. Business Continuity Plans are being kept under review.

6.7 Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1 COVID-19 is having an impact across all communities, including rural communities. The support for small businesses will support rural business.

6.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1 There are implications for children and young people. There are implications for schools, early help and prevention and children's social care which are summarised in the report.

6.9 Public Health Implications

6.9.1. COVID-19 is a global pandemic and public health emergency. There are implications for Cheshire East which are summarised in the report.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.10.1 There have been positive benefits of fewer cars on the road. This includes most staff who have been working from home. There has also been lower demand for heating/lighting offices.

7 Ward Members Affected

All Members.

8 Consultation & Engagement

8.1 Formal consultation activities were initially paused due to the lockdown restrictions. However, we are now undertaking all consultations following a review on a case by case basis to ensure that we can continue to operate effectively.

9 Access to Information

9.1　　　Comprehensive reports on COVID-19 can be found on the Council's and the Government's websites.

10 Contact Information

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

Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services

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Appendix 1 – Maintaining Leisure Services during the pandemic

1. All Leisure Centres have been required to close during the national lockdowns in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which means that they have been closed for 8 months from 20th March 2020 to 12th April 2021. Leisure centre income reduced to zero during these periods of closure. Furthermore, when they have been able to open there has been an additional impact on costs and income due to the measures required to maintain social distancing and reduced visitor numbers due to the pandemic.

2. Throughout the pandemic the council's commissioned leisure provider-Everybody Sport and Recreation has sought to reduce costs and access government support in order to remain a going concern. The majority of staff were furloughed during periods of lockdown, with a core staff retained on a flexible furlough basis with the agreement of the council for key activities including regular building inspections, membership engagement and retention, and the delivery of a new online health and fitness channel to help people to keep physically active while at home. The trust chose not to pay the % of furloughed staff wages not covered by government's job retention scheme.

3. Everybody Sport and Recreation has been ineligible for government grants and rate relief provided to businesses and front-line charities. It has been unable to access government backed commercial loans because of the nature of its business model. A claim through its business interruption insurance was also rejected. Furthermore, the lost income from leisure centres is not eligible for support under the government scheme to partially reimburse councils for income lost during the pandemic owing to the fact that the council operates its leisure facilities through a trust.

4. Despite the actions taken to reduce costs Everybody Sport and Recreation have continued to incur a net cost throughout the pandemic. This financial pressure was first reported to Audit and Governance Committee on 30th July 2020 forecasting increased expenditure for leisure services of £1m in 2020/21.

5. The Mid-Year Review reported to Cabinet on 6th October 2020 revised the forecast to £1.2m. It reported that financial support for Everybody Sport and Recreation's cashflow position had been provided through advance payments of the 2021/22 management fee, pending further announcements from government. It also reported that this support may need to be funded from the Covid-19 Emergency Grant if specific funding for local authority leisure centres was not forthcoming or insufficient. Without this financial support Everybody Sport and Recreation would not have had sufficient income to meet their costs and liabilities through to March 2021. The trust would have become insolvent and be unable to operate the council's leisure centres. This support, therefore, ensured service continuity for the council's leisure centres.

6.   On 1st December 2020 Cabinet approved a Supplementary Revenue Estimate of £500,000, fully funded from the un-ringfenced Covid-19 Emergency Grant, to provide a budget for an additional management fee payment to Everybody Sport and Recreation in 2020/21. This reflected the impact of the second lockdown on income, the latest view of post pandemic recovery and the most recent financial position of the trust.

7.   The Council has been awarded £961,000 through the National Leisure Recovery Fund launched in December 2020 to support the reopening of public leisure facilities following the second lockdown. Once the third national lockdown was announced later in December, it was clear that the scheme and total funding allocation of £100m was insufficient. This funding will be passed on to Everybody Sport and Recreation but the trust is likely to require additional financial support to recover to a sustainable financial position in the medium term. If there is no further funding for public leisure facilities announced by Government, it will be necessary for the council to provide further financial support.

8.   The latest forecast of Everybody Sport and Recreation's financial position for 2020/21 is a net cost of £2.1m. The full 2021/22 management fee budget of £1.561m has been paid in advance as well as the additional £500,000 approved by Cabinet in December.

9.   The risk articulated in the Mid-Year Review that financial support for leisure services may need to be funded from the Covid-19 Emergency Grant has now materialised. It is essential that the budget for the 2021/22 management fee that has been paid in advance is replenished in order to maintain leisure services for the borough. A Supplementary Revenue Estimate for £1,561,000, fully funded from the Covid-19 Emergency Grant, is recommended to replenish the management fee budget for 2021/22.

10.   The provision of financial support for ESAR has enabled them to address the significant reductions in income resulting from the pandemic. It is to be noted that the ongoing financial support is to enable the ongoing future provision of leisure services in the Borough on behalf of the Council which is going to be a key element of future recovery from the pandemic.

11.   The proposed financial support would reduce the risk of the council's leisure provider not being able to meet its financial obligations. In this scenario the day to day operational responsibilities for running leisure would transfer to the council -in addition to the strategic commissioning responsibilities it currently has. This would involve the TUPE transfer of staff and would lead to additional costs for the Council associated with the reductions non-domestic rates and VAT that the charity can currently benefit from. Harmonisation of terms and conditions with Council staff would also increase costs associated with pension liabilities. The council would also need to undertake a review of options regarding the future

delivery of services which may lead to a reduction in service provision across the Borough.

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Cheshire East
Council

Working for a brighter future together

| Key Decision: Y |
| Date First Published: 18/1/21 |

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13th April 2021

Report Title: Household Waste Recycling Centre Provision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Laura Crane – Highways and Waste

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan - Executive Director Place

1. Report Summary

1.1. Cheshire East Council is responsible for the management of all household waste within the Borough. This means making reasonable provision for a range of waste management services which enable waste to be re-used, recycled or composted wherever possible, and only disposed of as the last option. Approximately 80% of household waste is collected from the kerbside. The remaining 20% is collected through our household waste recycling centres and bring banks.

1.2. Councils are required to provide Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) which are reasonably accessible to the public. These provide an important waste management service to enable householders to dispose of, and recycle, their excess waste responsibly. The Council currently operates 8 centres across the borough. The current contract for the delivery of these services ends in March 2023. It is to be noted the current facility in Congleton operates on a site leased by the Council which is due to expire in 2021. All other sites operate on land that is under the ownership of the Council.

1.3. Minimising waste in the first place is by far the best environmental and economic solution to tackling waste management. The Council's Municipal Waste Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in 2014, (reviewed 2020) sets out the aims and objectives for the management of waste within the Borough. The strategy acknowledges the national policy direction and legislative pressure to minimise the overall amount of waste produced and to be more responsible in the way waste is managed. Furthermore, the Council's Environment Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in May 2020 has waste reduction as one of its strategic objectives.

1.4. To assist in the commissioning of a new contract the Council has undertaken a review of the current service provision in the Borough. This outlined that the current provision compares favourably with neighbouring and similar authorities to Cheshire East.

1.5. In November 2020, Cabinet considered the findings of this review and agreed that a public consultation on the options for the future pattern of provision for HWRCs should be undertaken. The consultation reported that most residents supported the option to keep the current service provision pattern. Notwithstanding the feedback, the lease on the Congleton HWRC site expires in 2021 and so a timely decision is required on future provision in Congleton.

1.6. A key consideration for the commissioning of these facilities from 2023 onwards will be the cost of running such facilities in the future which are expected to rise considerably owing to the volatility of the global market for recyclables. Furthermore, keeping the current pattern of service provision across the council would require the council to fund the capital costs associated with replacing the current facility in Congleton. The costs of replacing this facility are estimated to be at least £4m. The council would need to finance this through borrowing and the repayments would lead to an annual cost of at least £250k over 25 years.

1.7. Therefore, this report seeks approval for a revised distribution of 7 HWRCs across the Borough by confirming that Congleton HWRC will not be replaced when the lease at the current site expires this year. This would:

   1.7.1. Reduce the future running costs of the service, which are expected to rise, therefore improving value for money for the service in the future

   1.7.2. Avoid the Council having to find a further £250k of revenue to cover the costs of capital associated with providing a facility in Congleton which is particularly relevant given the ongoing challenges to the Council's finances

   1.7.3. Still enable the council to provide a pattern of service provision which more than meets the required minimum level

   1.7.4. Supports the Council's Environment Strategy and Municipal Waste Strategy which both have strategic aims of reducing waste across the Borough.

1.8. An environmental appraisal seeking to assess the impacts of proposed closure of Congleton HWRC is contained in Appendix 4 of this report. The report concludes that 'the residual impact of closing the Congleton HWRC ranges between minor beneficial to minor adverse' and makes a number of suggestions to reduce these impacts. The Council will monitor usage and consider measures to improve traffic flow at Macclesfield and Alsager sites.

1.9. There is a risk that the revised distribution will not fully mitigate the increased cost of running the remaining HWRCs through the new contract. Once market testing of the new contract has been undertaken, it may be necessary to consider further the distribution of sites to deliver the service at an acceptable cost. However, these considerations would be subject to further consultation and a decision that would be taken under the committee system of governance.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That Cabinet:

2.1.1. Note that the lease on the current Congleton Household Waste Recycling Centre expires in September 2021.

2.1.2. Approve the procurement of the new contract and note that a further decision will be sought to award the contract, confirm the distribution of Household Waste Recycling Centres and their cost.

2.1.3. Agree that the Congleton Household Waste Recycling Centre will not be replaced whilst this procurement process outlined at 2.1.2 is undertaken and a decision is taken regarding the overall provision for the Borough and as such the amount indicated in the addendum to the capital programme will remain.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. This decision would support the aims of the Council's Environment Strategy and Municipal Waste Strategy in relation to waste reduction.

3.2. A new contract for the delivery of the Household Waste Recycling Centre service in the Borough will need to be commissioned by the end of March 2023. It is anticipated that the cost of the new contract will increase significantly owing to volatility in the global market for recyclables.

3.3. The lease for the current Household Waste Recycling Centre in Congleton expires in September 2021. Not replacing the current facility in Congleton would reduce the future running cost of the HWRC service and so partly mitigate the anticipated increased cost of the new contract. Furthermore, it would avoid the cost associated with repaying the capital investment required to deliver a replacement facility at Congleton which is estimated to be £250k per annum.

3.4. It is acknowledged that this proposal could result in longer journeys for some residents and an increase in carbon emissions from those journeys. However, the Council's Corporate Plan and Environment Strategy, prioritises waste prevention, reduction and reuse over recycling and disposal, and so this may encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce. Analysis of waste levels at surrounding sites following the closure of Arclid HWRC in October 2017 suggests that not all the waste was transferred to surrounding sites with no significant increase in fly tipping and hence an overall waste reduction.

3.5. The revised distribution of 7 HWRCs would result in 96% of Cheshire East households being able to reach a site within a 20-minute drive. There would be approximately one HWRC per 27,000 households and 54,400 residents which remain well within the WRAP guidelines set out below.

3.6. Given the level of coverage that would be provided if we moved to a 7 HWRC pattern and the costs associated with replacing the facility at Congleton it is not considered to represent good value for money to proceed with its construction. Furthermore, the construction of a new facility will have environmental impacts in itself.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. There were a range of service provision options that were consulted on in the exercise undertaken.

4.2. The Council could construct a replacement HWRC in Congleton, but this is estimated to cost in an initial appraisal of £3 - £3.26 million plus site acquisition costs. Cost would need to be further developed based on any site chosen at design the stage. The annual cost of the capital investment would have to be met from the council's revenue budget. This would mean that savings would need to be found from elsewhere in the budget to accommodate this.

5. Background

5.1. The Council has a statutory duty to provide Household Waste Recycling Centres free of charge and that are reasonably accessible to residents.

5.2. The Council currently operates 8 Household Waste Recycling Centres in Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich and Poynton. The delivery of the service is managed on behalf of the Council by ANSA Environmental Services, a company wholly owned by the Council, with site operations undertaken by HW Martin Ltd and the subcontracted Site Managers.

5.3. The current Household Waste Recycling Centre contract will end on March 31st 2023. A 5-year extension was actioned in 2018 and therefore there is no option to extend the current contract further.

5.4. The current facility in Congleton is on a site that is leased by the Council. The owner of the site has informed the Council that they will not consider a renewal of the lease. The replacement of such a facility is estimated to cost in an initial appraisal of £3 - £3.26 million plus site acquisition costs which would need to be funded from the capital programme with the annual cost of the capital investment having to be met from the council's revenue budget at an estimated £250k per annum.

5.5. An extensive review of the efficiency of the Household Waste Recycling Centres service in 2016 led to the closure of a site, a reduction in the opening hours, the

introduction of a charge for disposing of rubble/construction waste and the opportunity for small traders to use our sites.

5.6. In order to prepare for the end of the contract the Council commissioned a further review in 2020 to:
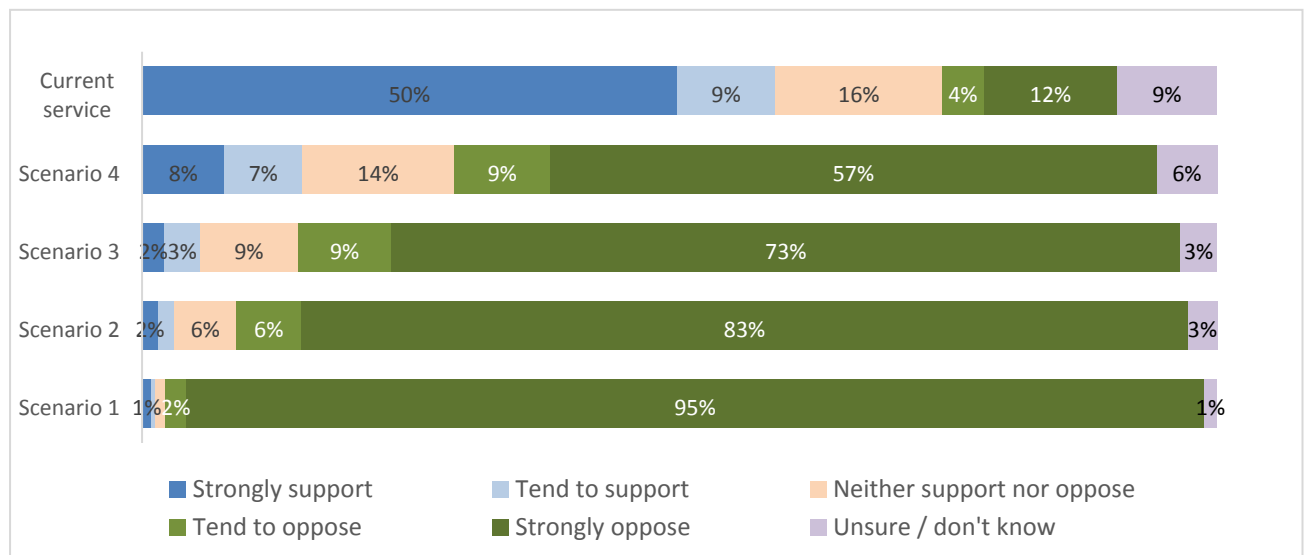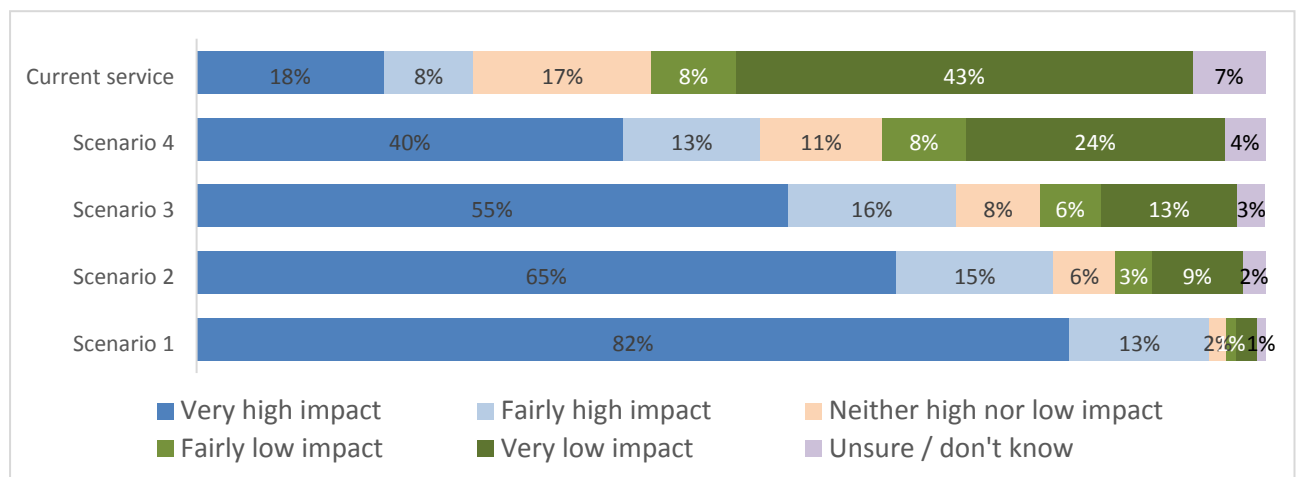
- Review the existing service, comparing it with neighbouring and similar authorities

- Review the wider waste management market to examine existing contracts and delivery arrangements

- Model a range of scenarios for the future shape of the household waste recycling centre contract.

5.7. It is to be noted that the Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) published an HWRC Guide in 2012 which recommended that the distribution of centres should:

- Be at 50,000 households per HWRC or less

- Be at 120,000 residents per HWRC or less

- Enable driving times to HWRCs to be up to 20 mins for the great majority of households in good traffic conditions (30 minutes in very rural areas).

5.8. In Cheshire East, the current provision equates to one HWRC per 24,000 households and 47,600 residents, more than twice the recommended distribution. 98% of households can reach a site within 20 minutes in normal traffic. The review highlighted that the current service also compares favourably with neighbouring and authorities that are similar to Cheshire East. This suggests that there is a potential over provision of sites within the borough.

5.9. Residents were consulted on the scenarios identified in the review and asked how they felt about the options being considered and what they considered the impact would be on them. Over 10,200 responses were received. As **Error! Reference source not found.** and 2 show, most residents supported the option to keep the current service provision pattern.

Figure 1 How strongly do you support or oppose each option being considered

	Strongly support	Tend to support	Neither support nor oppose	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure / don't know
Current service	50%	9%	16%	4%	12%	9%
Scenario 4	8%	7%	14%	9%	57%	6%
Scenario 3	2%	3%	9%	9%	73%	3%
Scenario 2	2%		6%	6%	83%	3%
Scenario 1	1%		2%		95%	1%

Figure 2 What impact would each option have on you personally?

	Very high impact	Fairly high impact	Neither high nor low impact	Fairly low impact	Very low impact	Unsure / don't know
Current service	18%	8%	17%	8%	43%	7%
Scenario 4	40%	13%	11%	8%	24%	4%
Scenario 3	55%	16%	8%	6%	13%	3%
Scenario 2	65%	15%	6%	3%	9%	2%
Scenario 1	82%	13%	2%	1%		1%

5.10. Respondents to the consultation were asked to provide comments on what the Council may need to consider as part of this review. The top themes emerging from the comments concerned the environmental impacts that closing sites may cause including fly tipping, increased carbon emissions from longer journeys, pollution and congestion from queuing to access sites, misuse of kerbside bin collections and reduction in recycling rates. Other concerns included the increased time / cost it would take to travel to an alternate site including increased difficulty for those of an older age/ the disabled and increase in demand due to new houses being built. These matters are addressed in the Environmental Appraisal in appendix 4.

5.11. In addressing residents' concerns highlighted in the consultation, an environmental appraisal has been undertaken which can be found in appendix four of this paper. The report concludes that, 'the residual impact of closing the

Congleton HWRC ranges between minor beneficial to minor adverse'[1] and summarises the impacts in the table below:

SEA Objective	Assessment	Impact	Possible Mitigation	Residual Impact
Population & Human Health Material Assets	Transportation	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems.	Minor Adverse
Air Quality Population & Human Health	Air Quality	Neutral	N/A	Neutral to Minor Beneficial
Climate Factors	Climate Change	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. Infrastructure Improvements.	Minor Adverse
Population & Human Health	Amenity	Neutral	Signage and CCTV	Neutral
Employment Social Inclusion	Socio Economic	Minor Adverse	Redeployment and infrastructure improvements.	Neutral
Population & Human Health Material Assets	Future Demand & Recycling	Minor Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems. Wider infrastructure improvements.	Neutral

5.12. The appraisal proposes a number of mitigation measures to limit the impacts of closing Congleton. These consist of the provision of additional bring sites in locations 8km or more from the alternate HWRC.; CCTV and signage at Congleton, on closure, to deter against fly tipping; managing fairer access and to monitor the effects of the closure. Review of potential to redeploy staff and review of progress of improvements outlined within the Waste Strategy. The Council will monitor usage and consider measures to minimise congestion at Macclesfield and Alsager sites and look to introduce a change in traffic flow within the site boundary at Macclesfield to accommodate any further traffic. It is noted however that with existing covid social distancing measures at our centres is creating longer queues at some peak times that would be expected in normal operational times.

5.13. Notwithstanding these risks, the key consideration in relation to the future service provision is the future costs of running HWRCs. It is anticipated that the

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[1] Resource Futures, *Environmental Appraisal of closure of Congleton HWRC* (2021) p 39

cost of the new contract will increase owing to volatility in the market for recyclables. Not replacing the current facility in Congleton would deliver a reduction in the future contract cost of the HWRC service. Furthermore, it would avoid the cost associated with repaying the capital investment required to deliver a new facility at Congleton which is currently estimated to be £250k per annum.

5.14. If Congleton HWRC were not replaced the nearest alternative sites would be in Alsager and Macclesfield. As the map below illustrates, there is currently significant overlap in catchment areas in this area of the borough. Alsager or Macclesfield HWRC is within a 15 minute drive time for the majority of Congleton households.
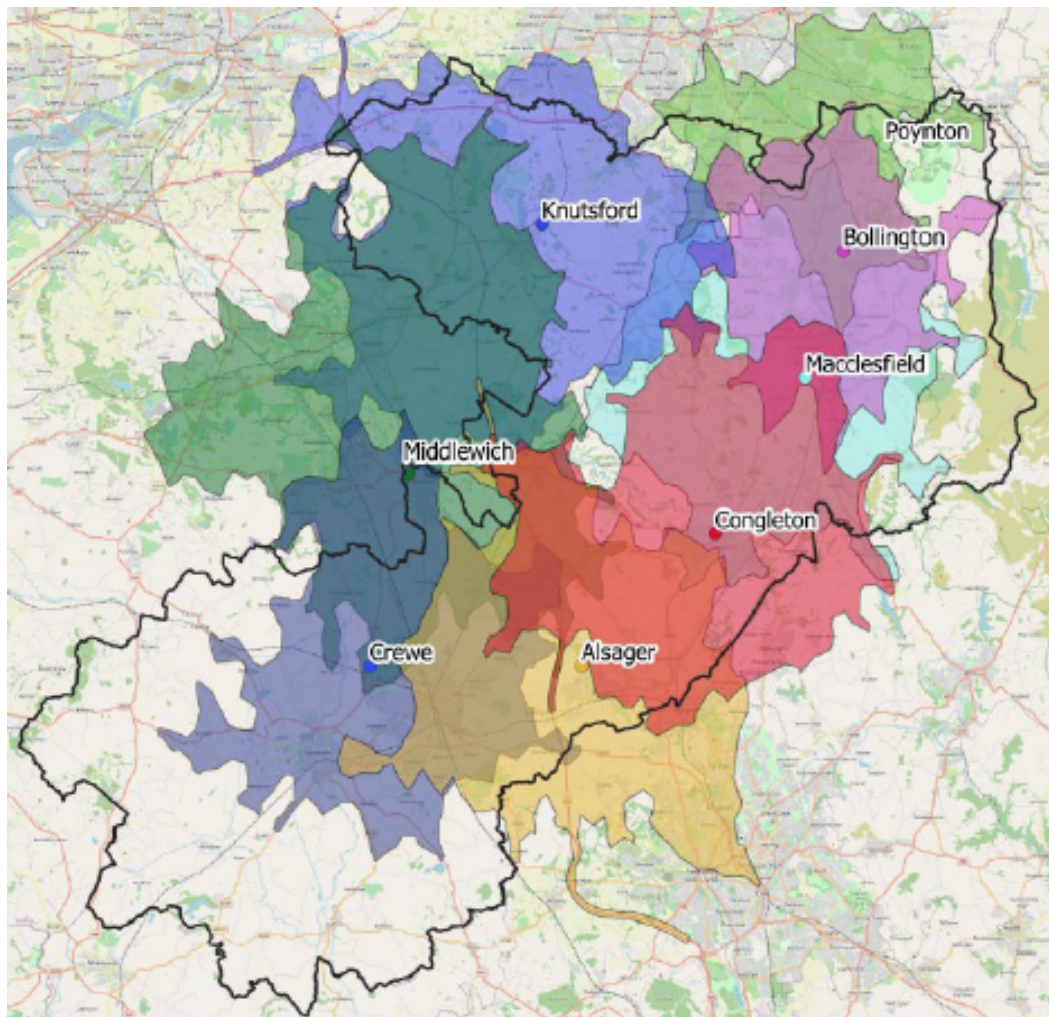
Current HWRC network and 15-minute drive times

5.15. The closure of Congleton HWRC would result in 96% of Cheshire East households being able to reach a site within a 20 minute drive. There would be approximately one HWRC per 27,000 households and 54,400 residents which remain well within the WRAP guidelines set out in 5.7 above.

5.16. However, there is a risk that the proposed closure of Congleton HWRC will not fully mitigate the future increased contract cost of operating the remaining HWRCs. Once market testing of the new contract has been undertaken, it may be necessary to consider further rationalisation and review to ensure the service can be delivered within the available budget.

5.17. In addition, the new service will investigate technological solutions to ensure a fair use policy such as use of number plate recognition to ensure sites are accessed by Cheshire East residents only. The service will also investigate the potential of a mobile 'pop up' household waste service provision to provide fairer access to waste disposal for communities who are currently disadvantaged. There are examples such as North Yorkshire County Council and Conway County Borough Council providing a mobile service to rural areas which could be a model for our future service provision.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. Councils must provide Household Waste Recycling Centres. Under Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990… it shall be the duty of each waste disposal authority to arrange … for places to be provided at which *persons resident in its area* may deposit *their* household waste (1) (b). They must be reasonably accessible to persons resident in its area (2) (a), open at reasonable times, including Saturday and available *free of charge by persons resident in the area* (2) (c)

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. It is anticipated that the cost associated with running HWRCs will increase owing to volatility in the market for recyclables. At this stage it is to be noted that the future cost of a contract is a future financial risk and will not be known until a new contract has been awarded. Therefore, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 22/23 onwards will need to reflect the anticipated increase in costs for the 2023/24 financial year together with proposals on how the overall budget can be balanced.

6.2.2. The Council's MTFS Capital Addendum contains £4 million for the construction of a new Congleton site, however projects in the capital addendum are still subject to business case approval, in particular considering how the cost of the capital investment would be repaid.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. Household Waste and Recycling Centres support the vision within the Corporate Plan for an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East. The service helps to protect and enhance our environment by enabling the responsible recycling and disposal of waste. The proposal to investigate the feasibility of

a mobile 'pop up' household waste service provision will help to provide fairer access to the service for all.

6.4. **Equality Implications**

6.4.1. An equality Impact assessment has been undertaken and is included in Appendix 3. The closure of Congleton HWRC will impact all households that currently use the site, but the impact will be the same for all users because all must drive to their nearest HWRC. The current service does not accommodate residents who have no vehicle access, but the new service will seek to provide greater access through additional bring sites and a potential new mobile service.

6.4.2. Concerns were raised in the consultation process about older and less physically able site users having an issue driving further to access a site. The environmental appraisal identifies that the existing facility contained stepped gantry access to the skips that was not considered to be accessible and that an additional drive of 5 to 10 minutes did not introduce an impediment to users of the site who already drive and load/unload their vehicles. Both Alsager and Macclesfield offer a site that is on a single level with no gantries to negotiate with easy access to the skips.

6.5. **Human Resources Implications**

6.6. The proposal has no affect on Cheshire East and Ansa staffing but may result in staff implications for the household waste centre contactor.

6.7. **Risk Management Implications**

6.7.1. There is a risk that following soft market testing that an alternative operator will not deliver what we are seeking but we will address this through a thorough commissioning and procurement process that will ensure a quality service.

6.8. **Rural Communities Implications**

6.8.1. Travel times for some rural residents will increase and though these are within acceptable limits in line with national guidance, the Council recognises this possibility and will seek to provide alternative, mobile facilities in the new contract.

6.9. **Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

6.9.1. There are no implications for children and young people.

6.10. **Public Health Implications**

6.10.1. The Council recognises that some residents will be required to make longer journeys, thus increasing vehicle emissions, to access a centre but anticipate that because of the greater distances that residents will make

fewer journeys. The environmental appraisal identifies that in overall terms, based on the information available, it is considered the affect to be neutral to minor beneficial impact, based on the reduction of 2 HGV collections per day that would no longer be required.

6.10.2. Regarding fly-tipping, the appraisal notes that there is no evidence to suggest that the closure of a household waste recycling centre leads to an increase in litter and fly-tipping. A minor adverse effect has been assumed in the short term if members of the public drive to Congleton and find the site closed, fly tipping instead of travelling to an alternate site.

6.11. **Climate Change Implications**

6.11.1. Given the significant change in recycling since the previous contract was procured, we anticipate that site performance will be improved and the opportunity to reuse and recycle enhanced.

6.11.2. The environmental appraisal has assumed a complete re-distribution of trips across the network as a worst case, in reality (prior to any mitigation measures being employed) the number of trips are likely to reduce with residents making fewer trips but with larger quantities of materials. Notwithstanding this, overall, the development will have a moderate adverse effect as it will result in higher carbon emissions associated with transport emissions than if the HWRC remained open.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. Wards affected

- Congleton East – Cllrs D Brown, R Moreton, D Murphy
- Congleton West – Cllrs S Akers Smith, G Hayes and S Holland

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. A full borough wide consultation was carried out in which a range of options for future service provision were considered – there were over 10,000 responses.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The review of the Cheshire East HWRC Network is provided as appendix 1.

9.2. The consultation report is provided as appendix 2.

9.3. The Equality Impact Assessment is provided as appendix 3.

9.4. The Environmental Appraisal is provided as appendix 4.

9.5. The Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2030 and Household Waste and Recycling Centres Review can be accessed from the Council website here.

10. Contact Information

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

Name: Ralph Kemp

Job Title: Head of Environmental Services
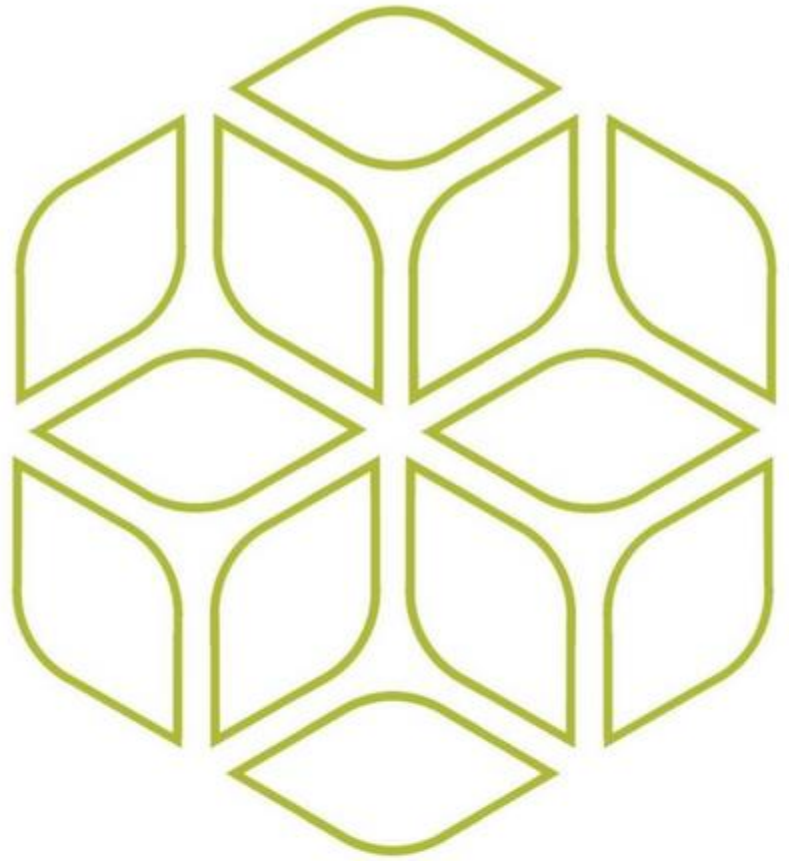
Review of Cheshire East Council HWRC network

Cheshire East Council

July 2020

resourcefutures

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Limitations

This report has been produced by Resource Futures on behalf of Cheshire East Council. Whilst Resource Futures has taken all due care to interpret and collate the information presented within the report, any third party relying on the results of the analysis shall do so at their own risk and neither Resource Futures nor Cheshire East Council shall be liable for any loss or damages arising there from.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Resource Futures was commissioned to carry out an update to a previous review and consider the options available to the Council for the future shape of the household waste recycling centre contract. With the contract ending in early 2023 the Council sought independent expert advice on the ways forward. CEC is aware that the current contract cannot simply be replicated and that national and international changes in the waste sector need to be considered. The volatility of the recycling market has severely impacted the planned income from these materials, and therefore future contracts may incur higher costs. The Council is seeking to understand the best contract model.

Contract procurement options

A comparison of the performance of the current contract alongside neighbouring and similar authorities recognised the range of contracts that are available; an evaluation of some working options was carried out. It is important to acknowledge that any contract options are going to be affected by the recent government Resources and Waste Strategy and the legislation which will result from it. The legislative environment means that the conditions within the waste management sector will be uncertain until at least 2023, when the majority of the initiatives are due to be implemented. Additionally, the situation on the international material markets means that the prices of materials are currently low. This suggests that the contractors bidding for any HWRC contract will be cautious while Local Authorities will need to build flexibility into contracts, which is likely to result in additional costs to operate services.

The analysis of the options available to the Council reveals that there are a number of key points that officers will need to consider before commencing the procurement process including appetite for risk, utilising the LA owned company, partnership work with the neighbouring authorities and the investment in infrastructure needed. The different operating models all have pros and cons so it is not possible to recommend one over another. In any case, it will be crucial to ensure that any future procurement exercise and contract documents (specification, payment mechanisms and incentives/penalties) are clearly set out to ensure best value is achieved for the Council.

Comparing the current service

To provide an informed understanding of the current service provision and its performance, a comparison was made with neighbouring authority sites and authorities that are similar to Cheshire East. On many of the measures used the provision is clearly highly rated and compares favourably, however with the contract due for renewal there is a need to ensure that the service is fit for purpose. The previous review revealed that the service provision was generous and therefore in order to determine the most efficient combinations of sites, Resource Futures was tasked with modelling four different scenarios that involved the closure of some sites. Could the Council operate more effectively by operating fewer improved sites and still deliver the same level of service?

Table E 1 below shows the scenarios modelled.

Table E 1 Network options scenarios

Site	Current	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Alsager	✔		✔	✔	✔
Bollington	✔			✔	✔
Congleton	✔				
Crewe	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Knutsford	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Macclesfield	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Middlewich	✔				✔
Poynton	✔				

Impact on distance and travel times

The current provision offers the best coverage in terms of the shortest drive times for residents, as indicated in the table below, however both scenario 3 and 4 offer 96% of all properties less than a 20-minute drive to their nearest HWRC. In scenario 3 and 4, only 4% of households are required to drive for more than 20 minutes to reach their nearest site and in scenario 4, the majority (96%) are able to reach their nearest HWRC within 20 minutes by car.

Table E 2 Proportion of households in each of the drive time bands for each scenario

Scenario	Proportion of Households				
	Less than 5 minutes	Less than 10 minutes	Less than 15 minutes	Less than 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
Current	22%	63%	91%	98%	2%
Scenario 1	11%	37%	68%	88%	12%
Scenario 2	13%	43%	78%	93%	7%
Scenario 3	15%	48%	82%	96%	4%
Scenario 4	17%	52%	86%	96%	4%

The analysis shows that a reduction in the number of sites, whilst having a localised impact, does not present a problem for the vast majority of residents. This understanding informs the preparation of the contract procurement since there may need to be flexibility within the contract to accommodate a reduction in sites if this is shown to be the most effective means of delivering a high-quality service. It is unlikely that the number of sites is a factor in how attractive the contract is to the market. The key considerations in the short term will be connected to the material markets and how this will impact the affordability of the contract.

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Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   Cheshire East HWRC network

Cheshire East Council (CEC) is a unitary Authority with a population of 370,100 and an area of 116,638 hectares. The Borough was created in April 2009 when Cheshire County Council and all borough councils within the County ceased to exist and was replaced by Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Unitary authorities.

The Council operates 8 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC). The delivery of the HWRC service is currently managed on behalf of Cheshire East Council by ANSA Environmental Services, a company wholly owned by Cheshire East Council, with site operations being undertaken under contract by HW Martin Ltd and the subcontracted Site Managers. The Site Managers are responsible for employing and managing site staff, provision of adequate Certificate of Technical Competence cover on site, site security and site cleanliness. The individual site managers are also responsible for the provision of suitable containers for the collection and storage of non- ferrous metal and reusable bric-a-brac, and a significant part of their payment for operating the sub contract comes from the right to remove and sell this non-ferrous material and bric-a-brac. HW Martin retain responsibility for ensuring the HWRC are operated in line with contract requirements, and for providing outlets for all material deposited at the site, bar the aforementioned reusable material, non-ferrous metal, and non-recyclable material, (which HW Martin are paid to haul to disposal sites operating under the Council's primary waste disposal contract). This contract is in place until March 2023.

In 2016 Resource Futures was commissioned to carry out a review of the service and as a result of this work the Council implemented the following changes to the service provision:

- Site closure (Arclid)
- Reducing hours at all sites from an average of 10 to 8 hours per day
- Introducing a rubble/construction waste charge that has resulted in total throughput at sites dropping by 25%
- The opportunity for smaller traders to deposit rubble at the Council's sites

1.2   Cheshire East Municipal Waste Management Strategy

In 2014 CEC published a Municipal Waste Management Strategy, identifying how it plans to manage waste up to 2030. The Strategy included a recommendation to undertake a review of the HWRC network and identified that less than 20% of the borough's household waste is taken to the HWRCs. An objective of the Strategy was to maintain the role of HWRCs in collecting bulkier wastes and maximising the recycling and re-use of these items. It also indicated that CEC *"will examine the use of Third Sector Organisations as potential off takers for the re-use of bulky waste and WEEE collected at HWRCs"*. The Strategy also suggested that CEC investigates the management of commercial and industrial waste through provision of a dedicated commercial waste recycling centre in order to meet CECs aspirations of serving the business community and improving overall waste management. Re-use and commercial waste were therefore considered within the 2016 review resulting in the acceptance of rubble/construction waste from small traders at all sites. This was deemed to be a more cost effective action than creating a single site dedicated to trade.

In 2020 the Council carried out a review of the Waste Management Strategy, taking into account the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy. The review was due to be consulted with the public, but this is currently put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The review included two updated targets which are particularly pertinent to HWRCs:

- *Having exceeded the national targets for recycling of 50% by 2020, to work towards the new national target of 65% by 2035.* HWRCs will need to contribute to achieving this target.
- *To utilise waste that cannot be reused or recycled as a resource for energy generation.* The sites are separating the residual material delivered by the residents to ensure that the bulky waste items can be shredded and sent for energy recovery.

1.3 Aims and objectives of this review

Resource Futures was commissioned to carry out an update to the previous review and consider the options that are available to the Council for the future shape of the HWRC contract. With the contract ending in early 2023 the Council sought independent expert advice on the ways forward. CEC is aware that the current model has been superseded by others, whose contracts are not based on the income from commodities as a key element. This is an important change as the volatility of the recycling market has severely impacted the planned income from these materials, and therefore future contracts are likely to incur higher costs. The Council is seeking to understand the best contract model based on the scenarios below.

Key objectives are therefore:

1. Modelling the scenarios identified by Cheshire East Council. The scenarios include:

- Scenario 1 - Keeping 3 key sites open. Crewe, Macclesfield and Knutsford and therefore closing Congleton, Poynton, Bollington, Alsager and Middlewich
- Scenario 2 – Keeping 4 sites open. Crewe, Macclesfield, Knutsford and Alsager
- Scenario 3 - Keeping 5 sites open. Crewe, Macclesfield, Knutsford, Bollington and Alsager
- Scenario 4 – Keeping 6 sites open, closing Poynton and Congleton

The analysis of the scenarios will help the Council understand the impact on the remaining sites in terms of throughput and traffic, the impact on residents in terms of site provision and drive times as well as any legislative or statutory implications.

Additionally, the review will help the Council understand how the services compare with the geographic and demographic neighbours. The review will identify how services could be improved and the potential for increased income.

2. Determining viable contract options from the analysis included in the review. This will assist the Council in assessing the future market and legislative situation and the impact of these on services as well as the contracts and procurement options.

2 Baseline

2.1 Current HWRC provision levels

The Council has a statutory duty to provide sites at which residents can deposit their household waste free of charge and that are reasonably accessible to residents. The legislation does not specify how many sites

an authority should provide and therefore the responsible authority is able to determine what is reasonably accessible based on local circumstances.

The Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) published an HWRC Guide in 2012, which identified guidance for the level of provision of HWRCs, these were:

- Maximum catchment for a large proportion of the population of 3-5 miles (7 miles in very rural areas)
- Maximum driving times for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions of twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas)
- Maximum number of inhabitants per HWRC of 120,000
- Maximum number of households per HWRC of 50,000

In Cheshire East, there are currently eight sites at Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich and Poynton. This equates to one site for approximately 24,000 households and one site for every 47,600 inhabitants. 76% of residents are within 5 miles of an HWRC and over 98% can reach a site within 20 minutes in normal traffic. Taking account of the guidelines above, CEC currently has a sufficient provision of HWRCs to fulfil its statutory duty.

2.2 Current performance

The following Figure 1 shows the performance of the HWRC network between 2017 and 2020. The impact of the introduction of the rubble charges in January 2018 can be clearly seen in the significant decrease in the quantity of the material presented at the HWRC network. This therefore led to a decrease in the recycling rate (incl. rubble). However further analysis of the data (removing rubble from the calculation as shown by the dark blue line) shows a more general decline in the recycling rates across the network from 65% in 2016/17 to 61% in 2019/20.
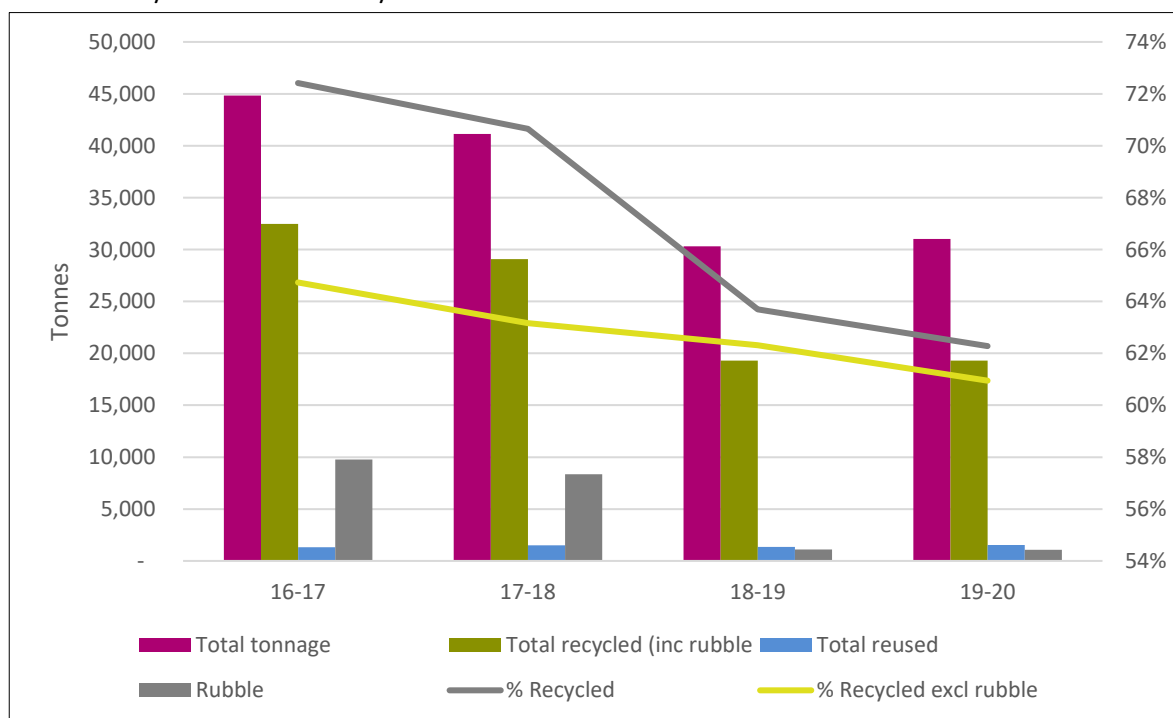

Figure 1 HWRC network performance between 2016/17 and 2019/20

2.3   Users

A user count was carried out in May and June 2020 following the reopening of sites, after the pandemic restrictions had been lifted. The results are shown in Table 1 below. Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield and Alsager had the highest footfall.

Table 1 Average users per day per site

Site	Average no of users per day
Alsager	304
Bollington	175
Congleton	186
Crewe	419
Knutsford	325
Macclesfield	303
Middlewich	172
Poynton	206
Total	**2,090**

3   Benchmarking

CEC was benchmarked with both neighbouring and similar authorities with the results provided below. Further detail is referenced in the following section and provided in Appendix A.

3.1   Neighbouring authorities

HWRC sites in six neighbouring local authorities were selected for benchmarking based on their proximity to the border with CEC. The neighbouring authorities are:

- Cheshire West and Chester
- Warrington Borough Council
- Greater Manchester WDA (incl. Manchester, Stockport, Trafford)
- Derbyshire County Council (incl. High Peak Borough Council)
- Staffordshire County Council (incl. Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council)
- Shropshire

According to the 2018/19 national HWRC directory CEC has the second highest HWRC recycling rate excluding rubble (66.7%), following Warrington (71.0%). In terms of throughput, CEC has the second lowest annual tonnage, coinciding with a 25% drop from the previous year. Throughput per household is middle of the range (180kg/hh/yr.); with Shropshire and Greater Manchester residents producing the most HWRC waste (276 kg/hh/yr.). Both CEC and Cheshire West and Chester have the highest number of sites per 100,000 population (2.1 sites), when compared with the neighbouring authorities.

A summary of key policies and opening times are detailed in Table 2. All authorities enforce vehicle restrictions, largely related to vehicle payload and length. Shropshire enforces a similar permit scheme to CEC for vans or larger vehicles, while Warrington issues permits either for vans with large amounts of

household waste, or where non-household waste is being disposed of. Both Greater Manchester and Warrington allow only a certain number of visits per year, with the former restricting frequency based on vehicle type. Only Staffordshire requires residents to pay for disposal of rubble, plasterboard and soil type wastes, though most authorities state that only small DIY projects can be accepted. Greater Manchester and some sites in Staffordshire cannot accept plasterboard and asbestos.

HWRC opening times are varied across the authorities. Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington, Greater Manchester, and Derbyshire all provide at least one site with opening times similar to or greater than CEC. The Chester, Ellesmere Port and Winsford recycling centres, within Cheshire West, provide 12-hour opening times during weekdays in the summer months.

Table 2 HWRC policies and opening times of neighbouring authorities

Authority	Vehicle restrictions	Residents Permit	Limits on non-household waste	Opening Times	Trade Waste Accepted?	DIY Charges
Cheshire East	Yes	Yes, for vans or trailers	Small DIY projects only, charges applicable. No gas cylinders or tyres. Asbestos at Pyms Lane Crewe or Danes Moss Macclesfield only.	Seven days a week; 8:30am-5pm April-September, 8:30am-4pm October-March.	Yes, limited quantities of rubble from small traders	Hardcore/rubble/soil/ceramic/glass & plasterboard = £3.60 per bag, per sheet or individual item.
Cheshire West & Chester	Yes	No except for Neston, due to location near council boundary.	Cannot accept asbestos, gas cylinders, tyres.	3x sites open seven days a week: Summer months 8am-8pm weekdays, 8am-6pm weekends. Winter months 8am-4pm every day. 4x sites open five days a week (midweek closing). Summer months 9am-5pm. Winter months 8am-4pm.	No – separate centre allocated for trade waste next to Chester Site.	No
Warrington Borough Council	Yes	Yes, for non-household waste, or when using van for large amounts of household waste.	Requires permit with list of items, regardless of vehicle. Up to three visits in 12-month period. Can't accept car tyres or vehicle parts, fire extinguishers, gas bottles, hazardous or flammable liquids or chemicals, pallets.	Gatewarth: Seven days a week; 8am-6pm Stockton Heath / Woolston: Seven days a week; 10am-4pm weekdays, 8am-6pm weekends (Stockton Heath: 8am-4pm weekends in winter months).	No	No
Greater Manchester WDA	Yes	No	No asbestos, plasterboard (both to be taken to waste transfer facility) or food waste.	Seven days a week; 8am-6pm	No	No
Derbyshire County Council	Yes	No	No car parts except tyres (max 4), large tree branches, large items of fitted furniture, greenhouses, sheds, fencing, decking, Christmas cards or wrapping paper. Plasterboard – max. 50kg per visit per week, whole sheets not accepted. Asbestos – 2x roofing sheets or 2m downpipe.	Seven days a week; 8:30am-6pm	No	No

Authority	Vehicle restrictions	Residents Permit	Limits on non-household waste	Opening Times	Trade Waste Accepted?	DIY Charges
Staffordshire County Council	Yes	No	DIY only. Charges applicable to some items. No car parts (except tyres/batteries), animal carcasses, petrol or diesel. No plasterboard at Cheadle or Newcastle. No engine oil at Newcastle. Although usually accepted at Leek, asbestos is not currently permitted. Restricted to 4 sheets or 4 bags per household every six months.	Newcastle-under-Lyme: Five days a week (midweek closing), 9am-5pm. In summer months, 9am-6pm weekdays. Staffordshire Moorlands - Biddulph: Five days a week (Mon/Tue closed), 9am-6pm. In winter months, 9am-4:30pm. Leek: Seven days a week, 9am-5pm (in summer months, 9am-6pm weekdays).Cheadle: Five days a week (midweek closing), 9am-5pm (in summer months, 9am-6pm weekdays).	No	Rubble/bricks/concrete/glass/gravel/ceramic/sand/slate/soil/stone/tarmac/turf/tiles & fibreglass - £3 per bag or large item. Plasterboard - £4 per bag or sheet. Tyres - £4 per tyre.
Shropshire	Yes	Yes, for cars with large trailers, vans and 4x4s with goods body, long-term hire commercial vehicles.	Small DIY only. Asbestos requires notification prior to visit.	Seven days a week; 9am-5pm	No	No

3.2   Similar authorities

In order to benchmark the current CEC HWRC operation we have identified five target authorities using Office of National Statistics (ONS) area classification data which uses 59 key variables of demographic and socio-economic factors to rank the similarity of local authorities across the UK. The most similar authorities to CEC are identified as:

- Cheshire West & Chester
- Tewkesbury
- Stroud
- Stafford
- Monmouth

For authorities that are waste collection authorities only (Tewskesbury, Stroud and Stafford), HWRC data for the disposal authorities (Gloucestershire and Staffordshire) has been used.

According to the 2018/19 National HWRC Directory, CEC has the highest HWRC recycling rate excluding rubble when compared to the similar authorities. CEC's throughput per household is second lowest amongst the group (180kg/hh/yr.), following Staffordshire (175kg/hh/yr.). Monmouthshire in comparison, had a throughput per household of 492kg/hh/yr., and provides double the amount of sites per 100,000 population (4.2.) when compared to CEC (2.1 sites).

A summary of key policies and opening times are detailed in Table 3. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire normally use a similar permit scheme to CEC for vans and trailers, though both are currently enforcing a pre-booking system in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Both Gloucestershire and Staffordshire will accept tyres and batteries but not car parts, and also mention that they will not accept petrol or diesel. All authorities accept plasterboard, rubble and soil, as long as it is for DIY only and not trade waste, with only Staffordshire charging for the disposal of these items. Monmouthshire explicitly states that DIY waste is restricted to five bags or one small car boot load per visit, with a maximum of two visits per month.

The majority of sites have shorter opening times compared to CEC, with Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and some Cheshire West sites opening for five or six days per week.

Table 3 HWRC policies and opening times of similar authorities

Authority	Vehicle restrictions	Residents Permit	Limits on non-household waste	Opening Times	Trade Waste Accepted?	DIY Charges
Cheshire East	Yes	Yes, for vans or trailers	Small DIY projects only, charges applicable. No gas cylinders or tyres. Asbestos at Pyms Lane Crewe or Danes Moss Macclesfield only.	Seven days a week; 8:30am-5pm. April-September, 8:30am-4pm October-March.	Yes, limited quantities of rubble from small traders	Hardcore/rubble/soil/ceramic/glass & plasterboard = £3.60 per bag, per sheet or individual item.
Cheshire West & Chester	Yes	No except for Neston, due to location near council boundary.	Cannot accept asbestos, gas cylinders, tyres.	3x sites open seven days a week: Summer months 8am-8pm weekdays, 8am-6pm weekends. Winter months 8am-4pm every day. 4x sites open five days a week (midweek closing). Summer months 9am-5pm. Winter months 8am-4pm.	No – separate centre allocated for trade waste next to Chester Site.	No
Gloucestershire County Council (Tewkesbury, Stroud)	Yes	Normally for vans. Booking system now in force for all visits due to Covid-19.	Cannot accept ammunition, flares, animal carcasses, car parts (except tyres/batteries), clinical waste, petrol or diesel, invasive or poisonous plant species, large items such as septic or heating tanks. Asbestos must be pre-booked.	Six days a week (mid-week closing). 9am-5pm.	No	No
Staffordshire County Council (Stafford)	Yes	No	DIY only. Charges applicable to some items. No car parts (except tyres/batteries), animal carcasses, petrol or diesel. Although usually accepted, asbestos is not currently permitted due to Covid-19. Restricted to 4 sheets or 4 bags per household every six months.	Seven days a week; 9am-5pm. In summer months, 9am-6pm weekdays.	No	Rubble/bricks/concrete/glass/gravel/ceramic/sand/slate/soil/stone/tarmac/turf/tiles & fibreglass - £3 per bag or large item. Plasterboard - £4 per bag or sheet. Tyres - £4 per tyre.
Monmouthshire County Council	Yes	Normally for vans. Booking system now in force for all visits due to Covid-19.	DIY waste restricted to five bags or small car boot load per visit, with maximum of two visits per month. No asbestos.	Six days a week (midweek closing); 8am-5pm. Covid: Key worker times: 8am-9am.	No	No

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3.3 Benchmarking findings

The findings of the benchmarking with neighbouring and similar authorities suggest that:

- In terms of rubble/construction type wastes, only Staffordshire charges residents for disposal similar to CEC. Monmouthshire and Derbyshire do provide limits on the amount of waste that can be disposed, but most authorities are less explicit, asking only that small DIY wastes be brought to recycling centres.
- Most of the comparable authorities require some form of residential permit for vans, but not all.
- The majority of authorities accept asbestos but impose either limit to the amount that can be disposed or ask that site visits are pre-booked. Safe handling and bagging or wrapping of materials is advised in all cases.
- CEC is amongst the authorities which provide longer opening times. There are however three sites within Cheshire West which are open for 12 hours each weekday during the summer.

4 Scenario spatial analysis showing drive times and distances for residents

Spatial analysis has been completed to understand the distance residents need to travel to the nearest HWRC and the drive times for residents within Cheshire East. A number of scenarios were modelled to consider the impact of closing two or more sites. All calculations assume that residents are likely to visit their closest site in Cheshire East. The analysis does not include HWRCs outside the Cheshire East boundary.

Table 4 Sites included within each scenario (✔ denotes site remains open in the scenario)

Site	Current	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Alsager	✔		✔	✔	✔
Bollington	✔			✔	✔
Congleton	✔				
Crewe	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Knutsford	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Macclesfield	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Middlewich	✔				✔
Poynton	✔				

The scenarios were chosen by CEC to represent different levels of HWRC provision, ranging from just two site closures in scenario 4, to a network of only three sites. Detailed results of the spatial analysis are included in Appendix B with the key points discussed below.

At present, with eight HWRCs, 98% of householders can reach a site within twenty minutes. Analysis indicates that more than 78% of all households could drive to an HWRC in less than fifteen minutes in all of the scenarios modelled, (with the exception of the scenario whereby only the core sites of Crewe, Knutsford and Macclesfield remain open). This suggests that there is a potential over provision of sites

within the authority and closure of up to three sites would not have a significant impact upon the majority of the population. Reducing the number of HWRCs to only three sites would mean that approximately 12% of households would have to drive more than 20 minutes to reach a HWRC. CEC may deem this to be acceptable given the WRAP guidance suggest that the great majority of residents are twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas) away.

Drive time analysis has been used as a proxy for which sites a householder is most likely to use. Of course, convenience and preference will also play a role. However, assuming householders use their nearest sites, 67% of CEC households use Alsager, Crewe, Knutsford or Macclesfield. 7% of households use Poynton HWRC, 8% use Middlewich HWRC and both Bollington and Congleton are used by 9% of households. Previous analysis has shown that the proximity of sites within neighbouring authorities means that approximately 8% of households are closer to a site outside of CEC. The map below shows the locations of the HWRCs and the current overlap of 15-minute drive times.
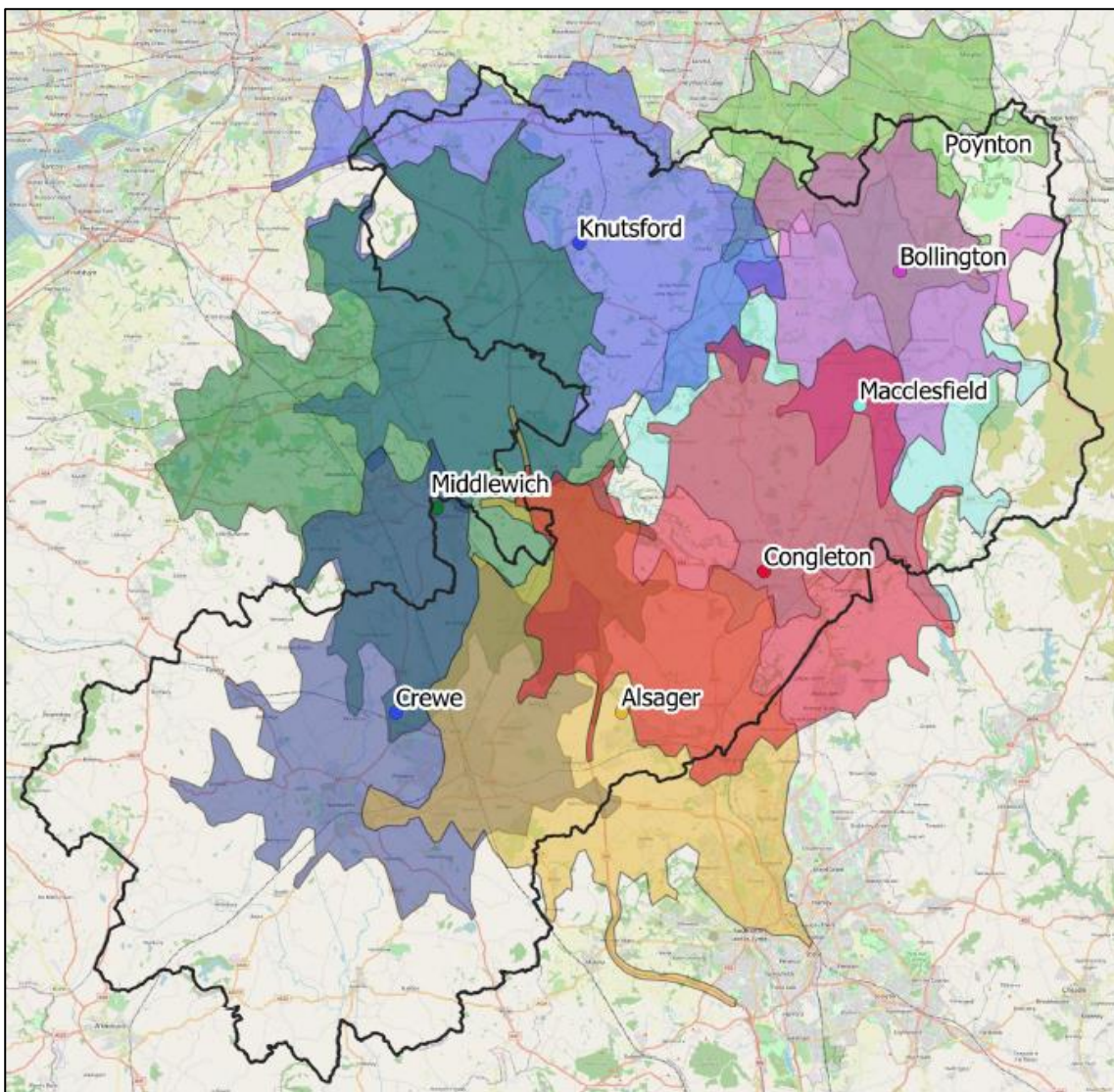
Figure 2 Current HWRC network and 15-minute drive times

4.1   Scenario 1 – Macclesfield, Crewe and Knutsford open

If five of the eight sites were to close, Macclesfield would be the closest site for another 21% of the population. Crewe would be the closest site of another 16% of the population. Therefore, both sites would require redevelopment or renewal to accommodate this additional throughput of site users and tonnage. Indeed, all three sites would also require investment to ensure they could accommodate the additional throughput whilst maintaining high recycling rates.
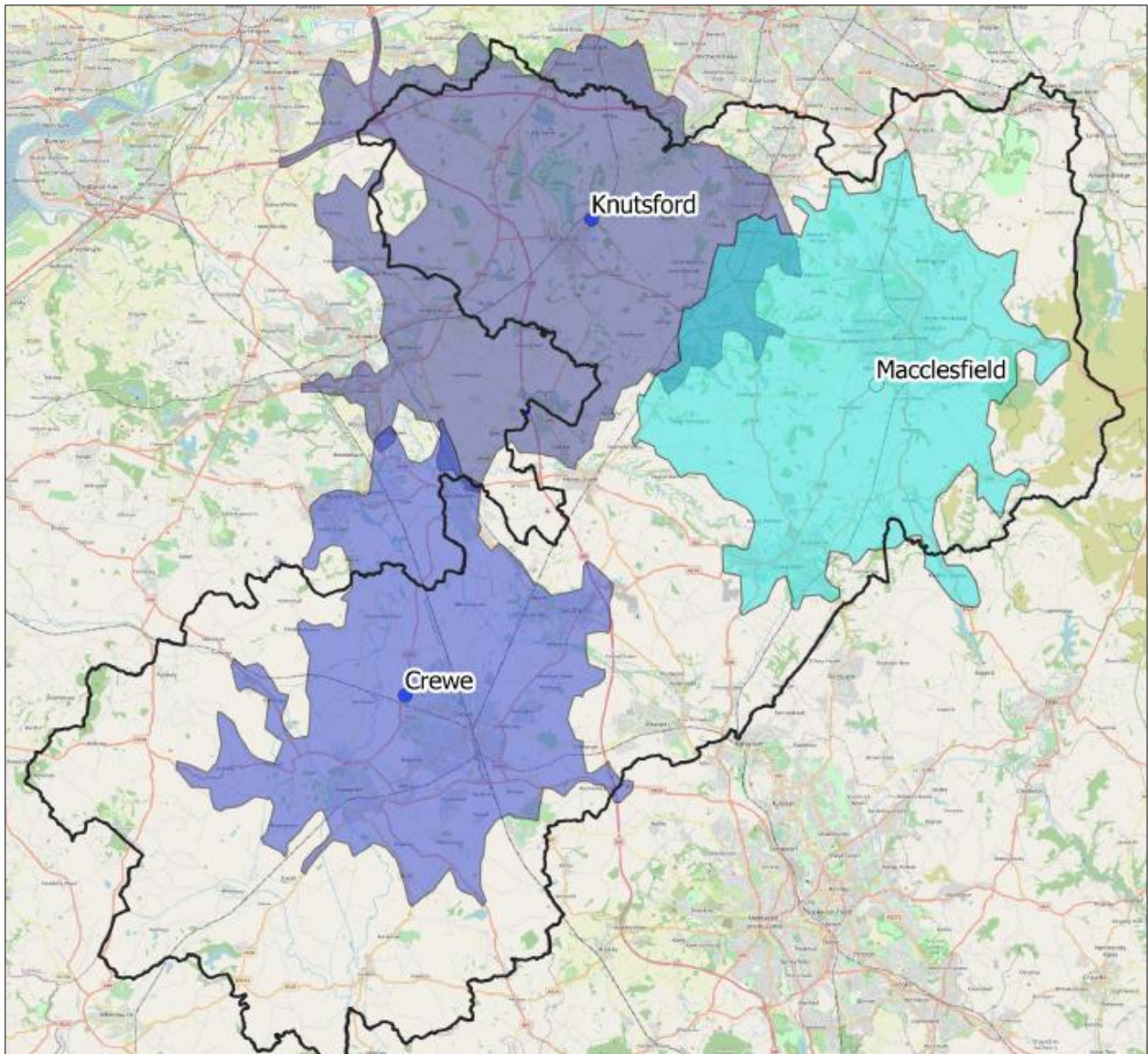
Figure 3 Scenario 1 and 15-minute drive times

4.2 Scenario 2 – Macclesfield, Crewe, Knutsford and Alsager open

A scenario that sees Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton close (as the four sites with the smallest throughput) would minimise the overlap of HWRC catchments in the centre of the authority. There would be areas in the north around Colshaw Farm and Poynton and in the South in Wrenbury and Audlem where residents would be expected to drive for more than 15 minutes to reach their nearest HWRC within Cheshire East. However, based on WRAP guidelines, 93% of households would still receive acceptable levels of provision because they could reach a site within twenty minutes. In this scenario there would be a noticeable impact on Macclesfield HWRC with 37,000 more properties in the Macclesfield catchment area, compared with the current provision.
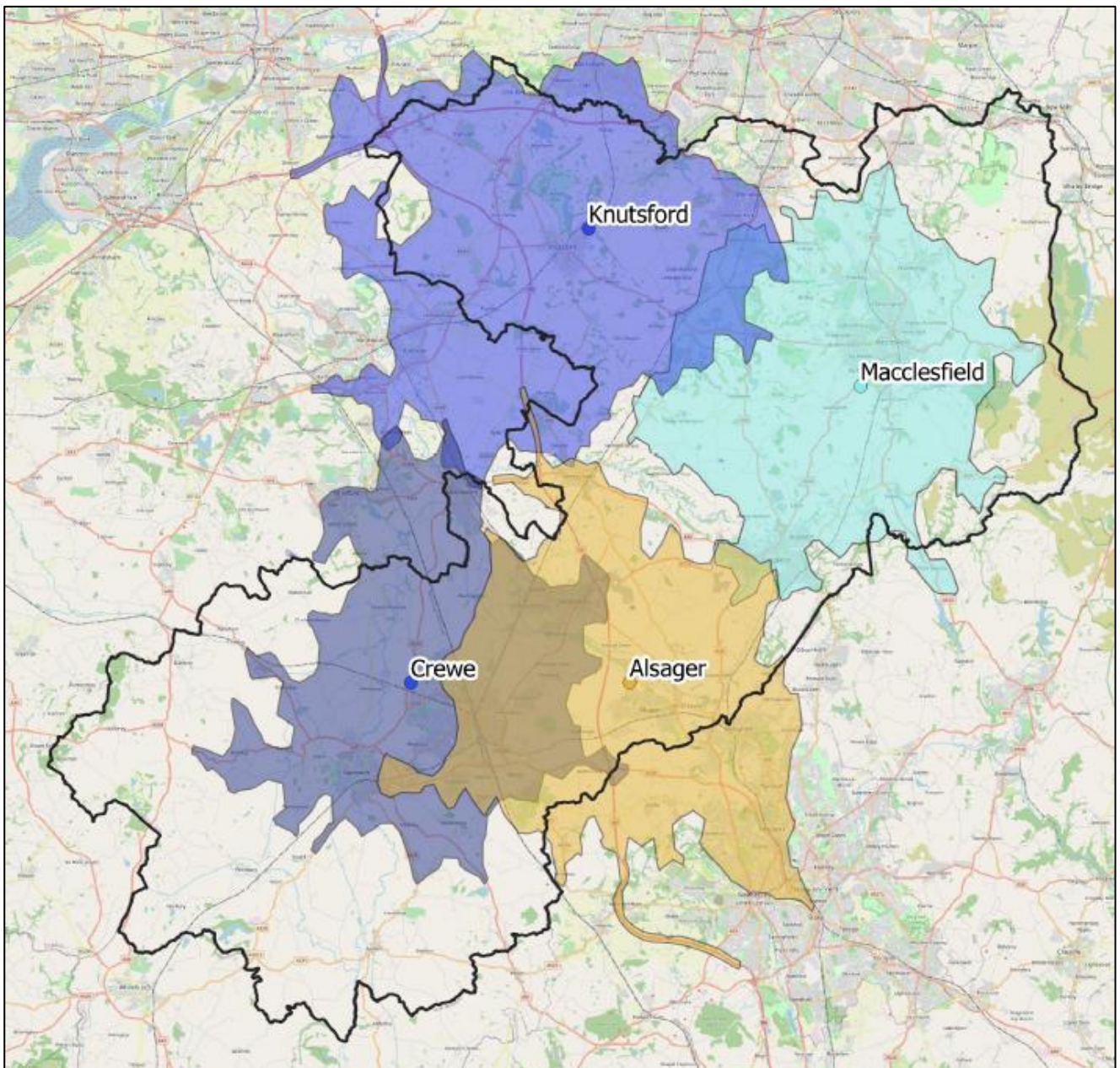
Figure 4 Scenario 2 and 15-minute drive times

4.3 Scenario 3 – Macclesfield, Crewe, Knutsford, Alsager and Bollington open

If Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton close, and assuming they are not replaced, the spatial analysis forecasts that Macclesfield and Bollington will see increased use. 9% more households will go to Macclesfield and 7% more households will go to Bollington. 96% of households will still receive acceptable levels of provision because they could reach a site within twenty minutes.
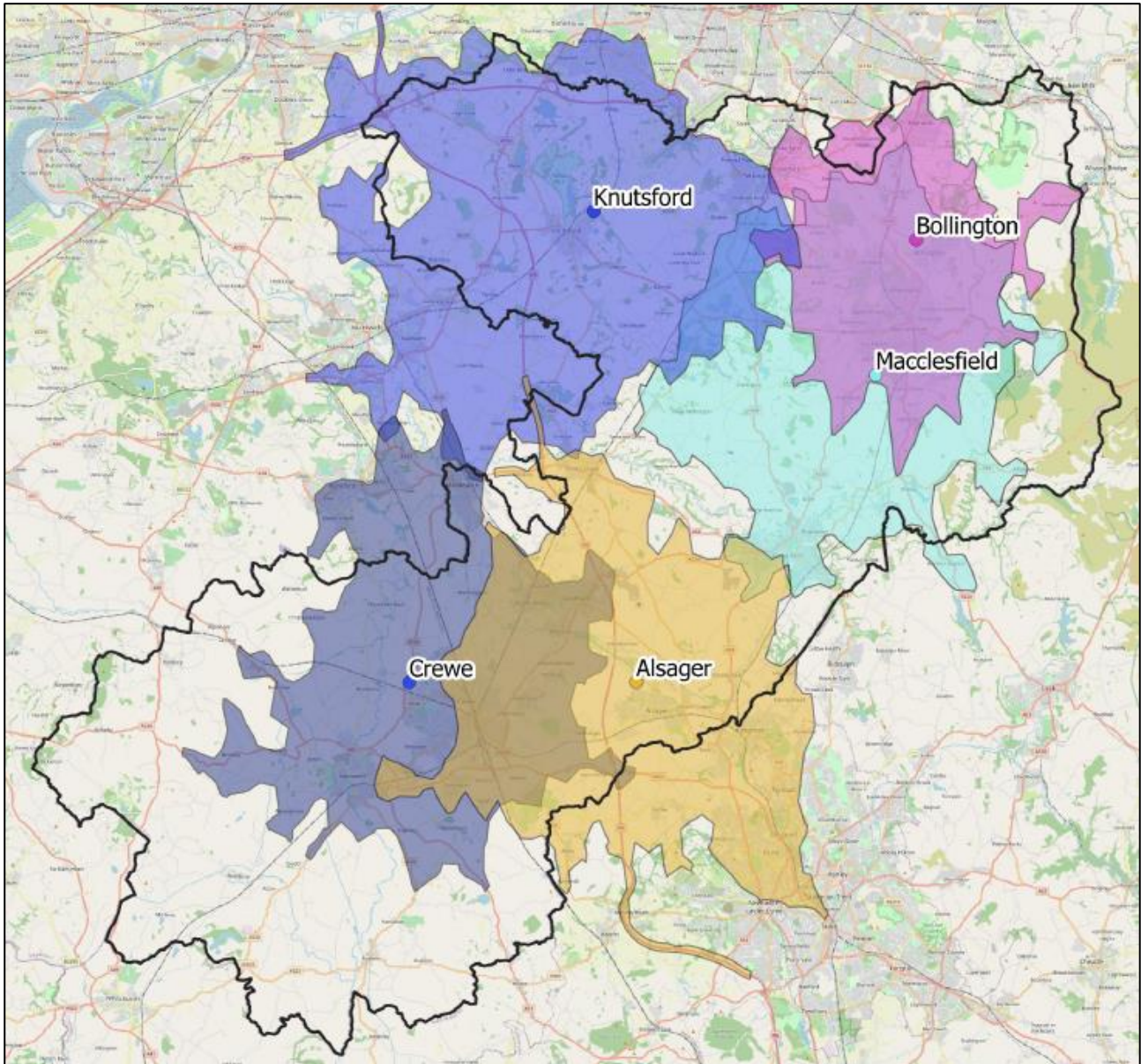
Figure 5 Scenario 3 and 15-minute drive times

4.4 Scenario 4 – Macclesfield, Crewe, Knutsford, Alsager, Bollington and Middlewich open

If Congleton and Poynton close, and assuming they are not replaced, the spatial analysis forecasts that Bollington and Macclesfield will see similarly increased use as in scenario 3. Middlewich will have the same number of households closest to it. As in scenario 3, 96% of households would still receive acceptable levels of provision because they could reach a site within twenty minutes.

Figure 6 Scenario 4 and 15-minute drive times

5   Network Options

Cheshire East Council, with its responsibility to manage public finances in a sustainable manner, is reviewing the HWRC network to ensure the operation of the service is the best it can be.

CEC designed a range of scenarios to assess the associated impact on the residents. The analysis was based on current costs and tonnages with key assumptions including:

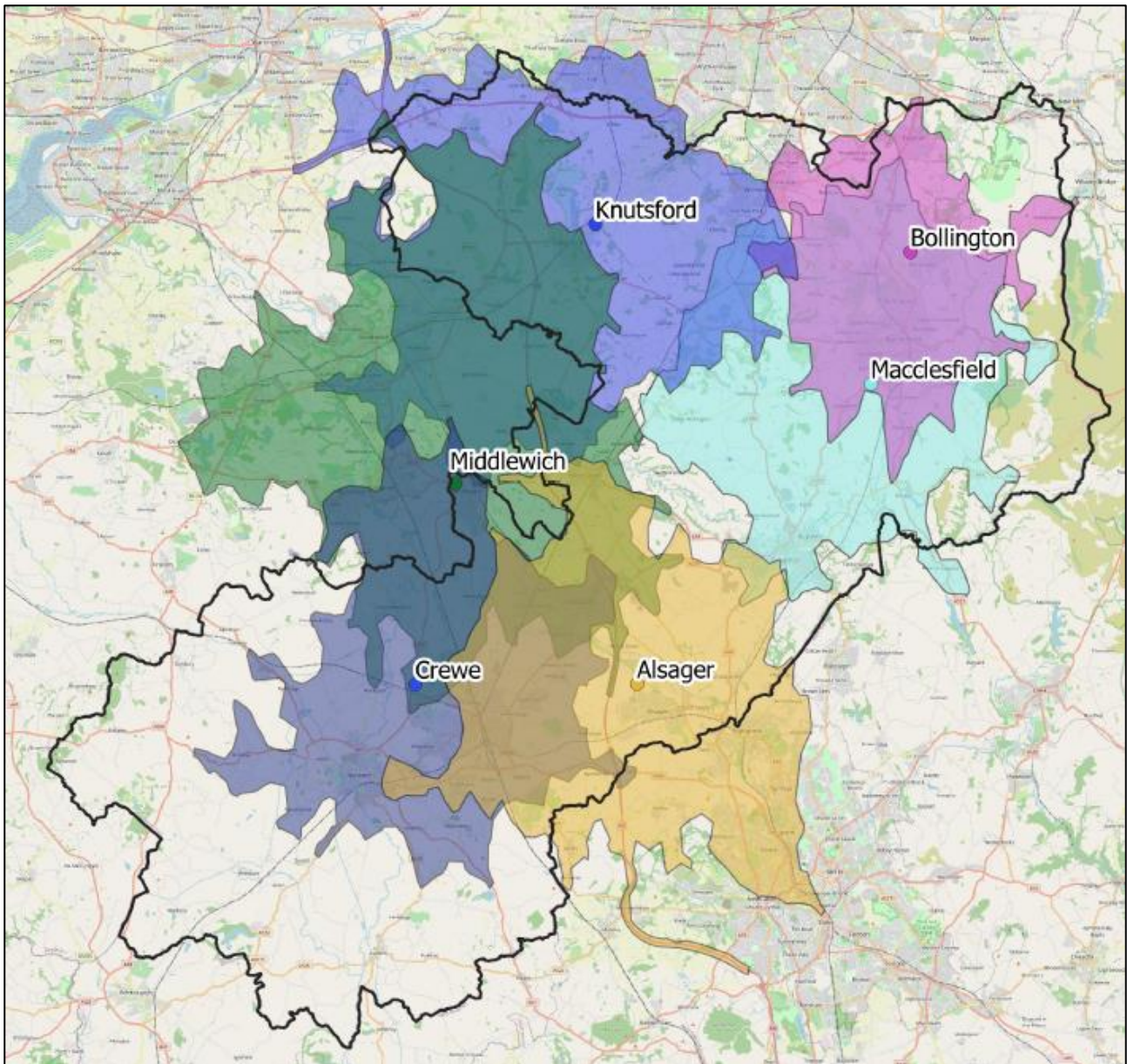- A small decrease in tonnages of 4% for closure of Congleton and Poynton. This was based on the decrease in tonnages year on year in the three months Arclid was closed before rubble charges were introduced.
- The remaining tonnages are unlikely to decrease with the effect of tonnage reductions stopping after the two small sites are closed.
- An allocation of management fee proportional to current tonnage throughput on sites
- Reduction of management fees by 50% for each site closure with the rest having to be reallocated (in terms of staff, equipment and contractor overheads across the network)

Table 5 below shows the scenarios and the associated savings alongside estimated annual contract cost.

Table 5 Theoretical savings and network cost in the first year (without indexation) for the four scenarios

Scenario	Sites to close	Potential savings in the first year (without indexation)	Estimated annual cost of network in the first year (without indexation)
Scenario 1	Congleton, Poynton, Bollington, Alsager and Middlewich	£406,025	£2,057,958
Scenario 2	Congleton, Poynton, Bollington and Middlewich	£287,634	£2,176,349
Scenario 3	Congleton, Poynton and Middlewich	£213,131	£2,250,852
Scenario 4	Congleton and Poynton	£143,138	£2,320,845

The savings modelled for site closures are very similar to those reported in the 2016 study with the network cost dropping to just over £2million should only three sites remain open. However, as the estimates are based on the terms of the current contract which comes to term in 2023 it is difficult to say how the savings associated with site closures will translate to actual savings for the new contract. The material market conditions and the new contract specifications (including the material prices, the risks and income sharing mechanisms and the employment situation for example the minimum wage) will have a significant effect on the future costs of the HWRC network. It is therefore important to take the figures with caution and treat them as a way to offset any increases in the costs as opposed to a significant cost saving opportunity.

The analysis of the redistribution of the tonnages across the network for the different scenarios used the spatial analysis and assumed that the residents would use the site closest to them in terms of drive times. The results of this analysis should be treated with caution as this is not always the residents' main motivation for using a particular site. This is particularly well demonstrated by the analysis of current tonnages and the closest sites to householders which is considerably different for some of the sites

(including Crewe and Macclesfield which are to remain open in all scenarios). This analysis however is at this current time the best approximation available. It is recommended that the Council considers on site user surveys with a question about the residents' postcode (even just partial) to collect better data on the users and where they travel from in the County. Table 6 below shows the results.

Table 6 Tonnage redistribution based on drive time analysis and current tonnages for the four scenarios

Site	Total throughput 19/20	Total throughput apportioned by closest site by drive time	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Alsager	3,906	3,567		4,576	4,576	3,941
Bollington	2,664	2,942			4,875	4,874
Congleton	2,783	2,913				
Crewe	8,183	9,787	14,696	10,921	10,921	9,722
Knutsford	3,948	3,544	5,745	5,427	4,096	3,572
Macclesfield	4,918	3,886	10,367	9,884	6,341	6,304
Middlewich	2,350	2,354				2,394
Poynton	2,256	2,017				
Total	**31,009**	**31,009**	**30,808**	**30,808**	**30,808**	**30,808**

The increase in tonnages across the three sites in Scenario 1 are significant with all of the sites having to accept around double the material they are currently accepting. This would require significant improvements including a potential redevelopment of the sites and considering how the sites would be accessed by increased numbers of residents as well as the need to service these sites (number of haulage vehicles etc.). We note from the site plans that this would require the extension of the site into the adjoining land (with potential purchase of industrial or farmland required). In Knutsford this may be difficult due to the proximity of residential properties. We also note that this increase in throughput would result in significant increases in vehicle movements both of residents visiting the site and service vehicles. It appears from previous site plans and assessments that there is limited space for queuing and the queues could end up on public highways.

It is difficult to estimate the cost of site redevelopment with a wide range of costs reported across the industry. However, the recently redeveloped Chester site cost in the region of £900,000[1].

Early estimates of site options for a potential new replacement for Congleton (due to the fact that the site is leased, and the landlord has indicated they may shortly require vacant possession), would be around £4m.

Scenario 4 (providing the least number of site closures) shows an estimated increase in throughput ranging from 1% for Alsager to 28% in Macclesfield. In this scenario Bollington is likely to experience an increased

[1] https://www.hwmartin.com/news/chester-residents-and-businesses-get-new-recycling-centres/

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throughput (almost doubling) because most of the tonnage from Poynton would be absorbed there. However, we cannot be sure how much of an outlier this may be. It would be important to survey the residents in the nearest site in Poynton to understand the split between Bollington and Macclesfield. In either case, both sites would require some improvement works. Bollington is surrounded by farmland and has an extended access road. Macclesfield is adjacent to the Council waste site so the potential for redevelopment could be carefully considered.

The savings associated with land sale could be used to fund site development and improvement. Table 7 shows the estimated land sale value based on 2017 Government estimated land values[2] of industrial land (which is the most recent available data set). The example costs have been calculated as an average for the two data points in the proximity to Cheshire East (Warrington and Chester) but the high and low estimate based on the highest and lowest estimated land value is also provided for interest and to demonstrate the range.

Scenario 4 would result in only small savings due to Congleton site being leased so the income would only be generated through the closure of Poynton.

Table 7 Estimated revenues from sale of land for the four scenarios

Site	Site size (SqM)	Potential revenue from sale of land	Comments	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Alsager	6,240	£397,800		£397,800			
Bollington	4,701	£299,670		£299,670	£299,670		
Congleton	1,642	£0	Land leased	£0	£0	£0	£0
Middlewich	1,587	£101,171		£101,171	£101,171	£101,171	
Poynton	1,858	£118,422		£118,422	£118,422	£118,422	£118,422
Total estimated potential income				**£917,063**	**£519,263**	**£219,593**	**£118,422**
High				£1,442,421	£880,821	£457,758	£167,184
Low				£601,009	£367,009	£190,733	£69,660

5.1 Impact on recommended site provision levels

Although there are no statutory levels of HWRC provision, WRAP HWRC guidance recommends that the maximum number of inhabitants per HWRC is 120,000 and the maximum number of households per HWRC is 50,000. The following table shows the levels for the scenarios considered alongside the current situation.

The analysis shows that all but Scenario 1 would provide the recommended level of HWRC provision by households and inhabitants.

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/land-value-estimates

Table 8 Household and inhabitants per site for the four scenarios

Scenario	Households per site	Inhabitants per site
WRAP recommended	50,000	120,000
Current	23,979	47,599
Scenario 1	63,943	126,930
Scenario 2	47,958	95,198
Scenario 3	38,366	76,158
Scenario 4	31,972	63,465

6 Other service efficiency and cost improvement measures

Cheshire East Council has already implemented several best practice initiatives across the HWRC network including bag splitting (currently suspended due to Covid-19 pandemic) or accepting trade waste rubble on sites. The following section summarises additional measures that could be considered.

6.1 Improving the user experience and site aesthetics

It is well established that site performance is influenced by site aesthetics and user experience. This includes signage, site cleanliness and how the traffic is managed.

Following the 2016 HWRC review, the Council planned and costed a wide range of improvements for the sites.

Table 9 shows the breakdown of the measures and costs. Note that no improvements to Congleton site were planned.

Table 9 Planned site improvements and the associated costs

Site improvements	Signage	Traffic	Infrastructure	Welfare	Re-use	Total
Alsager	£17,100	£1,500	£21,600	£25,500	£0	£65,700
Bollington	£11,740	£0	£8,150	£45,000	£0	£64,890
Crewe	£17,100	£14,000	£20,400	£55,500	£0	£107,000
Knutsford	£8,610	£0	£53,850	£66,000	£0	£128,460
Middlewich	£11,365	£0	£28,500	£30,000	£0	£69,865
Macclesfield	£15,240	£1,935	£33,715	£27,000	£25,500	£103,390
Poynton	£9,945	£0	£35,625	£25,500	£0	£71,070

However, the work is currently on hold and there is potentially a saving associated with prioritising the improvements to sites that are earmarked for staying open indefinitely. Table 10 shows the potential savings for the four scenarios considered in this report.

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Table 10 Potential savings from site improvements works for the four scenarios

Scenario	Sites to close	Potential savings
Scenario 1	Congleton, Poynton, Bollington, Alsager and Middlewich	£271,525
Scenario 2	Congleton, Poynton, Bollington and Middlewich	£205,825
Scenario 3	Congleton, Poynton and Middlewich	£174,460
Scenario 4	Congleton and Poynton	£71,070

7   Resources and Waste Legislation and Policy Impacts

A range of environmental measures have been proposed in recent years that could have far reaching impacts, such as the Drinks Return Scheme (DRS), consistency framework for household waste collections, and reform of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements. The measures are in different stages of development, consultation and implementation and key aspects are currently being debated for many of these policies. Three landmark policy and strategy documents outline the key policies and are analysed below for their potential impact on HWRCs:

- The Resources and Waste Strategy, 2018[3]
- The Environment Bill, Draft 2018[4]
- EU Ecodesign Implementing Regulations, 2019[5]

The measures in these three documents are discussed in the sections below. Based on this analysis, Table 11 lists key policies and indicates the nature of their impact on HWRCs. The table illustrates the large number of policies recently announced that have the potential to significantly impact operations at HWRCs.

The predominant impacts are expected to be on the quantity of the waste received and the nature of the waste, e.g. by diverting specific waste streams or products to other waste management systems or altering the products placed on market in terms of their design, materials, durability and repairability. The waste treatment options available are also likely to change. For example, EPR reform could incentivise recycling of difficult to recycle products such as carpets and mattresses. At a national level, economies of scale could be gained enabling new facilities to be opened to process these waste streams. EPR and DRS are anticipated to present funding opportunities if producers engage with Councils and HWRC services and pay for treatment of their waste products, and Councils could be reimbursed for handling deposit-bearing items not captured by the DRS return points and arriving as waste at the HWRC.

Interestingly, many of the policies could require more sophisticated data monitoring and reporting. Such data systems would allow Councils to interface with emerging waste systems such as EPR and DRS and

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[3] *HM Government (2018), Our waste, our resources: a strategy for England,* *https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf*

[4] *Environment Bill, Bill 003 2019-20 (as introduced),* *https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2019-2020/0003/20003.pdf*

[5] *Regulation laying down ecodesign requirements 1 October 2019,* *https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/regulation-laying-down-ecodesign-requirements-1-october-2019*

access the associated funding mechanisms. Several of the policies also imply the need for improved performance in waste management, and HWRCs are likely to have a pivotal role in delivering this.

Table 11: Summary of key policies and their impacts on HWRCs

	Quantity of waste	Nature of waste	Waste treatment options	Funding	Data and reporting	Performance requirements
Extended Producer Responsibility	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Drinks Return Scheme	✔	✔		✔	✔	
Ecodesign	✔	✔	?			
Right to repair	✔	✔	✔			
Addressing barriers to re-use at HWRCs					✔	✔
Tackling waste crime			✔			
Single-use plastics bans	✔	✔				
Single-use plastics charge	✔	✔		?		
Waste collection consistency	✔	✔				
Net-zero carbon emissions by 2050	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔
Mandatory electronic tracking of waste					✔	

✔ = Yes, ? = Impact is less certain

7.1   Potential future changes

The policy landscape is fast developing, and it is worth considering further measures that may be brought in to support those discussed above. We highlight two specific policy topics below.

The UK recycling rate has flat-lined in recent years. The 2020 municipal recycling rate target is likely to be missed, and subsequent targets will prove even more challenging. It is conceivable that individual targets will be set for local authorities and perhaps even targets for HWRCs. The emphasis and planned systems for waste data collection and reporting would support targets for re-use, recycling and waste reduction, and the new Office for Environmental Protection would be set to monitor progress and intervene where deemed necessary. Meeting higher targets will be bound with the funding impact of EPR and objectives around the collection and processing of food waste. Government has consistently said it will support local authorities with costs attached to these higher objectives and ensure that industry pays the full cost of EPR for packaging and that this accrues to councils in line with the desire for efficient, high-quality packaging collections. While the impact of EPR for packaging may not be the biggest factor in the evolution of HWRCs

it is still a factor to account for and may well lead to funding support for well collected packaging. The EPR for other items and especially for bulky items ending up in HWRC, such as furniture and mattresses, has not yet been discussed but will be an important consideration and an issue many organisations from the public sector and producers will need to be aware of.

To meet the environmental objectives, including carbon impacts, it is likely that further measures will be taken to influence the full product life cycle including design, production, supply, use and disposal. The initial focus could look to improve primary, secondary and tertiary packaging and transport of goods.

Beyond this, there may be potential impacts from other areas of policy development, outside the resources and waste arena that need to be considered in the development of new HWRCs and modernisation of existing sites. For example, growing demand for active travel and safe cycling is forecast. As infrastructure improves and demand increases, the opportunity to incorporate safe access to HWRCs by bicycles (including cargo bikes) may provide an innovative and timely accessibility improvement to the service that would prove popular and chime with Climate Emergency actions. Government has recently announced new funds[6] for safe cycling infrastructure and access to these funds should be monitored and prove especially relevant for new site developments.

Further analysis of the implications of the new legislation and national strategy can be found in Appendix C.

8   Innovation within the HWRC sector

Local Authorities across the UK are looking at ways to run the services more efficiently while improving the recycling, reuse and diversion rates. The innovative ideas recently employed within the HWRC sector can be grouped into the following categories:

- Site operations
- Site design
- Contracts

8.1   Site operations

8.1.1   ANPR and CCTV

ANPR and CCTV have recently been used and requested in contracts by LA. The technology can be used for administering the permit systems, managing trade abuse and in some places, limiting the number of visits on a "fair usage" case (for example in Herefordshire County Council there is 12 fair usage visits per annum). The systems could also be used to monitor traffic flows, collecting data on numbers of visitors and using this to potentially communicate live updates to residents. This has been successfully employed by Bristol Waste Company where live CCTV footage of the HWRC queues can be accessed via their website[7].

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[6] https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2020/february/government-pledges-5bn-to-improve-bus-and-cycling-services-our-response/

[7] https://www.bristolwastecompany.co.uk/hrrc-queue-camera/

8.1.2 Further material separation

Further steps can be made to separate materials for recycling where multi-material furniture (e.g. sofas, beds, mattresses) are unsuitable for re-use. A site in Wales has set up a system where the items are stripped down by hand on site and then separated into various components. Initially only the wood and metal were recycled, but negotiations are ongoing with reprocessors to recycle additional materials such as flock and foam. Existing site staff are utilised to undertake the work which is carried out on a rotational basis depending on how busy the site is. Material stripping activities are attributed to an estimated 2-3% increase in the recycling rate. Cost benefits include increased revenue from the sale of recyclate and savings in landfill tax and gate fees. Additionally, staff motivation and happiness increase as targets are met and staff efficiency is maximised by utilising 'down time' to strip materials. An additional staff member is employed using revenue generated by the process.

8.1.3 Community recycling centres

With cuts to resources some local authorities have considered site closures and network rationalisation. One creative way to limit the site closures while at the same time realising savings is changing the function of the waste and recycling centres to recycling and reuse. In Lancashire one of the smaller sites was renamed as a Community Reuse and Recycling Centre and accepts a limited range of materials excluding residual waste, wood, rubble, chemicals and asbestos while retaining the reuse shop onsite.[8] The Centre, which operates in a different way from the other sites, has a focus on selling recycled items, alongside a limited waste and recycling service.

There are also several innovative operations internationally where the recycling sites' focus has shifted further up the waste hierarchy. An example of this recently has been the Reuse centre in Ljubljana[9] which operates as a reuse or resource hub where items are repaired and upcycled.

8.2 Site design

Whilst requiring a considerable amount of engineering work, a move from a more traditional site design to the introduction of modular and flexible solutions has been a key innovative design solution. A modular design allows the site to be reconfigured as needed with the minimum of difficulty and expense. One construction firm comments[10]:

> *We offer a prefab concrete modular system for the construction of split-level household waste recycling centres that helps achieving higher recycling rates enhances safety and customer satisfaction and is future proof because of its flexibility. The modular construction can easily be expanded or adapted and could even be relocated. Construction time is very short; only 1-2 weeks, depending on the size of the platform.*

Figure 7 below shows the modular HWRC design used in Cardiff. The infrastructure is constructed from prefabricated blocks. Visitors drive up the ramp, park next to the waste bays and deposit materials into skips on the lower level. The site can be expanded by placing additional prefab blocks, or even moved

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[8] https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/recycling-centres/garstang/

[9] https://www.vokasnaga.si/en/reuse-centre

[10] https://governmentbusiness.co.uk/company-focus/modulo-beton-modular-hwrc%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%93-construction-conscience

and/or combined with other sites. The space under the platform can be used for storage; a re-use shop, offices, a tool library, repair shop etc. and the red bins on the top level are linked via chutes to the space below allowing for safe disposal of small waste streams such as batteries.
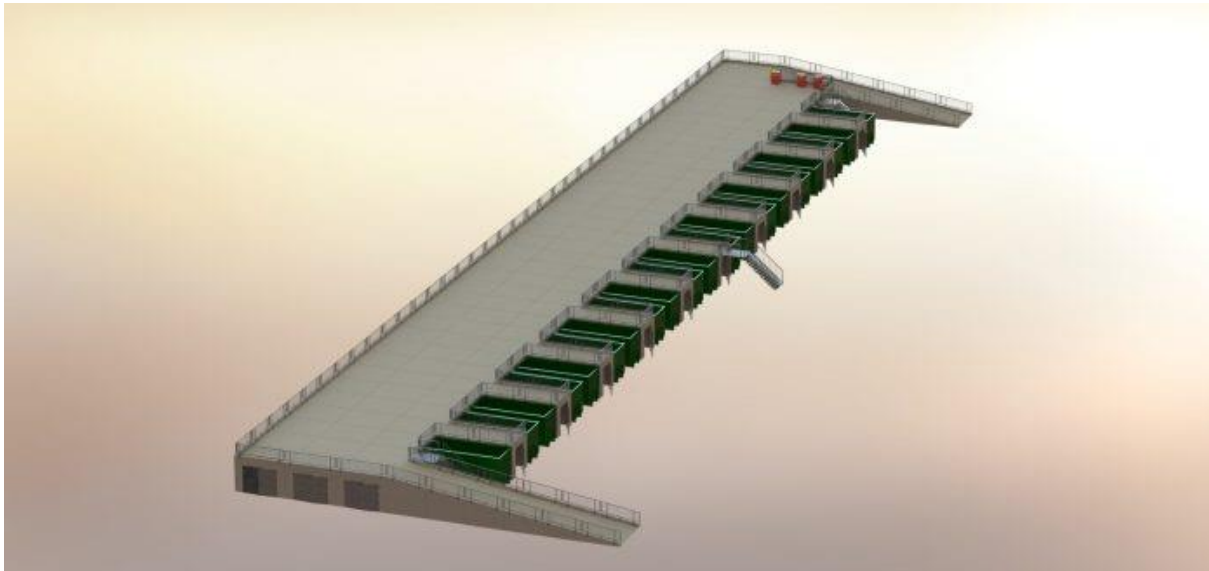

Figure 7: Plan of modular design in Cardiff HWRC[11]

8.3   Contracts

There are several methods that contracts for operating HWRC sites and networks can be set up to drive efficiency and performance. This includes contract length and size, risk and income sharing, contract incentives and penalties.

Similarly, there are a number of options that the LA can consider in terms of the contract characteristics but the factors behind these decisions are likely to include:

- whether other waste and recycling services are included within the same contract;
- the number of sites within the network and whether they are to be managed as one contract or several;
- investment requirements;
- the local authority's attitude to risk;
- the strategy for contracting with local businesses and third-sector organisations;
- the level of flexibility required.

8.3.1   Contract length and size

The overall contract cost and the structure will often be dependent on the length of the contract. Traditionally the length of the contract would align with the life span of equipment or assets so between 5 and 11 years. This is still common practice in the industry. However, some LAs are entering into much longer-term contracts for example where significant investment is required. For example, Somerset Waste

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[11] https://www.modulo-beton-environment.com/realization/uk-united-kingdom/

Partnership is currently under contract with Viridor which had the initial term of 16 years, recently (2019) extended by 9 years to 2031.

There are a number of options where the contract for operating the HWRC networks have been included within a wider service provision making it a more integral part of the overall waste management solutions within the LA are and generating some potential savings through the economies of scale. This however has to be carefully considered to ensure that all elements of a contract are delivered to the required quality. Drafting of the specification would require significant time and expertise and a transparent way of evaluating the financial viability of the contract would be required during the procurement process. The potential bidders for such a contract would include the large, national and multinational waste management companies.

On the other hand splitting the contract into smaller lots (by location or function such as haulage, site operation, material brokering etc.) may be beneficial if specialist services are required and the LA has a clear procurement strategy that encourages participation of smaller businesses or local third sector organisations. In such instances it would be important to consider the contract interfaces (for example vehicles operated by one contractor needing access to sites that are operated by another contractor) and how the contracts will be coordinated day to day.

8.3.2 Income and risk sharing

The material markets have been significantly affected by international events in recent times, with the likes of China imposing very tight controls on the materials that can enter their economy from abroad and the price of oil falling. Additionally, national policy decisions have a direct impact on how material is traded. For example, the Environment Agency is investigating waste wood to determine whether the material is hazardous or not. The methods will have an impact on the overall wood recyclers market and ultimately price for disposing of the material. Furthermore, there is continuing uncertainty associated with the Resources and Waste Strategy with its risks and opportunities for market development.

It is therefore important for the LA to consider how much risk it is willing to take on the price of the materials as any risk the contractor will need to take will be costed in to the proposed contract during the tender stage.

There are a number of mechanisms that the LA can choose to include during the procurement process these would be up for discussion during the competitive dialogue sessions. These could include: a percentage split of income or cost, additional limits on the maximum costs of income the contractor can claim, open book contracting[12] or set review periods. Such mechanisms should be considered in detail with qualified legal and accounting advisors and should take into account the additional costs and required expertise associated with managing more complex contracting arrangements.[13]

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[12] *Open Book Contract Management (OBCM) is a structured process for the sharing and management of charges & costs and operational and performance data between the supplier and the client. The aim is to promote collaborative behaviour between client and supplier through financial transparency. The outcomes should be a fair price for the supplier, value for money for the client and performance improvement for both over the contract life.*

[13] *https://www.nao.org.uk/naoblog/open-book-contracting/*

8.3.3 Incentives and penalties

There are specific incentives and penalties associated with recycling, diversion and reuse or waste prevention targets. These can generally be described as:

- Specific bonuses or financial penalties for meeting or not meeting specified target or stretch targets or banding
- Incentives or penalties associated with the saving or incurring costs for disposal of the material. It is important to note that if the contractor is responsible for disposal costs any savings are likely to be retained by the contractor
- Specific mechanisms for managing performance and the delivery against Key Performance Indicators (for example the delivery of regular reports and the consequences of non-delivery)

The LA will need to consider the key metrics for the contracts whether that would be focused on the recycling targets, diversion from residual waste or customer service and design the mechanisms to ensure these are met. The design of such mechanisms would require expertise from legal and financial advisors and the complexity of managing such mechanisms would need to be considered for the life of the contract. Specific examples of incentives and penalties focussed on recycling and diversion used by LAs can be found in Appendix D.

9 Assessment of procurement options

CEC's HWRC network is currently operated by HW Martin under a contract which finishes its term in 2023. The contract is managed on behalf of the Council by ANSA Environmental Services, a company wholly owned and controlled by the Council (a Teckal company[14]). Additionally, the sites are managed by individual site managers subcontracted to HW Martin. The Council is currently considering the options available to it for how a new contract could be operated. The contract would need to provide improved performance control and flexibility because of the impact, in the medium term, of the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy. The following table explores the issues and questions the Council will need to consider in greater detail ahead of any procurement exercise. This qualitative analysis provides an assessment of the potential impact on the costs of the service and operations of the HWRC network and highlights where each of the service delivery and contracting models has particular benefits or drawbacks. The assessment is based on our broad experience of working with the local authorities and waste operators.

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[14] https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/articles/teckal-the-basics-explained

Table 12 Legend for Table 13
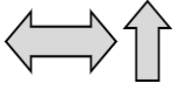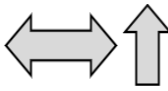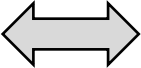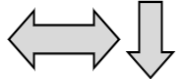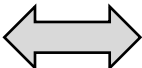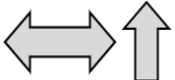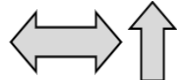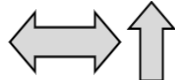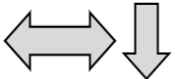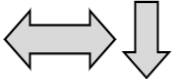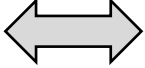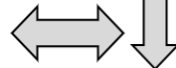
Change	Impact level
Negative impact/ cost increase	⬇
Greater negative impact/ cost increase	⬇⬇
Status quo	⬌
No immediate negative impact/ costs but potential over time	⬌⬇
No immediate positive impact but potential over time	⬌⬆
Positive impact/ reduced costs	⬆
Greater positive impact/ reduced costs	⬆⬆

Table 13 *HWRC operating models and the potential benefits and disbenefits*

Risk/ Opportunity	Current contract HW Martin and subcontracted site managers	In house operated by ANSA, the Teckal company	Outsourced to a single private contractor	Commentary/ evidence
Emerging policy – local	↔	↔ ⬆	⬇	The current service has limited flexibility to respond to local issues, with ANSA potentially being able to build this into a co-ordinated approach that prioritises local needs. In order to respond to local issues an In house service will need to ensure that it is tuned in to issues locally and can respond accordingly. There may be a danger that out-sourced contracts are less likely to be able to change and adapt.
Emerging policy – national	⬇ ⬇	⬆ ⬆	⬆	Reduced ability to respond to the opportunities and impacts posed by EPR/ DRS without an integrated approach and in the bounds of the current contract. A Council owned company would be able to respond to policy requirements as required by the Council. Contract drafting of out-sourced delivery is key to maintaining the ability to respond over time.
Fleet management (vehicles, grapple vehicles etc.)	↔ ⬇	⬆ ⬆	⬆ ⬆	Benefits of buying in-house potentially balanced by private sector access to wider purchasing agreements – if CEC owns the HWRC service vehicles this is less of an issue.
Vehicle maintenance	↔	⬆	↔ ⬆	Some positive impact likely from integration with the other waste services operated by ANSA. As long as the contracts clearly specify responsibilities the right contractor may benefit from some buying power.

Risk/ Opportunity	Current contract HW Martin and subcontracted site managers	In house operated by ANSA, the Teckal company	Outsourced to a single private contractor	Commentary/ evidence
Infrastructure	⟷	⬇	⬇	The current contractor has access to a well-located waste transfer station which serves CEC and the nearest neighbours. It is unlikely the LA would be able to procure a WTS meaning there may be a need to invest or use the services from the contractor who was not awarded the contract. Any other contractor would have to consider this issue in the response, and it would depend on the local presence and infrastructure they already have in the area. This would be expected to add costs to the contract.
Flexibility and resilience in service delivery	⟷⬇	⬆	⬆	Individual site managers driven only by managing their site with limited involvement in the wider issues and services. Flexibility enhanced by integration. However, the current contractor managed all streams and is able to respond to the demands because of that. In house and outsourced similar on balance – internal flexibility due to greater control balanced against support available from other private-sector contracts / national agreements.
Service consistency	⟷	⬆⬆	⬆	The ability for the in-house company to respond to the priorities of the Council ensuing that these are applied consistently. As long as the specification is well drawn out a private contractor is likely to apply the same approach across the contract. Greater control over staff as opposed to sole agents site managers

Risk/ Opportunity	Current contract HW Martin and subcontracted site managers	In house operated by ANSA, the Teckal company	Outsourced to a single private contractor	Commentary/ evidence
Rationalisation of the HWRC network	⬌ ⬆	⬌ ⬆	⬌ ⬆	Previous rationalisation of the network aligned with the renegotiation of terms which meant the savings were not realised as estimated. A contract that is operating less sites and less waste should theoretically result in savings. However, should radical changes (such as Scenario 1 and 2 in section above) be made capital investment will be required. This would be expected to include significant redevelopment of sites or building of new sites. The less radical scenarios 3 and 4 would require less investment. All site closures may generate income from land sale.
Staffing costs and management costs	⬌ ⬇	⬆	⬆⬆	The current contract has issues with staffing partially funded by the material sales. Due to market collapse this has been difficult. Potential greater saving with outsourced due to regional/ national management and support functions and potentially reduced pension liability.
Materials value	⬌ ⬇	⬆	⬆⬆	Private sector service providers are likely to have greater experience in material marketing & greater access to markets. ANSA could already have the skills and staff capable of managing the material to extract the best value.

Risk/ Opportunity	Current contract HW Martin and subcontracted site managers	In house operated by ANSA, the Teckal company	Outsourced to a single private contractor	Commentary/ evidence
Procurement costs	⬆	⬆⬆	⬇	Extension of the current contract could save CEC some costs and resources which would be required to go out to open tender. The LA could choose to appoint their wholly owned company to take the contract on with limited procurement costs required. However legal advice would be required and the company is still subject to EU Procurement Regulation.
Buying power	⬌	⬆	⬆⬆	Both in house (due to integration with other CEC waste services) and outsourced could have greater buying power - subject to potential market saturation.
Responding to growth	⬌⬇	⬆⬆	⬆	Limited flexibility in the current contract. An in-house service would enable a cohesive internal response to growth. With an out-sourced service model the contract drafting would be critical.
Commercial waste/ non-HH waste	⬌⬇	⬆	⬇	Potential incentive for ANSA to generate more income for the company and support other services. Potentially competitive pricing as the company is Council owned and not profit driven.\nOut-sourced – contract drafting is important in order to provide incentivisation to grow service.

Risk/ Opportunity	Current contract HW Martin and subcontracted site managers	In house operated by ANSA, the Teckal company	Outsourced to a single private contractor	Commentary/ evidence
Reputation	⟷	⬆⬆	⬆	In-house service has greater ability to enhance reputation through communicating savings and responding to local needs. With out-sourcing careful contract drafting would be required to maintain service standards and good control of communications/ public interface would be required. Protecting CEC's reputation through ensuring any service transfer is as good as possible is very important.

The key consideration throughout this assessment was the balancing of cost savings and the Councils appetite for risk and significantly improving the service alongside retaining the flexibility to accommodate any changes resulting from the 2018 Strategy. One of the first important steps is to start a conversation with ANSA about this contract, as the option to take the service in house would mean significant growth which may or not be within the strategic plan for the company.

Should the outsourced model be preferable, the drafting of the specification and careful negotiation would require concerted effort from Council officers.

9.1   Attractiveness of the contract

The market conditions are an important consideration when tendering any services. Although it is difficult to assess how the waste management market will respond to any contract there are some key elements which may help with understanding the market situation.

It is important to note that the response of the market is dynamic. The response of the market will depend on who is operating other contracts in the region, and when they are up for retendering, the waste management companies and their strategic priorities, waste management companies bidding capacity and how the market perceives the current contract (for example if it is well known that the incumbent has competitive advantages or is a preferred bidder for the services). It is unlikely that the number of sites is a factor in how attractive the contract is to the market. The key considerations now will be connected to the material markets and how this will impact the affordability of the contract. As the prices of the materials are currently lower and are fluctuating the contractor will have to price in the risk associated with trading materials in uncertain conditions. As HWRC contracts tend to be procured through the competitive dialogue process the risk and income sharing mechanisms, as well as any incentives or penalties, will be the key issues discussed. Should the Council wish to close sites, redevelop sites or build new sites during the term of the contract this would have to be clearly stated in the invitation to tender documents and discussed at length during dialogue.

The following table shows the contractors and expected contract terms of the benchmarked authorities which sheds some light on the state of the HWRC contract market.

Table 14 Benchmarked LA and the contract arrangement

Local Authority	Contractor	End of term
Cheshire West and Chester	HW Martin	2023
Staffordshire	Amey	2022
Derbyshire	Renewi	2021
Greater Manchester	Suez	2026
Warrington	EWC	Unknown (last known extension request to Jan 2020
Shropshire	Veolia	2034
Gloucestershire	Ubico	2026
Monmouthshire	Dragon Waste, contracted through Viridor	under renegotiation as permanent closure of Usk was intended for 31 March

The geographic and demographic neighbours' services are operated by a number of different waste management companies with the major players represented in this sample. It is particularly interesting that CECs closest neighbour, Cheshire West and Chester will be considering its options at the same time. It may be prudent to initiate conversations about partnership working which may result in savings to the operating costs of the contract for both authorities.

It is recommended that the council carries out a soft market testing exercise well in advance of any procurement document being prepared (at least two years in advance of the contract award). This will allow the market to express their views on the attractions of the contract in the comfort of private meetings with Council officers.

10   Concluding remarks

The review presented within this document analyses the current HWRC network provision as well as the potential impacts of the four scenarios for network rationalisation identified by Cheshire East Council.

The analysis shows that any site closures are anticipated to provide some savings in revenue costs associated with the operation of the sites. It will be important to ensure that these are reflected once the contract is retendered. However, the savings are not guaranteed as the contract price will ultimately depend on the conditions on the materials markets and the risks the Council will be willing to take for this contract. As the situation is currently very uncertain (with the prices of the material low and additional uncertainties associated with the changes in the legislation, the UK leaving the EU and Covid-19) the contractors are likely to price these risks in their costs to ensure affordability. It is also clear that in all of the scenarios some improvements will have to be considered to accommodate the redistributed tonnages from the sites. The north east sites, Macclesfield and Bollington, are the ones most likely to be affected by this change.

Table 15 Summary details

Scenario	Proportion of households less than 20 minutes from a site	Potential savings	Investment required	Estimated capital receipt from sale of land
Scenario 1	88%	£406,025	Substantial	£917,063
Scenario 2	93%	£287,634	Substantial	£519,263
Scenario 3	96%	£213,131	Moderate	£219,593
Scenario 4	96%	£143,138	Moderate	£118,422

The analysis identified potential savings through sale of land and the rationalisation of the planned improvement works but for the scenarios with fewer sites remaining, where considerable increases in tonnages are anticipated, there may be a need for the Council to make substantial capital investment in terms of increasing site footprints (purchase of land) and redevelopments. Such major works would need to be carefully planned to manage the impact on site users.

The impact on the residents is considered through the drive time analysis. Currently the residents are enjoying a network which minimises the driving times for them. The rationalisation will have some impact on the drive times to the nearest HWRC however these are not substantial, even for the most radical Scenario 1, with 88% of residents driving less than 20 minutes to the nearest site.

As the Council is considering the opportunities and risks associated with a new contract it will be crucial to build in flexibility to manage the impacts of the changing legislative and government strategy landscape. Drafting contract specification that ensures that the contractor can respond to the changes will be important. Another key consideration will be the situation on the material markets and managing the risks of the commodity price fluctuations. At the time of writing the values of the materials are low, and any contractor would be looking to buffer themselves from the fluctuations, passing these costs onto the Council. However, this may change once the government policies are implemented to develop national material markets and advance the circular economy.

We note from our analysis that limited data on site users is available and we would recommend an on-site user survey to understand the footfall and where the users travel from to access sites. A question to assess the sites the residents would prefer to use, following site closures, could be added to collect further insight. This would enable refinement of the tonnage redistribution analysis as well as the assessment of impact on residents.

Our review includes an assessment of the contract terms and current HWRC operators in neighbouring authorities which will help the Council understand the current market situation. We recommend that the Council carries out soft market testing well in advance of any specification drafting to help inform the decisions.

Appendix A   Benchmarking details

A.1   Neighbouring authorities

Warrington Borough Council has three HWRCs in close proximity to Cheshire East; Stockton Heath, Gatewarth and Woolston. Greater Manchester also has three HWRCs close to Cheshire East; Altrincham, Longley Lane and Adswood Road. Staffordshire has two; Biddulph and Newcastle. Cheshire West, Shropshire and Derbyshire all have one HWRC in close proximity to Cheshire East; these are Northwich, Whitchurch and Waterswallows.

Vans and Permits

Most authorities specify a gross vehicle weight limit of 3.5 tonnes and height restriction of 2 metres. Greater Manchester limits the amount of visits allowed to site per year by the type of vehicle; 52 visits for cars and cars with single axle trailers, 18 visits for cars with a double axle trailer or vans under 3.5 tonnes, and any larger vehicles to 12 visits per year. Staffordshire also requires all trailers to be single axle but adds that specifically adapted vehicles for blue badge holders will be accommodated for. Shropshire requires a permit for vans, 4x4s with a goods body or for cars with trailers, while a residents' permit is required for Neston recycling centre in Cheshire West due to its location near the county border.

Warrington's permit system is unlike the others, in that permits are required if residents need to visit more than once in a van to dispose of a larger amount of household waste, or for non-household waste regardless of vehicle. Non-household waste must be listed on the permit prior to visiting, and visits are limited to three per year.

Restrictions on rubble/construction waste

In most cases, authorities do not restrict the number of items or amount of non-household waste but advice that small DIY only will be accepted. All authorities state that they cannot accept trade waste, with Cheshire West and Greater Manchester providing directions to nearby waste transfer stations for these items. Staffordshire is the only other authority to charge per item. This includes a £3 charge per bag or large item of rubble, bricks, soil, concrete, stone, fibreglass and ceramics, and £4 per bag or sheet of plasterboard. Warrington does not issue charges for non-household waste, but items must be listed on a permit prior to the visit. Derbyshire includes a restriction of 50kg plasterboard per visit per week (no whole sheets), 50kg of rubble, concrete or soil.

Asbestos is accepted at Warrington, Derbyshire, the Leek site at Staffordshire, and with prior notice at Shropshire sites. Plasterboard is not accepted at Greater Manchester, or at Cheadle or Newcastle sites in Staffordshire. Derbyshire permits a maximum of either 2x roofing sheets or 2m downpipe of asbestos, while Staffordshire permits either 4 sheets or 4 bags per household every six months.

Opening hours

All authorities provide at least one site which is open seven days a week, and it is only Cheshire West and Staffordshire where the majority of sites are open five days per week. Greater Manchester, Derbyshire, and Shropshire do not state any seasonal variation, with Derbyshire providing the longest opening hours of 8:30am-6pm. The largest seasonal variation can be seen at the Chester, Ellesmere Port and Winsford recycling centres, within Cheshire West, which are open 8am-8pm on weekdays and 8am-6pm on weekends in the summer months, compared to opening hours of 8am-4pm throughout the week in winter.

Materials accepted

Cheshire West and Warrington do not accept gas cylinders or tyres, similarly to CEC; however the other neighbouring authorities seem to do so. Staffordshire accept tyres but implement a charge of £4 each, to a maximum of four. Derbyshire does not accept large items of furniture, nor does it accept any waste resulting from the demolition or replacement of gardens sheds, greenhouses, fencing, or decking, and recommend hiring a skip for garden renovations. Greater Manchester also states that food waste cannot be accepted.

Coronavirus restrictions

Each authority includes detailed information on their website regarding specific site rules due to Coronavirus. In the main, this includes adhering to social distancing measures, avoiding the site for all but essential journeys and having a maximum of one passenger per car. All authority websites state that staff members cannot help to unload vehicles and reminds visitors to behave respectfully and appropriately on site. Derbyshire and Greater Manchester introduced a number plate system to restrict traffic flow on site; however, Greater Manchester has since relaxed this measure. Some materials that are normally accepted have been temporarily suspended, such as asbestos at Staffordshire and Shropshire sites, and clothing, textiles and shoes in Greater Manchester.

Warrington has temporarily closed its Stockton Heath site, while vans are only permitted at its Gatewarth site with 48 hours' notice. A valid form of I.D. is also required at each site.

Table 16 Neighbouring authorities HWRC data from the 2018/19 National HWRC Directory[15]

Authority	Authority type	No. HWRCs 2018/19	No. HWRCs per 100,000 population	Land area per HWRC, sq. miles	Average site catchment radius, miles	Total HWRC tonnage throughput		HWRC arisings, kg/hh/yr.			HWRC Recycling Rate including rubble		HWRC Recycling Rate excluding rubble	
						2018/19	Difference with previous year	All HWRC throughput	HWRC residual	HWRC recycling, excluding rubble	2018/19	Difference with previous year	2018/19	Difference with previous year
Cheshire East	UA	8	2.1	56	4.2	30,073	*-10,895*	180	58	116	67.9%	*-6.4%*	66.7%	*-1.0%*
Cheshire West and Chester	UA	7	2.1	51	4.0	39,001	*-23*	268	83	125	68.8%	*-0.1%*	60.0%	*-0.5%*
Warrington Borough Council	UA	3	1.4	23	2.7	15,202	*-1,153*	166	45	110	73.0%	*1.8%*	71.0%	*2.3%*
Greater Manchester WDA (MBC)	WDA	20	0.8	21	2.6	291,653	*29,917*	276	131	96	52.6%	*8.2%*	42.3%	*2.2%*
Derbyshire County Council	WDA	9	1.1	109	5.9	68,309	*1,933*	196	80	103	59.2%	*-6.2%*	56.3%	*-6.3%*
Staffordshire County Council	WDA	14	1.6	72	4.8	65,109	*2,810*	175	89	78	49.1%	*3.8%*	46.7%	*4.0%*
Shropshire	UA	5	1.6	247	8.9	37,950	*3,002*	276	94	127	66.1%	*1.4%*	57.5%	*1.4%*

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[15] *WRAPs national HWRC directory compiled by Resource Futures and updated in 2020 as part of their series of HWRC guidance documents. Figures used in this data set were returned from Waste Data Flow.*

A.2   Similar authorities

Five local authorities were selected for benchmarking based upon their similarity to CEC in terms of certain demographic data. To measure similarity between authorities, ONS uses the squared Euclidean distance (SED), which is based on 59 variables used in the area classification of local authorities. Variables include statistics based on demographic structure, household composition, housing, socio-economic factors and employment. The five authorities chosen were Cheshire West and Chester, Tewkesbury, Stroud, Stafford and Monmouth.

Vans and Permits

Similar to CEC, both Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire require permits for vans. Staffordshire specify small single axle trailers of no more than 6ft x 4ft in size, while Cheshire West and Chester require trailers of fewer than 3.5 metres in length. Monmouthshire do not permit double-axle trailers, and ask that residents only bring what they can unload within a 15 minute period. Gloucestershire specify that vans or pick-ups pulling a trailer may only present waste in either the van or trailer, but not both. All authorities, except for Monmouthshire, impose a 3.5 tonne gross vehicle weight limit.

Restrictions on rubble/construction waste

Rubble and construction waste is accepted at all sites, provided it is not trade waste, but Staffordshire is the only other authority to charge per item. This includes a £3 charge per bag or large item of rubble, bricks, soil, concrete, stone, fibreglass and ceramics, and £4 per bag or sheet of plasterboard. Only Monmouthshire provides an explicit limit on the amount of non-household waste that will be accepted; either five bags or one small car boot load per visit, and no more than two visits per month.

As with CEC, Cheshire West and Monmouthshire do not accept asbestos. Staffordshire restricts the amount to four sheets or bags per household every six months, while Gloucestershire asks that residents pre-book any asbestos disposal.

Opening hours

Opening hours are varied amongst the authorities, but CEC is among those which offer the longest opening periods. Cheshire West has three sites open for seven days a week and four sites open five days a week. Of the sites that are open for seven days, opening hours extend to 8am-8pm during summer weekdays. In winter, all sites are open 8am-4pm. The Stafford site in Staffordshire is open seven days a week between 9am-5pm, with an extra hour added during summer weekdays. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire sites are open six days per week, with midweek closing, and are open from 9am-5pm and 8am-5pm respectively.

Materials accepted

Gloucestershire and Staffordshire will accept a maximum of four tyres, with the latter charging £4 per tyre. Both authorities include a more comprehensive list of what cannot be brought to site on their websites, including animal carcasses, petrol and diesel. Gloucestershire also specifies that invasive or poisonous plant species are not brought to site. Only Cheshire West and Chester will not accept gas cylinders, similar to CEC. Monmouthshire mention that black bags will not be accepted with food waste or recyclables inside, as these items are covered in the kerbside collection service.

Coronavirus restrictions

Each authority includes detailed information on their website regarding specific site rules due to Coronavirus. These include keeping to social distancing measures, avoiding the site if you or a household

member has symptoms, and practicing good hygiene measures such as washing hands or wearing gloves. Monmouthshire sites at Mitchel Troy and Usk remain closed, while its remaining two sites have an online booking system in place, limiting visits to one per week. Trailers will only be accepted within the 4pm-4:30pm booking slot due space restrictions, while the first hour of each day is reserved for key workers. Gloucestershire also has a pre-book system in place on their website, but limits residents to one visit per day. Staff are unable to help unload cars, except for blue badge holders in Gloucestershire, and there are limits to the number of people in cars, one or driver plus one. Staffordshire and Monmouthshire ask that only one person leave the vehicle to unload, and therefore remind residents that only items that can be carried by a sole person should be brought to site.

Table 17 Similar authorities HWRC data from the 2018/19 National HWRC Directory[16]

Authority	Authority type	No. HWRCs 2018/19	No. HWRCs per 100,000 population	Land area per HWRC, sq. miles	Average site catchment radius, miles	Total HWRC tonnage throughput		HWRC arisings, kg/hh/yr.			HWRC Recycling Rate including rubble		HWRC Recycling Rate excluding rubble	
						2018/19	Difference with previous year	All HWRC throughput	HWRC residual	HWRC recycling, excluding rubble	2018/19	Difference with previous year	2018/19	Difference with previous year
Cheshire East	UA	8	2.1	56	4.2	30,073	*-10,895*	180	58	116	67.9%	*-6.4%*	66.7%	*-1.0%*
Cheshire West and Chester	UA	7	2.1	51	4.0	39,001	*-23*	268	83	125	68.8%	*-0.1%*	60.0%	*-0.5%*
Gloucestershire County Council (Tewkesbury, Stroud)	WDA	5	1.0	201	8.0	56,233	*-5,616*	256	112	131	56.3%	*-11.4%*	54.0%	*-9.2%*
Staffordshire County Council (Stafford)	WDA	14	1.6	72	4.8	65,109	*2,810*	175	89	78	49.1%	*3.8%*	46.7%	*4.0%*
Monmouthshire County Council	UA Wales	4	4.2	82	5.1	19,534	*171*	492	184	240	62.6%	*0.5%*	56.5%	*0.9%*

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[16] *WRAPs national HWRC directory compiled by Resource Futures and updated in 2020 as part of their series of HWRC guidance documents. Figures used in this data set were returned from Waste Data Flow.*

Appendix B   Spatial analysis

The current provision offers the best coverage in terms of the shortest drive times for residents, as indicated in Table 18, however both scenario 3 and 4 offer 96% of all properties less than a 20-minute drive to their nearest HWRC. In scenario 3 and 4, only 4% of households are required to drive for more than 20 minutes to reach their nearest site and in scenario 4, the majority (86%) are able to reach their nearest HWRC within 15 minutes by car.

Table 18 Proportion of households in each of the drive time bands for each scenario

Scenario	Proportion of Households				
	Less than 5 minutes	Less than 10 minutes	Less than 15 minutes	Less than 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
Current	22%	63%	91%	98%	2%
Scenario 1	11%	37%	68%	88%	12%
Scenario 2	13%	43%	78%	93%	7%
Scenario 3	15%	48%	82%	96%	4%
Scenario 4	17%	52%	86%	96%	4%

The figure below presents the modelled data in terms of cumulative coverage, whereby the proportion of the population served is plotted with each minute driving time from their closest site. The scenario with the left-most cumulative percentage offers the best provision to households and the right-most the least preferable, in terms of drive time. However, it should be noted that the analysis does not account for road works or areas of peak-time congestion.

As can be seen from the graph, the current scenario offers the best provision, followed by scenario 4 and scenario 3. Scenario 1 offers the least provision

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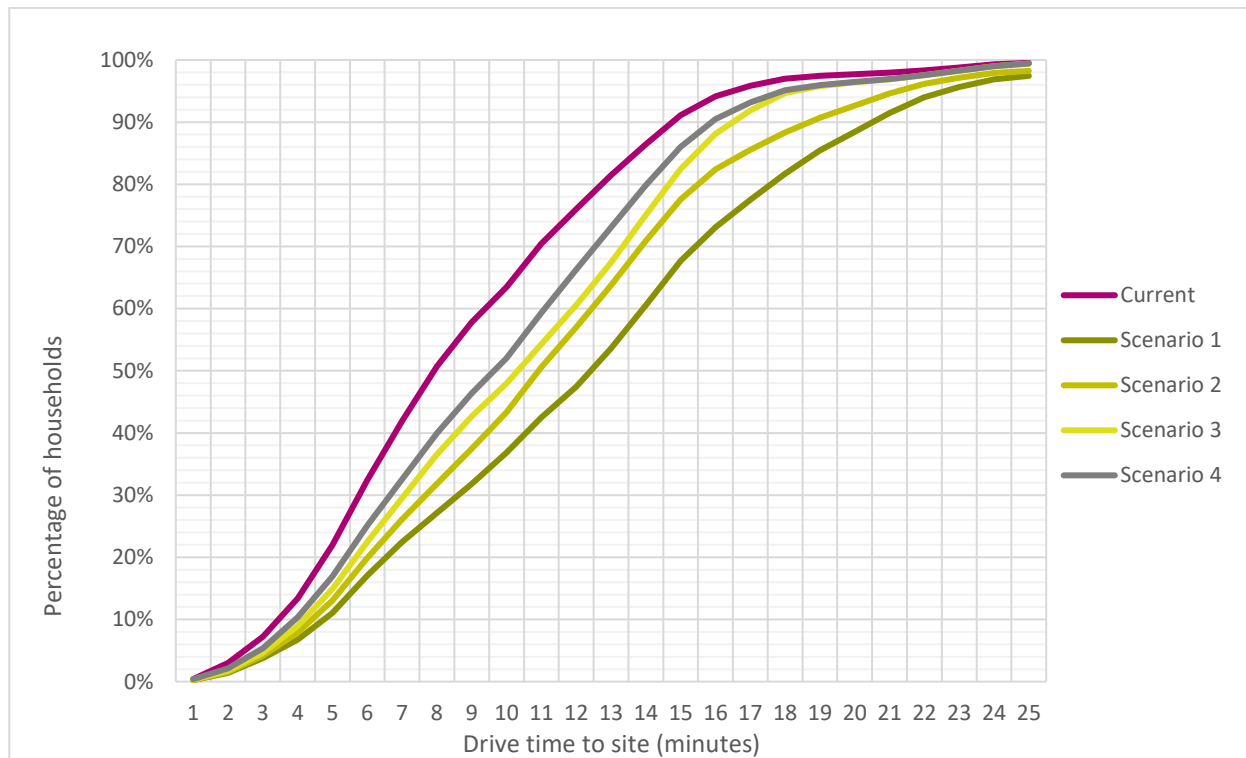
Figure 8 Cumulative drive time for HWRC scenarios

The following table shows the analysis of the distance between residents and their nearest HWRC site. It can be seen that the distance for the majority of residents is less than 8km (equivalent to 5 miles) for three of the four scenarios.

Table 19 Distance from the nearest HWRC

	Proportion of Households				
	Less than 2 km	2 to 4 km	4 to 6 km	6 to 8 km	More than 8 km
Scenario	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5
Current	15%	32%	15%	14%	24%
Scenario 1	7%	18%	13%	8%	54%
Scenario 2	7%	21%	15%	12%	45%
Scenario 3	9%	23%	15%	11%	42%
Scenario 4	11%	25%	15%	13%	36%

Appendix C   Detailed legislation assessment

C.1   The Resources and Waste Strategy

The Resources and Waste Strategy (RWS) sets out a broad range of measures that will affect HWRCs and the waste sector in general. The overarching expectation is for a shift to full alignment with the waste hierarchy through prevention and re-use.

The means to deliver this evolution described in the RWS include revised and expanded EPR and minimum requirements through Ecodesign and are expected to fundamentally alter the amount of waste generated, the nature of that waste, and how waste management systems are operated and funded.

Five priority areas are outlined for EPR, three of which will have direct impacts upon HWRCs:

- **Textiles** – Including at least all clothing, as well as other household and commercial textiles such as bed linens;
- **Bulky waste** – Including mattresses, furniture and carpets; and
- **Vehicle tyres** – Including tyres from cars, motorcycles, commercial and goods vehicles, and heavy machinery.

The EU Circular Economy Package sets minimum requirements for EPR schemes specifying, amongst other things, that producers must bear at least 80% of the costs of separate waste collection, transport and treatment necessary to meet EU targets[17]. Furthermore, EPR fees will be modulated to incentivise improvements to product durability, repairability, re-usability and recyclability and the presence of hazardous substances, thereby encouraging a life-cycle approach to production. The RWS goes further with regards to packaging, ensuring that producers pay the full net cost of managing the waste at end of life, i.e. 100% of the cost, and that full net cost recovery will underpin the Government framework for EPR as applied to other products. With regards to EPR, the RWS states that the Government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet new net costs arising from the policies in the RWS, including upfront transition costs and ongoing operational costs.

While EPR in the forms being debated for consultation and eventual implementation have derived from the EU Circular Economy Package, there may be questions about the likelihood of the UK Government maintaining regulatory alignment with the EU on packaging legislation now that the UK has left the European Union. At this moment, it is envisaged that packaging legislation may well stay aligned (or very closely aligned) as pan-European and global packaging producers operating across the EU will seek this assurance, and UK Ministers have repeatedly indicated their desire to even deliver stronger policy than that of the EU. This will need monitoring throughout the passage of the Environment Bill and in the subsequent detailed consultation on EPR options, expected in the autumn.

EPR reform is likely to:

- Change the amount of waste entering HWRCs vs. other waste systems;
- Create new waste management systems, e.g. takeback schemes, re-use networks, remanufacturing and repair centres, and specialist recycling centres;
- Change the design of products to enable longer product lifetimes, re-use, repair, modularity, and recyclability;
- Change the nature of waste entering HWRCs as product design changes and some end of life products are diverted to new waste management systems;
- Change how waste management is funded as producers will be liable to pay for waste management, presenting a revenue opportunity for Councils managing EPR product waste; and
- Require detailed data management for reporting and cost-recovery purposes on the part of actors managing EPR product waste.

The waste streams relevant to HWRCs that are most likely to be affected first are:

- Textiles
- Bulky waste
- Vehicle tyres
- Packaging

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[17] *Different rules apply to EPR schemes for ELV, Batteries and WEEE. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L0851&from=EN*

- WEEE
- Batteries and accumulators

These changes are expected to be implemented by 2023.

Carbon-based targets and natural capital accounting are proposed, moving away from weight-based targets, and inevitably driving different waste management choices. This will undoubtedly be used to support the Government commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050, outlined in the Environment Bill below.

The RWS dedicates Chapter 2 to "Helping consumers take more considered action", addressing consumption and disposal behaviour with aims to:

- Incentivise consumers to purchase sustainably
- Provide consumers with better information on the sustainability of their purchases
- Ban plastic products where there is a clear case for it and alternatives exist
- Address barriers to re-use
- Support the market for remanufactured goods
- Encourage appropriate disposal of used products
- Lead by example though procurement and the Greening Government Commitments

Specific actions include:

- Addressing barriers to re-use at Household Waste Recycling Centres and consulting on further measures to boost re-use, including reporting and re-use targets;
- Investigating amending the recycling credit system used by two-tier authorities;
- Reviewing the Controlled Waste Regulations and Household Waste Recycling Centres to ensure they are delivering value for money;
- Extending product lifetimes through warranties and disclosure;
- Supporting the market for remanufactured goods, including by developing quality assurance schemes to boost consumer confidence;
- Supporting large-scale re-use and repair through national planning policy;
- Introducing a DRS for single-use drinks containers, subject to consultation;
- Banning the most problematic plastic products, such as plastic drink straws, where there is a clear case for it and alternatives exist; and
- Producing consumer guidance for the recycling, resale, re-use and disposal of consumer internet-connected devices.

These actions reflect the emphasis on re-use, repair and waste prevention that runs throughout the RWS. The DRS may also provide a potential funding stream for deposit-bearing items collected at HWRCs. Furthermore, Chapter 4 of the RWS sets out measures to tackle waste crime, which will be supported by sophisticated digital waste tracking systems as mandated in the Environment Bill described below. Recent media exposés of illegal waste sites abroad treating UK exports of municipal waste have caused public outcry. Stricter monitoring of exports and waste supply chains is likely to improve environmental outcomes, potentially closing some treatment routes or increasing costs as a result of avoiding malpractice.

Ecodesign legislation is also discussed, with ambition to exceed the EU's Ecodesign standards where economically practicable, expanding the scope to cover more resource intensive product groups such as textiles and furniture. The availability of spare parts to facilitate repair, and the presence of harmful chemicals and their impact on recycling are highlighted as key issues.

C.2 The Environment Bill

The Environment Bill[18] currently in Parliament, but temporarily delayed as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, will be subject to scrutiny and amendment at Committee Stage[19] and Third Reading, noting that the Committee Stage was suspended but is now scheduled to report by 29th of September. No further information on scheduling the bill is available at the time of writing but it is important to remember that this flagship legislation will need to be approved by the end of 2020 when the UK leaves the European Union.

It is the legislation that will enact many of the measures outlined in the RWS above. In addition, it sets out:

- A commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
- Charges to minimise the use and impacts of single use plastics;
- Mandatory electronic tracking of waste; and
- A new public body, the Office for Environmental Protection, to be an independent watchdog to hold government and other public bodies to account on fulfilling their obligations on the environment.

Waste will be a key policy area in environmental legislation going forwards, particularly in relation to carbon targets due to the considerable amount of emissions associated with waste management and the opportunity to cut emissions through waste prevention, re-use and recycling. The Environment Bill also addresses air quality, which may influence decisions around waste treatment methods, waste transport distances and even HWRC site design and traffic, particularly when sited in urban areas.

C.3 EU Ecodesign implementing Regulations

EU regulations, published on the 1st of October 2019, set out Ecodesign requirements for the following product groups[20]:

- Household refrigerators
- Light sources
- Electronic displays
- Dishwashers
- Washing machines and washer-driers
- Motors
- External power supplies
- Refrigerators with a direct sales function
- Power transformers
- Welding equipment

A key component of the Ecodesign requirements centres on the 'right to repair'. Specific requirements are set out under resource efficiency detailing spare parts and repair and maintenance information that must be made available to professional repairers and end-users. The regulations intend to support prolonged

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[18] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020/30-january-2020-environment-bill-2020-policy-statement

[19] Environment Bill 2020 Second Reading, Hansard 26 February 2020 https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-02-26/debates/684530F9-0440-45F3-8768-E0E208082739/EnvironmentBill

[20] Regulation laying down ecodesign requirements 1 October 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/regulation-laying-down-ecodesign-requirements-1-october-2019

product lifetimes, repair and re-use, thereby reducing consumption and waste. If the market responds accordingly, it may also present opportunities for sale of spare parts from products brought to HWRCs.

The new regulations also include requirements for repairability and recyclability, contributing to circular economy objectives by improving the life span, maintenance, re-use, upgrade, recyclability and waste handling of appliances[21].

C.4   Impact of Covid-19

Local authorities and their waste contractors have responded to the pandemic in creative ways, with very few negative news stories about waste management. The industry's profile has been enhanced and the fact that it is designated "key" has been such an important recognition.

Waste Disposal Authorities and their contractors have managed to respond to varying demands; they have been flexible in the face of staffing shortages, assisting collection authorities through staff re-deployment from Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs); incorporated the changing health and safety guidance into safe systems of work and responded to the change in public expectation of service provision; opening as many services as possible as quickly as possible.

Priorities and planning

The length of time from most HWRCs being closed to most being re-opened has been around a month. Discussions with local authority waste managers have shown that some authorities managed to re-open some HWRC sites *in less than a week from the decision being made*. Those that have managed to re-open in such a short time had been working on plans with their contractors for two or three weeks beforehand and had kept a watching brief on developments at all times.

There are a multitude of aspects to be considered before re-opening, not least the management of demand; so, whilst not discounting the importance of off-take, markets for recyclables and disposal the measures and systems that local authorities have put in place to manage demand effectively whilst also adhering to social distancing guidelines. Examples have included:

1. Prioritising the opening of larger sites, where social distancing can be maintained.
2. Implementing booking systems, with access being through Council websites, call centres and phone apps.
3. Managed queueing systems, with increased communication between site staff and site users.

Booking systems

Authorities have implemented booking systems that can be accessed on-line only or by 'phone and other systems as well. Many authorities have focussed on only allowing domestic vehicles to be booked in, at least initially, to cope with the domestic demand and because they take less time to empty than larger vans and trailers. The booking slots have varied in length, from 15 minutes to an hour. Some allow a longer "window" so that, if the site user is delayed for any reason, they will still have chance to use the site; others are more time-specific. Authorities allow differing number of vehicles on site during those slots depending on the size of the site and the number of site staff. This booking slot can easily be changed to allow increases or decreases in numbers depending on staff availability and even fluctuations in the local severity of the pandemic. Using booking systems, means greater restrictions and control can be applied should

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[21] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_5895

there be upsurges in Covid-19 which could affect site users, those operating the site and associated off-takers and sub-contractors.

The implementation of booking systems has improved the flow of site users within the sites and helped them to use the sites more effectively; this has also prevented site-staff being inundated at peak periods and has enabled much greater communication between the site staff and site users. The add-on benefits have been increased sorting of materials for recycling and re-use and some reported decrease in residual waste. The booking system can also help to reduce abuse of the site from unauthorised use, such as commercial vehicles, and there is less likelihood of abuse towards site staff if users have to register to use the site.

Most authorities spoken to are intending to keep their booking system going forwards, with adaptations made to numbers on site as lockdown lifts, with additional expansion of the booking categories to allow more vans and trailers, giving those vehicles with larger loads to deposit, a longer time slot or having fewer vans and trailers within each time slot.

It has been reported by HWRC staff, both site staff and council officers, that site users have also been positive about the introduction of booking systems, as queueing is reduced and more assistance is available; they seem to be in favour of the system continuing post-Covid.

Limiting the types of materials accepted

Some authorities, at least initially, limited the types of materials they were accepting; firstly allowing excess black bag waste and then expanding the range/size of materials as throughput decreased following the initial rush - some authorities not allowing larger items, such as furniture and white goods or DIY waste, until recently.

The initial control of the type of waste accepted, often in combination with booking systems and other site access systems, has helped authorities to manage off-take and has allowed the off-takers themselves time to restart their own processes. It has been apparent that a difficult area to re-start has been that of re-use, with site re-use facilities and shops and charity off-takers being hard-hit by the pandemic. This has included schemes like Community RePaint, the paint drop-off and collect re-use system. However, recently, re-use has gradually re-started at HWRCs[22].

Furloughing has affected all parts of the waste management system and infrastructure, yet careful, staged re-opening has helped local authorities source destinations for all the waste and material streams.

Limiting the types of materials accepted on site may be another control measure that could be quickly adapted should there be any resurgence of the pandemic; priority materials could still be accepted, always taking into account the impact on the waste and recycling chain downstream, such has been the case, with the knock-on effects on supply of wood-waste to biomass and off-take of WEEE.

Controlled queueing

Some authorities were unable to implement booking systems for various reasons. This included those where reciprocal agreements between neighbouring authorities were in place - for allowing each other's residents on site - but where they had different systems, or different demands and where other authorities' sites weren't re-opening. Cross-border site use had to be considered. Others found it difficult to set up a

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[22] https://www.letsrecycle.com/news/latest-news/councils-tentative-steps-open-reuse-shops/

booking system in the time available as they didn't have any existing system in place that they could adapt or add to.

In these cases, queueing systems have been well-managed by local authorities, with few reported incidents of frustration leading to aggression. Authorities have employed traffic control experts and have liaised with local police forces and highway authorities to enable traffic signs, cones and routes to be clearly laid out and well-managed.

Site staff have been only allowing an agreed number of vehicles on site at any one time and have been ensuring good and regular communication along the queue of vehicles – telling people how long they are going to have to wait. At an agreed time prior to site closure, staff or traffic managers have been warning those queueing that they might not have time to access the site and that it's their choice whether to risk staying in the queue and the site closing or leaving and visiting another day.

Now that local authorities have tried and tested ways of introducing managed queueing at sites, this is another form of control that could be re-implemented if necessary.

Benefits of the measures for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic at HWRCs

The measures implemented to manage HWRC may have many positive aspects, including:

- It allows local authorities and their contractors to control site demand and have a smoother flow of inputs and outputs from the sites.
- It has potential to reduce abuse of staff on site and at access points.
- It has created tried and tested systems to control site use, for if there is a resurgence of the pandemic or other emergency situations.
- It has enabled the collation of increased information and data on site use.
- It is helping with increased segregation of materials for recycling and reuse and reduced residual waste.
- It promotes increased interaction between site staff and site users and can enable increased education opportunities, helping to inform the public, with positive behaviour-change as a result.

Ultimately, users of HWRCs, who have a positive, well-managed experience, might take the time to think more about the stuff they bring and that it might have a value.

Appendix D Contract incentives and penalties examples

Devon County Council: Devon County Council created a residual waste diversion target-based contract with their waste contractor. The contractor is not obliged to meet the target, but a bonus is given when it is achieved, and a penalty awarded if not. The target was introduced around 15 years ago and was increased by a percentage every year (by 0.25%) to boost performance. Once the sites achieved a high-performance level (70-80%) continued increases became unsustainable. At this point the diversion rate was set at 80%, with only 20% going to disposal.

Bonus payments replicated the avoided disposal costs (£100 per tonne). Bonuses were originally based on recycling performance alone but now include recycling and recovery to focus on residual waste reduction. The target is more difficult now as the EA is more restrictive on recycling activities. For example, many uses of recycled wood, such as animal bedding, are no longer permitted and so the only viable option for poor quality wood is biomass. Penalties were set higher at £120 per tonne and provide an important measure to

prevent poor performance. Use of this system rather than a contractual minimum performance targets helps prevent contract breaks and renegotiation or an expensive re-procurement exercise.

A separate re-use target is also written into the waste contract to incentivise re-use. This is set at 0.75% of total site throughput. Re-use revenue is shared evenly between DCC and the contractor. The bonus equates to equally shared revenue from re-use between DCC and Suez. The penalty for not meeting the target is set at £200 per tonne.

Dorset Waste Partnership: A target and bonus system is in place to minimise waste whilst promoting better segregation of materials, based around those material streams the Council pays for (green waste, wood and residual). Where targets are met the Partnership shares 30% of the avoided gate fees as a bonus. The contract also includes a clause that ensures the payment is shared with site staff as further incentive. Whilst this results in a relatively small loss to the contractor it translates to a good incentive for individual members of staff.

If performance falls 5% below the target a contract-default situation is triggered, so that the Partnership is protected if expectations are not met. A default escalator is applied to the recycling target each year to year to drive continued performance. However, targets are agreed annually together to remain realistic.

The two-part incentive system drives high performance, reduced costs and avoids unintended consequences. A recycling rate target alone may not incentivise a contractor to strictly enforce charging for non-household waste streams such as plasterboard that would otherwise inflate recycling figures. The system has flexibility to adapt to external influences that affect waste arisings and recycling rates such as unexpected weather patterns. A recycling target of 71.5% is set across whole HWRC network.

Durham County Council: Durham has 12 HWRCs with an additional one mobile site for rural Upper Weardale. The high-performance rates achieved on these HWRCs are attributed mainly to having had a well-defined and executed procurement process. It ensured that written into the specifications of the contract was a minimum of 70% recycling rate and 90% total diversion of waste from landfill.

The total diversion rate currently sits at 82% including rubble and material sent to RDF. The total recycling rate across all sites excluding rubble was 66% in 2017/18. The diversion rate had been higher but due to the loss of mattress and carpet recycling facilities it has declined in recent years and a new target of 80% (including rubble) was agreed. The effectiveness of the council's relationship with their contractor means that despite these challenges HWRCs are still able to maintain strong recycling rates.

Luton Borough Council: The current contract here is managed through a public-private partnership with a waste contractor until 2021. The partnership is based on a 'unitary' rate, with financial rewards for recycling performance to ensure recycling rates on site continue to increase. A 60% minimum recycling rate is specified in the contract with contractual conditions in place to penalise the waste contractor if the target is not achieved. The target is continually increased and initially started at 45%. The minimum contracted rate has resulted in reduced complaints from the public and a general improvement in recycling rates, with a recycling rate of over 70% currently being achieved.

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority: Merseyside is under a Waste Management and Recycling Contract which includes operation of 14 HWRCs and two Material Recovery Facilities. The contract recycling rate target is 53%, which due to use continuous improvements and positive incentive mechanisms has been exceeded (70%). The lower contract target reflected the HWRC performance at the time of contracting in 2009. There is a commitment to improve recycling performance and move up the waste hierarchy wherever possible, however it is acknowledged that this becomes more challenging as the easy

wins have been achieved, and due to financial constraints. Waste disposal costs are levied (under the EPA powers) from the Waste Collection Authorities. Levy costs are based on tonnage and population in each council area. An additional 24,000 tonnes were recycled above target in 2017/18, giving savings of circa £150,000 due to cost-effectiveness improvements. 2017/18 was the highest performing year since 2009 despite the highest tonnage throughput.

Nottingham City Council: Nottingham City Council has one HWRC, with an additional four HWRCs run by Nottingham County Council. The City Council currently has the highest HWRC recycling rate in England. The existing contract includes a target and bonus system with financial rewards available where the contractor exceeds an 85% recycling and diversion rate, meaning no more than 15% can be landfilled. Bonuses are linked to the avoided landfill cost currently equating to £69/tonne. The contract includes a bonus scheme to incentivise the contractor and their staff.

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation

Version 1

Contents

Executive summary and conclusions

Between 23 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 Cheshire East Council consulted on various options for future Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision in the borough. The results of which will be used to inform the future design and procurement process of a new provider of the service

The options presented were based on an independent review commissioned by the Council to assess alternative service scenarios, as the current contract comes to an end within the next 3 years. The options presented as part of the consultation were:

- **Remain with current service:** Replacement of Congleton site
- **Alternative service: Scenario 4**: Closure of Congleton & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 3:** Closure of Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 2:** Closure of Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 1:** Closure of Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton

Support was greatest for the option '**Remain with current service'** (59% overall, tend to or strongly support), with opposition increasing in each alternative scenario where a HWRC site was being proposed to close (65% overall, tend to or strongly oppose '**Scenario 4**' increasing to 97% for '**Scenario 1'** Generally, in each scenario opposition was greatest with the HWRC users whose nearest site was identified, apart from '**Scenario 1'** where opposition was strong across all HWRC users.

The impact of each option, upon respondents, followed a similar pattern to that noted above with '**Remain with current service'** reported as having the least impact (51% overall, fairly or very low impact). For '**Scenario 4'**, 53% overall, stated that it would have a fairly or very high impact on them personally, increasing to 95% for '**Scenario 1'**. The likely impact again was generally reported as being greatest by those HWRC users whose nearest site(s) were identified as potentially being closed.

74% of respondents stated that they would be willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a HWRC site, 24% would be willing to travel 10 to 20 minutes. With the current service it seems that many respondents reside within a 10-minute drive time to their nearest HWRC. However, this would not be the case for certain respondents within a number of the alternative scenarios.

Within the survey respondents were asked to provide any comments / considerations we may need to be aware of as part of this review. The top themes emerging from the comments were around the environmental impacts closing sites may cause for example, concern about fly tipping, carbon footprint, pollution and congestion, misuse of kerbside bin collections and reduction in recycling rates. Other concerns included the increased time / cost it would take to travel to an alternate site including an increased difficulty for those of an older age/ the disabled and increase in demand due to new houses being built. Some suggestions and general comments were also received.

Further details of the comments will be available in the next version of this report.

The Research and Consultation team recommend that the findings in this report are reviewed and considered alongside any other evidence whilst making a decision.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

Between 23 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 Cheshire East Council consulted on various options for future Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision in the borough.

The options presented where based on an independent review commissioned by the Council to assess alternative service scenarios as the current contract comes to an end within the next 3 years. The full review conducted is available on the [Cheshire East Website.](#)

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was mainly held online (due to the current Covid-19 restrictions) with paper versions being available on request. It was promoted to:

- HWRC Users, via posters at all Cheshire East Council HWRC sites
- The general public, via the council webpage, social media sites and through a press release.

The consultation picked up a lot of interest and was mentioned in numerous news articles. In total, 10, 208 consultation responses were received, including:

- 10,173 online survey responses
- 4 paper survey responses
- 31 email responses

We are also aware of 1 petition on change.org 'Save our Congleton Recycling Centre' this petition is currently still ongoing, at the time of writing this report it has received around 1,900 signatures.

A breakdown of demographics for the online & paper survey can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Section 1 – Current use of HWRC sites

As part of the, survey respondents were asked how often approximately, in a typical 12-month period, do they visit each of the current HWRC sites within Cheshire East. This question was asked to gain an insight into respondent usage and doesn't reflect actual usage of the sites in a typical 12-month period.

Figure1 shows the breakdown of results, excluding those who stated never. For most of the HWRC site's respondents represent frequent users - typically visiting monthly or more often:

- Alsager, 85% typically visit monthly or more often
- Bollington, 81% typically visit monthly or more often
- Congleton, 80% typically visit monthly or more often
- Macclesfield, 84% typically visit monthly or more often
- Middlewich, 84% typically visit monthly or more often
- Poynton, 88% typically visit monthly or more often

For Crewe and Knutsford HWRC sites however, respondents represented less frequent users visiting once every 6 months or less often:

- Crewe, 72% typically visit once every 6 months or less often
- Knutsford, 65% typically visit once every 6 months or less often

Figure 1: How often respondents visit Cheshire East HWRC sites in a typical 12-month period (excluding those who stated never)

	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Once every 6 months	Once every year	Less Often
Alsager (2,343)	16%	21%	47%	11%	2%	2%
Bollington (1,252)	16%	23%	42%	11%	4%	4%
Congleton (2,528)	13%	18%	48%	14%	3%	3%
Crewe (669)	2%	4%	21%	31%	19%	23%
Knutsford (292)	3%	4%	27%	32%	13%	21%
Macclesfield (1,060)	14%	21%	49%	12%	2%	2%
Middlewich (2,245)	14%	21%	49%	12%	2%	2%
Poynton (2,598)	17%	26%	45%	8%	2%	1%

■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Once every 6 months ■ Once every year ■ Less Often
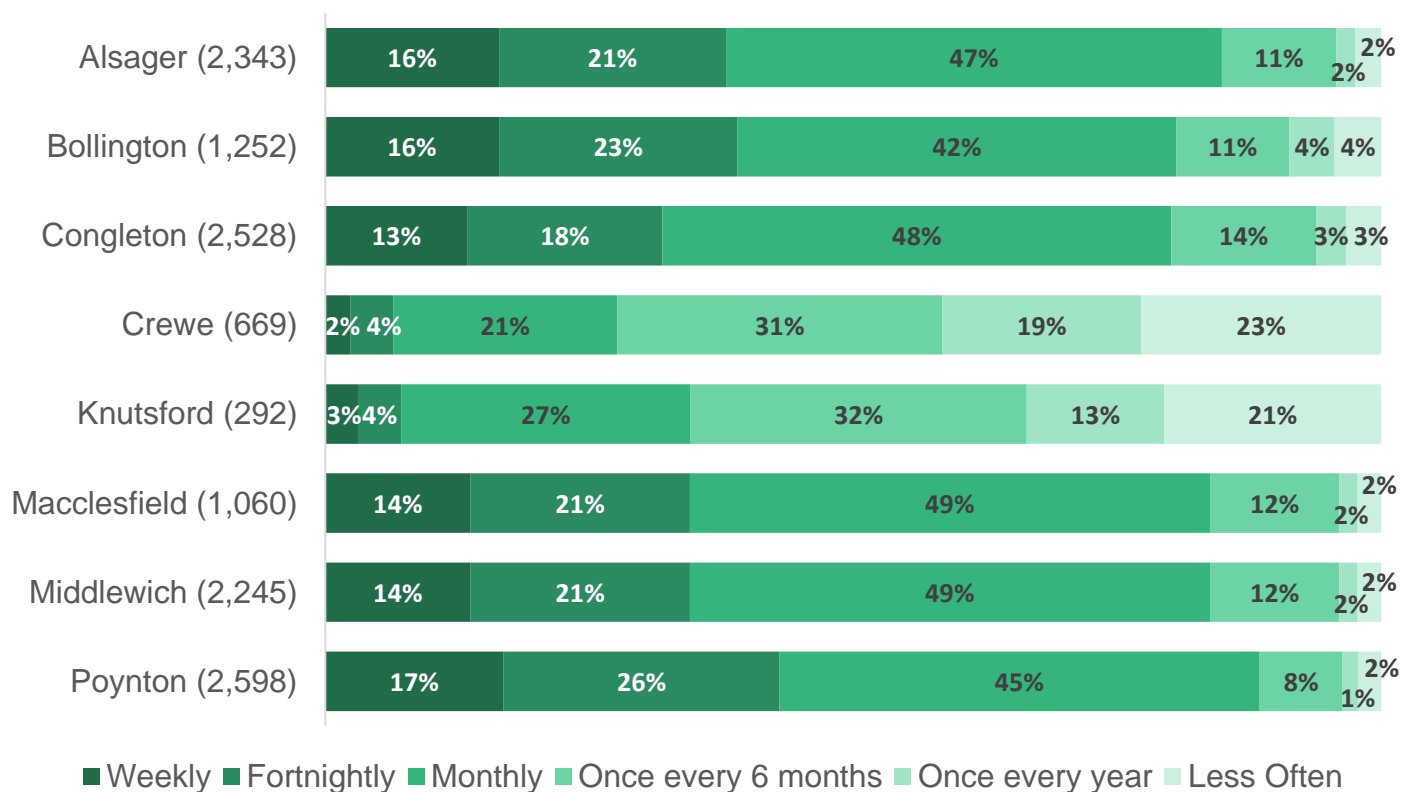
Many respondents (83%) had visited only one Cheshire East HWRC site within a typical 12-month period, 16% had visited two different sites and 5% had visited more than two different sites.

Table 1 below, provides further insight into respondent distribution per HWRC site. Users of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC represent around one quarter of the overall response each. Bollington HWRC Users represent 12% of the overall response.

Please note that percentages won't add up to 100 as respondents could specify that they use more than one HWRC site.

Table 1: User count by HWRC and Percentage of total response		
HWRC Site	**User Count**	**Percentage of total respondents**
Alsager	2,343	23%
Bollington	1,252	12%
Congleton	2,528	25%
Crewe	669	7%
Knutsford	292	3%
Macclesfield	1,060	10%
Middlewich	2,245	22%
Poynton	2,598	26%
Total Respondents	**10,177**	

Within section 2 of the report, the main results are shown overall and are also broken down by site users (excludes those who stated that they had never visited for each HWRC site).

Section 2 – The options

Respondents were presented with a table providing a snapshot of each option being considered by the Council as part of the review. A summary document which gave more detail on the options was also provided as well as a link to the full independent review document.

The options presented were:-

- **Remain with current service:** Replacement of Congleton site
- **Alternative service: Scenario 4**: Closure of Congleton & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 3:** Closure of Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 2:** Closure of Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton
- **Alternative service: Scenario 1:** Closure of Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich & Poynton

After respondents reviewed the information, they were asked how strongly they supported or opposed each option as well as what impact each option would have on them personally. The rest of this section of the report looks at the results received for each option in turn.

Please note that 'users' excludes those who stated that they had never visited for each HWRC site.

Remain with current service

Under this option Congleton HWRC Site would need to be replaced in order to maintain current levels of service. The current site is not owned by the Council and a long-term lease of this land has not been able to be secured.

Over one half of all respondents (59%) stated that they strongly or tend to support this option overall. Congleton HWRC Site users were more likely to strongly support this option compared to other site users (62% strongly support). Conversely, they were also more likely to strongly oppose this option (26% strongly oppose). This possibly represents those who do not want the site to be replaced or to change location and would rather it remain where it is. Figure 2 shows the percentage of those that stated oppose or support broken down by each HWRC site users. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on Figure 2) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 2: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Remain with current service, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

	Oppose		Support	
	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Strongly support	Tend to support
Overall (9,380)	4%	12%	50%	9%
Alsager Users (2,138)	6%	10%	43%	12%
Bollington Users (1,154)	5%	7%	38%	14%
Congleton Users (2,503)	3%	26%	62%	5%
Crewe Users (645)	6%	11%	39%	14%
Knutsford Users (284)	8%	12%	43%	15%
Macclesfield Users (1,025)	4%	15%	46%	11%
Middlewich Users (1,986)	4%	9%	41%	13%
Poynton Users (2,377)	2%	7%	55%	6%
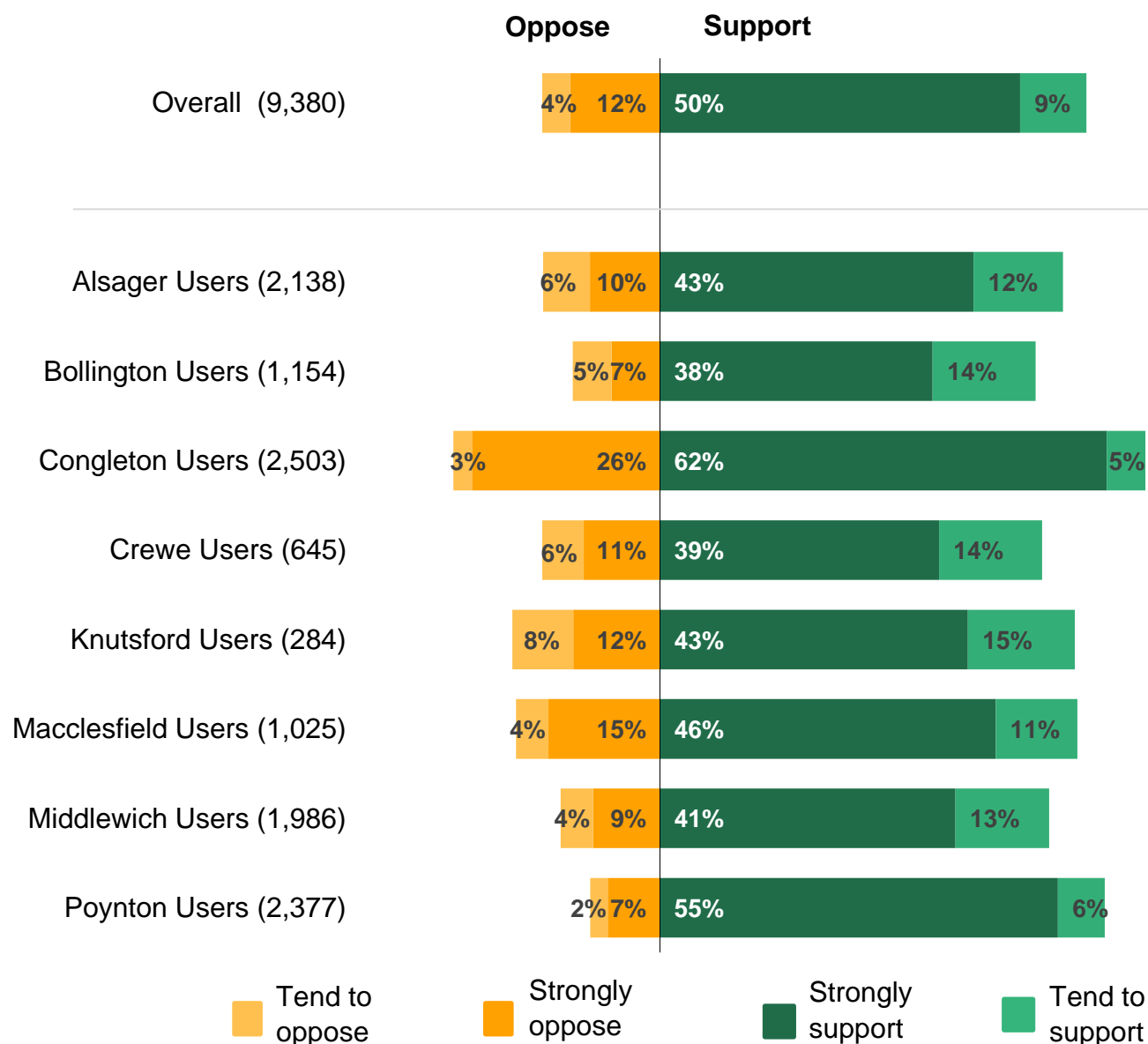
Just over one half of all respondents (51%) stated that this option would have a fairly or very low impact on them personally. Even though Congleton HWRC users were more likely to support this option they were also more likely to state that this option would impact them personally (58% very or fairly high impact compared to 26% Cheshire East overall). This probably reflects those who may feel that a replacement site / change in location to the current site would impact them and their current use.

Figure 3: Percentage of those stating that the option: Remain with current service, would have a low impact or high impact on them personally, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

	Low Impact		High Impact	
	Fairly low impact	Very low impact	Very high impact	Fairly high impact
Overall (9,434)	8%	43%	18%	8%
Alsager Users (2,163)	10%	41%	12%	9%
Bollington Users (1,164)	8%	55%	7%	5%
Congleton Users (2,490)	9%	21%	40%	17%
Crewe Users (653)	9%	47%	10%	9%
Knutsford Users (288)	9%	45%	12%	11%
Macclesfield Users (1,031)	10%	40%	20%	9%
Middlewich Users (2,019)	9%	46%	11%	7%
Poynton Users (2,369)	5%	53%	11%	5%
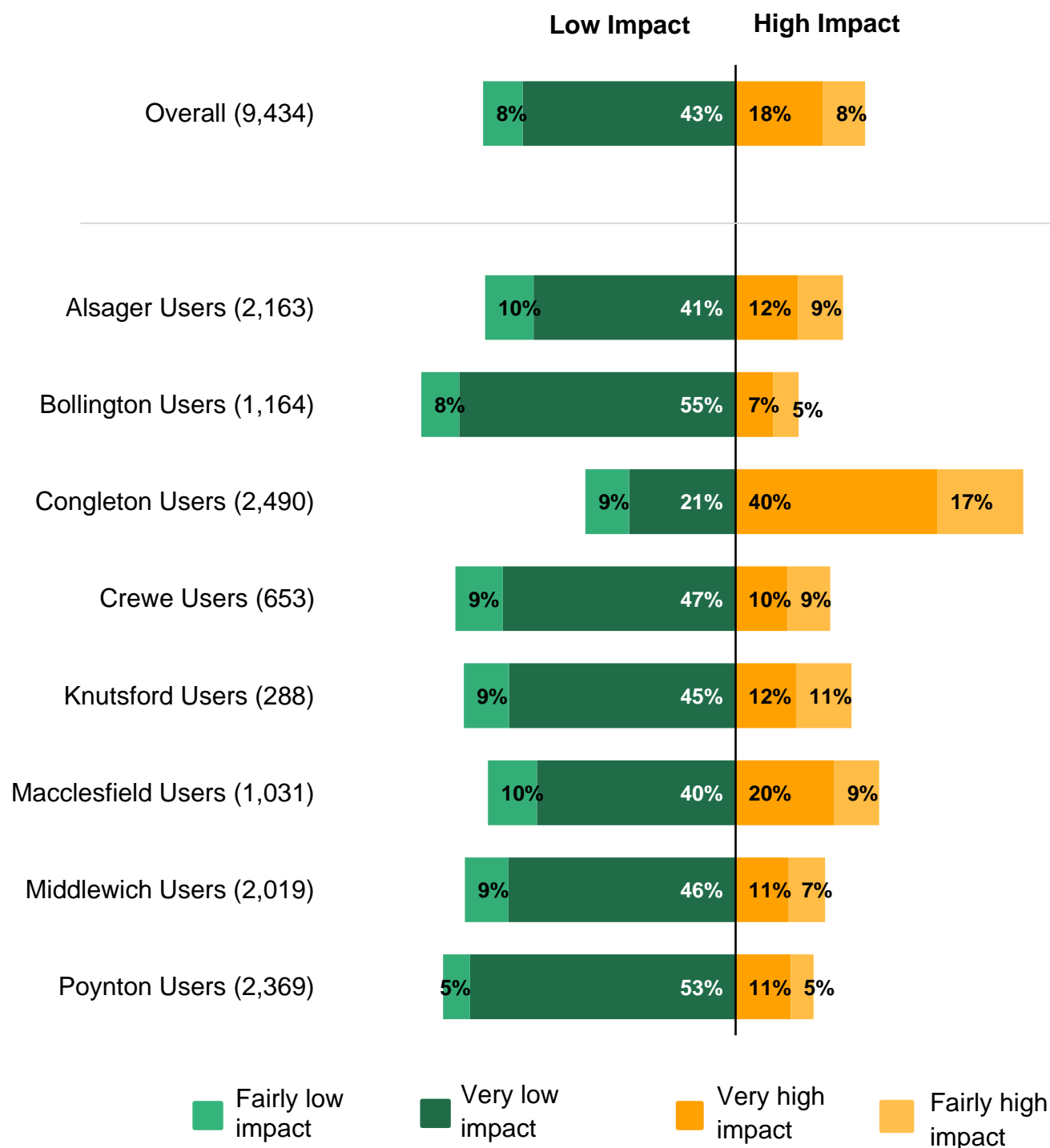
Alternative service: Scenario 4

The majority of respondents opposed this option with 65% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Both Congleton and Poynton HWRC would close in this scenario, unsurprisingly users of these sites were more likely to oppose this option compared to the other HWRC site users (92% and 96% oppose respectively). The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 4) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 4: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 4, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

Just over one half of all respondents (53%) stated that this option would have a fairly or very high impact on them personally. Congleton and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would personally impact them (88% and 95% respectively). Macclesfield HWRC users state a slightly greater impact compared with the other remaining HWRC users, 59% feel that this scenario would impact them (see figure 5). This might represent those with a concern that closing Poynton HWRC would mean greater use of the Macclesfield HWRC site as the next closest site.

Figure 5: Percentage of those stating that the option: Alternative service Scenario 4, would have a low impact or high impact on them personally, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

Low Impact   High Impact

Overall (9,432): 8% Fairly low, 24% Very low, 40% Very high, 13% Fairly high

Alsager Users (2,103): 14% Fairly low, 38% Very low, 11% Very high, 9% Fairly high

Bollington Users (1,148): 18% Fairly low, 36% Very low, 12% Very high, 13% Fairly high

Congleton Users (2,450): 3% Fairly low, 4% Very low, 67% Very high, 21% Fairly high

Crewe Users (643): 14% Fairly low, 42% Very low, 12% Very high, 11% Fairly high

Knutsford Users (284): 12% Fairly low, 29% Very low, 20% Very high, 18% Fairly high

Macclesfield Users (1.032): 10% Fairly low, 19% Very low, 41% Very high, 18% Fairly high

Middlewich Users (1,978): 11% Fairly low, 49% Very low, 7% Very high, 7% Fairly high

Poynton Users (2,529): 1% Fairly low, 2% Very low, 78% Very high, 17% Fairly high

Legend: Fairly low impact | Very low impact | Very high impact | Fairly high impact

Alternative service: Scenario 3

A high majority of respondents opposed this option with 82% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC sites would close in this scenario. Again, it's the users of these sites who show the greatest opposition compared to other HWRC site users (95%, 97% and 97% respectively) as shown in figure 6. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 6) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 6: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 3, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

Oppose / Support

Site	Tend to oppose	Strongly oppose	Strongly support	Tend to support
Overall (9,372)	9%	73%	2%	3%
Alsager Users (2,084)	19%	36%	5%	7%
Bollington Users (1,133)	19%	37%	6%	9%
Congleton Users (2,425)	5%	90%	1%	1%
Crewe Users (643)	14%	58%	3%	6%
Knutsford Users (279)	16%	61%	3%	8%
Macclesfield Users (1,021)	12%	66%	3%	5%
Middlewich Users (2,079)	4%	93%	1%	1%
Poynton Users (2,442)	4%	-93%	1%	

Legend: Tend to oppose | Strongly oppose | Strongly support | Tend to support

Overall, 71% stated that this option would impact them personally. Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would personally impact them (91%, 96% and 95% respectively).

Figure 7: Percentage of those stating that the option: Alternative service Scenario 3, would have a low impact or high impact on them personally, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

	Low Impact	High Impact

Overall (9,559): 6% Fairly low, 13% Very low, 55% Very high, 16% Fairly high

Alsager Users (2,107): 13% Fairly low, 32% Very low, 15% Very high, 13% Fairly high

Bollington Users (1,144): 17% Fairly low, 35% Very low, 13% Very high, 14% Fairly high

Congleton Users (2,449): 2%, 2%, 70% Very high, 21% Fairly high

Crewe Users (649): 11% Fairly low, 20" Very low, 35% Very high, 19% Fairly high

Knutsford Users (286): 10% Fairly low, 17% Very low, 41% Very high, 22% Fairly high

Macclesfield Users (1.035): 9% Fairly low, 17% Very low, 43% Very high, 21% Fairly high

Middlewich Users (2,144): 1%, 2%, 78% Very high, 18% Fairly high

Poynton Users (2,500): 1%, 2%, 78% Very high, 18% Fairly high

Legend: Fairly low impact | Very low impact | Very high impact | Fairly high impact

Alternative service: Scenario 2

A high majority of respondents opposed this option with 89% stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option overall. Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC sites would close in this scenario as such it was users of these sites who were more likely to oppose this option compared to other HWRC site users (97%, 96%, 97% and 99% respectively) as shown n figure 8. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 8) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 8: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 2, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

Oppose | **Support**

Overall (9,398): 6% | 83% | 1% | 2%

Alsager Users (2,074): 19% | 43% | 4% | 5%

Bollington Users (1,202): 3% | 94% | 1%

Congleton Users (2,415): 4% | 92% | 1% | 1%

Crewe Users (642): 13% | 63% | 4% | 5%

Knutsford Users (282): 12% | 72% | 2% | 4%

Macclesfield Users (1,030): 6% | 88% | 1% | 1%

Middlewich Users (2,053): 3% | 94% | 1%

Poynton Users (2,449): 1% | 98%

Legend:
- Tend to oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Strongly support
- Tend to support

13
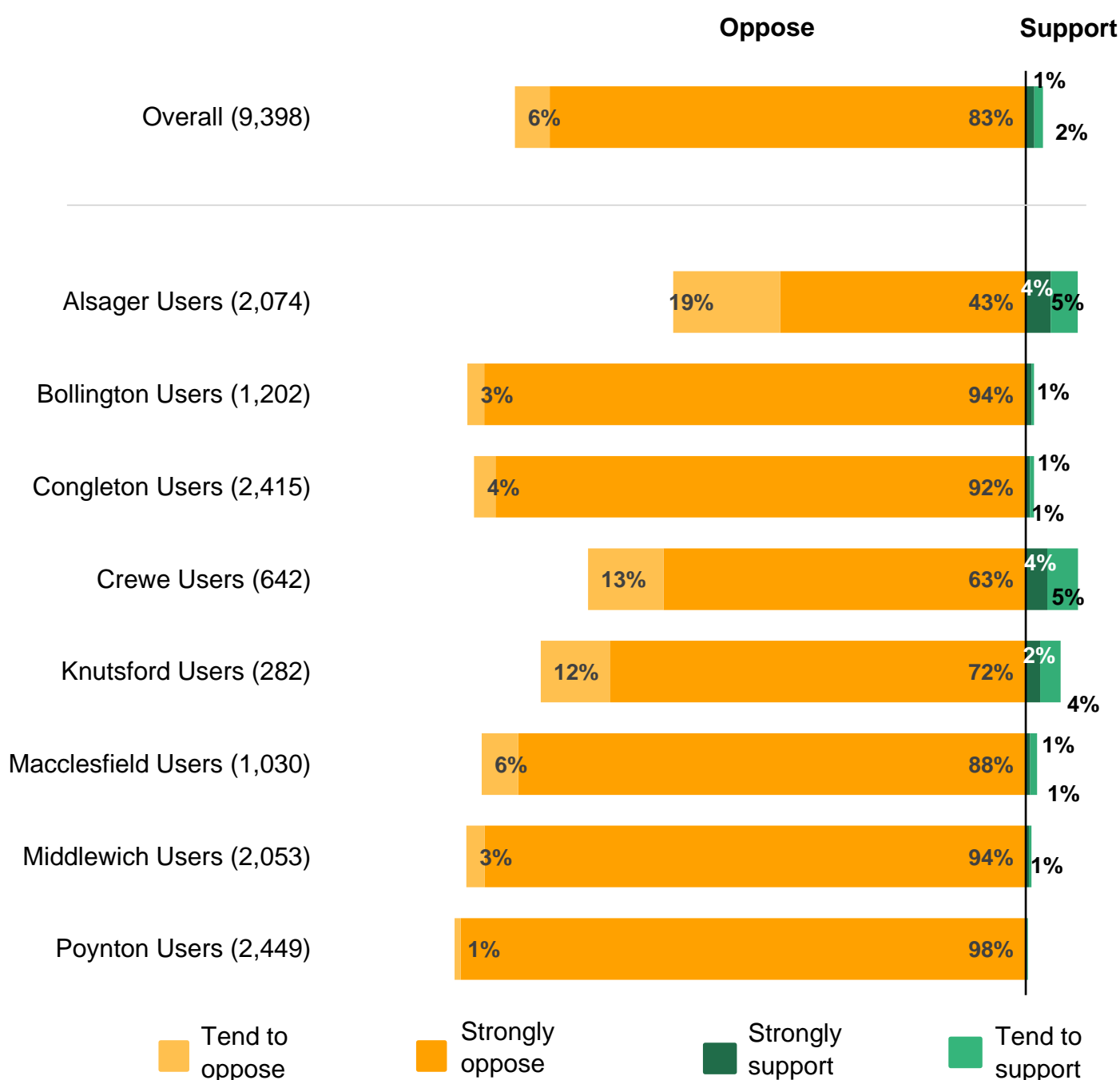
Overall, 80% stated that this option would impact them personally. Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC users were more likely to state that this option would impact them personally (97%, 92%, 95% and 98% respectively) as shown n figure 9.
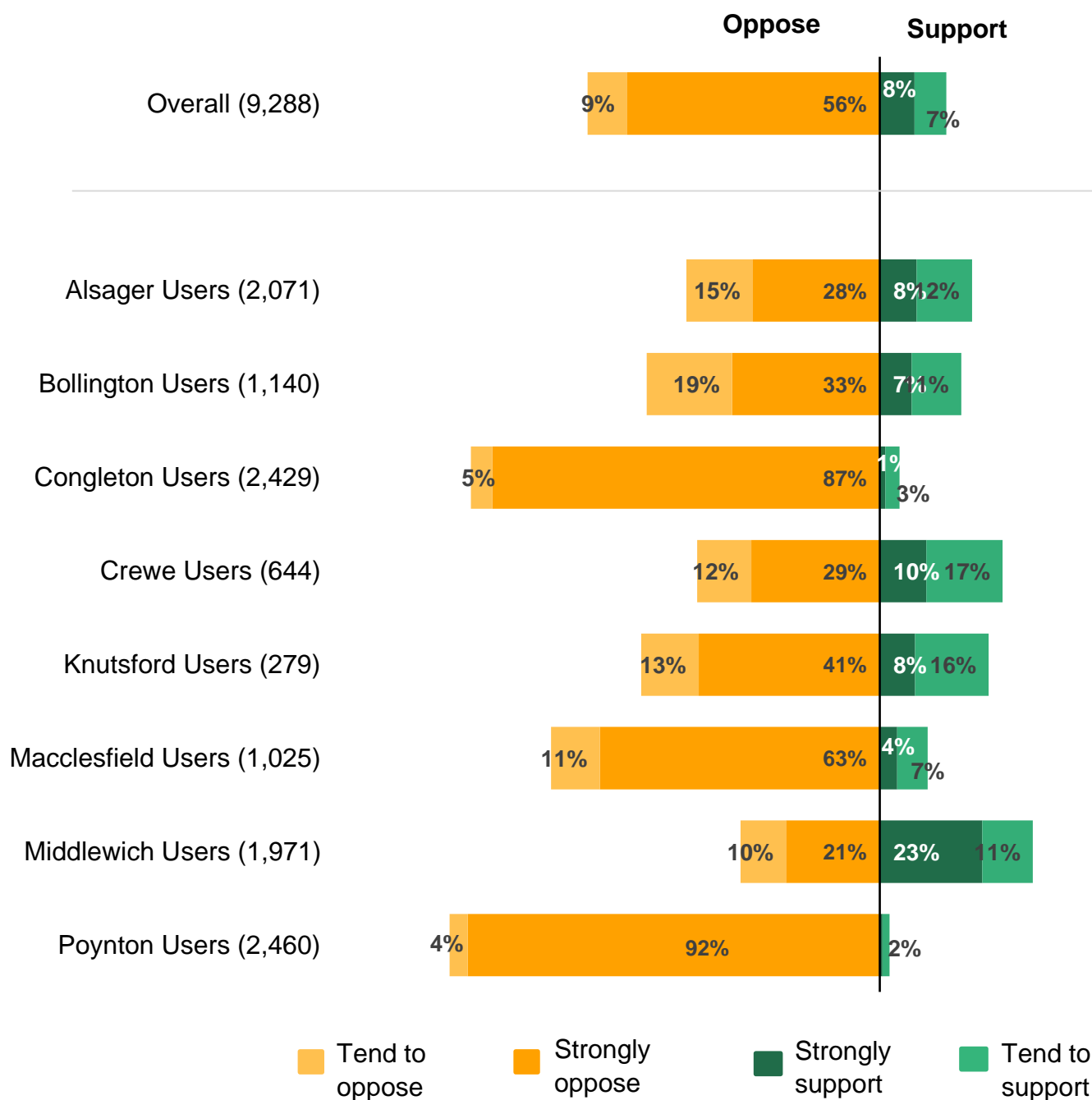
Figure 9: Percentage of those stating that the option: Alternative service Scenario 2, would have a low impact or high impact on them personally, overall and broken down by HWRC site users

Low Impact   High Impact

	Low Impact		High Impact	
Overall (9,599)	3%	8%	65%	15%
Alsager Users (2,107)	11%	31%	18%	13%
Bollington Users (1,212)	1%	1%	80%	17%
Congleton Users (2,443)	2%	3%	72%	20%
Crewe Users (648)	10%	19%	36%	19%
Knutsford Users (287)	7%	13%	50%	20%
Macclesfield Users (1.040)	5%	3%	65%	22%
Middlewich Users (2,121)	1%	2%	78%	17%
Poynton Users (2,506)			87%	11%

Legend: Fairly low impact | Very low impact | Very high impact | Fairly high impact

14
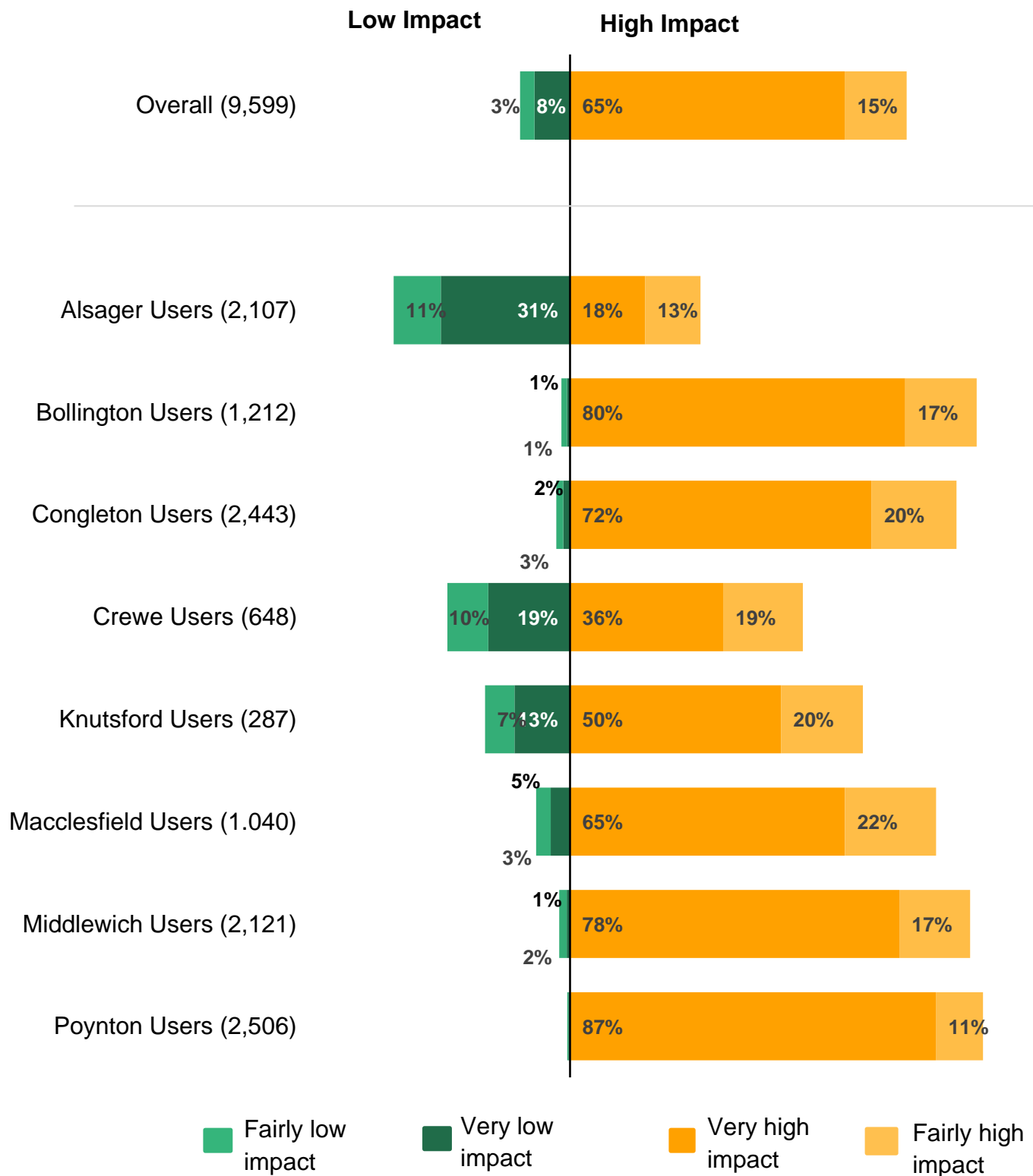
Alternative service: Scenario 1

Almost all of respondents opposed this option with 97% overall stating that they tend to or strongly oppose this option. Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton HWRC sites would close in this scenario. Opposition was strong amongst all HWRC site users for this scenario as figure 10 shows. The remainder of the respondents (not shown on figure 10) either selected 'neither support nor oppose' or 'don't know / unsure'.

Figure 10: Percentage of those stating oppose or support to the option: Alternative service Scenario 1, overall and broken down by HWRC site users
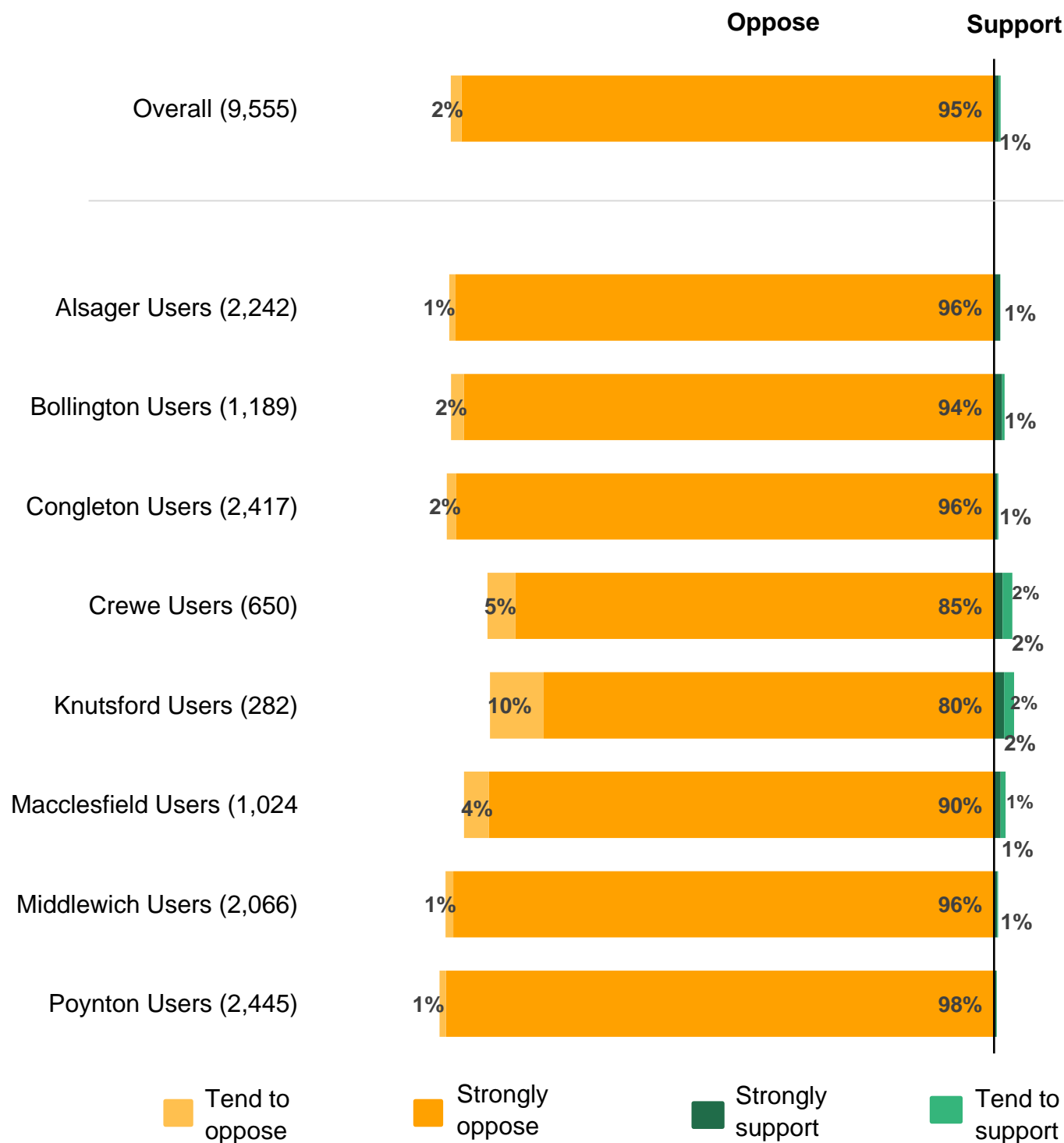
Impact was high amongst nearly all HWRC users (95% very or fairly high impact). Crewe and Knutsford HWRC users were slightly less impacted personally compared to the other HWRC site users as figure 11 shows.

Figure 11: Percentage of those stating that the option: Alternative service Scenario 1, would have a low impact or high impact on them personally, overall and broken down by HWRC site users
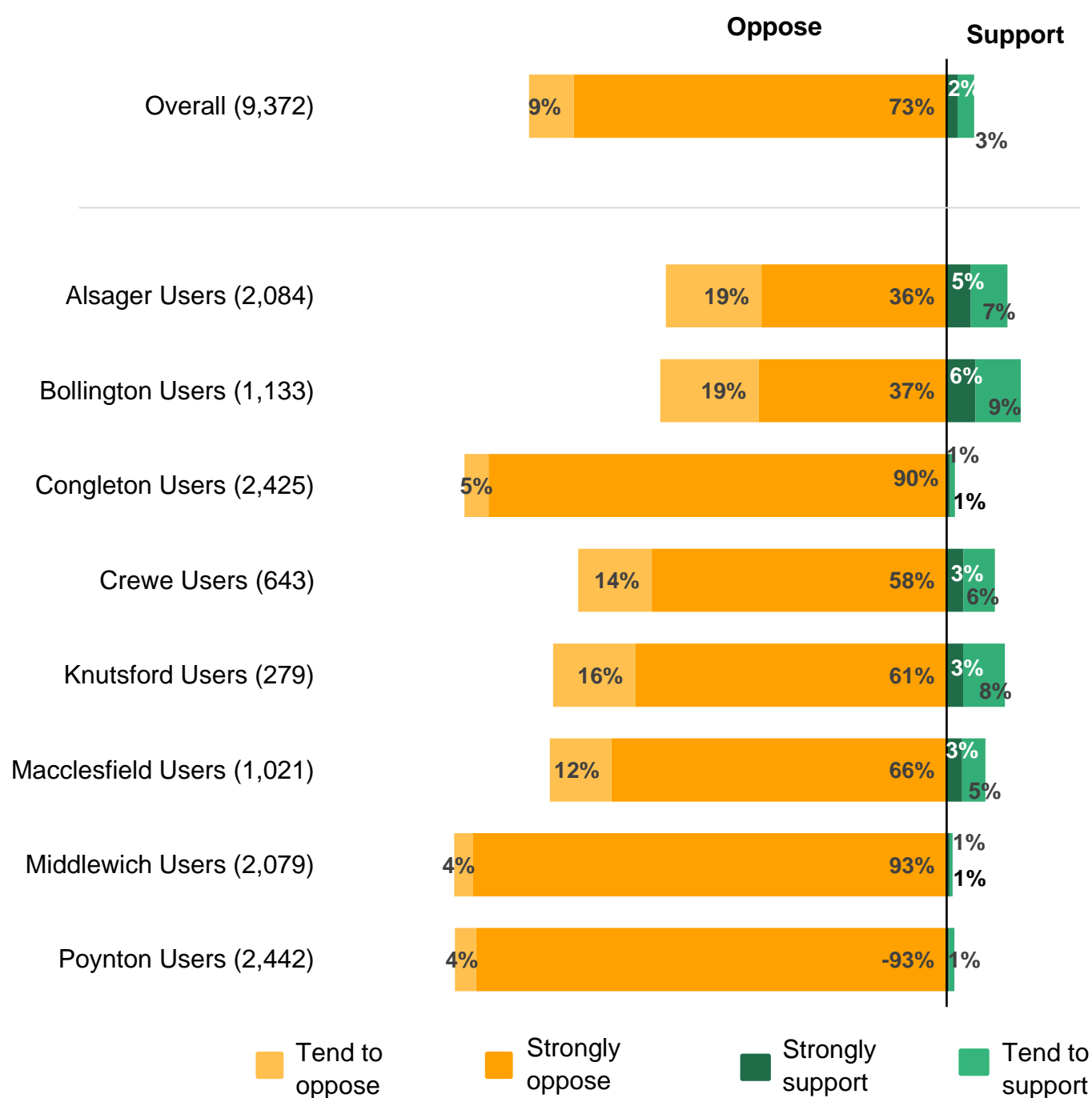

Low Impact   **High Impact**

	Fairly low impact	Very low impact	Very high impact	Fairly high impact
Overall (9,787)	1%	2%	82%	13%
Alsager Users (2,291)	1%		88%	9%
Bollington Users (1,213)	1%	1%	81%	16%
Congleton Users (2,447)	1%	1%	78%	17%
Crewe Users (658)	4%	9%	66%	14%
Knutsford Users (286)	5%	13%	59%	16%
Macclesfield Users (1,044)	3%	5%	69%	20%
Middlewich Users (2,123)	1%	1%	83%	14%
Poynton Users (2,509)			87%	11%

Fairly low impact   Very low impact   Very high impact   Fairly high impact
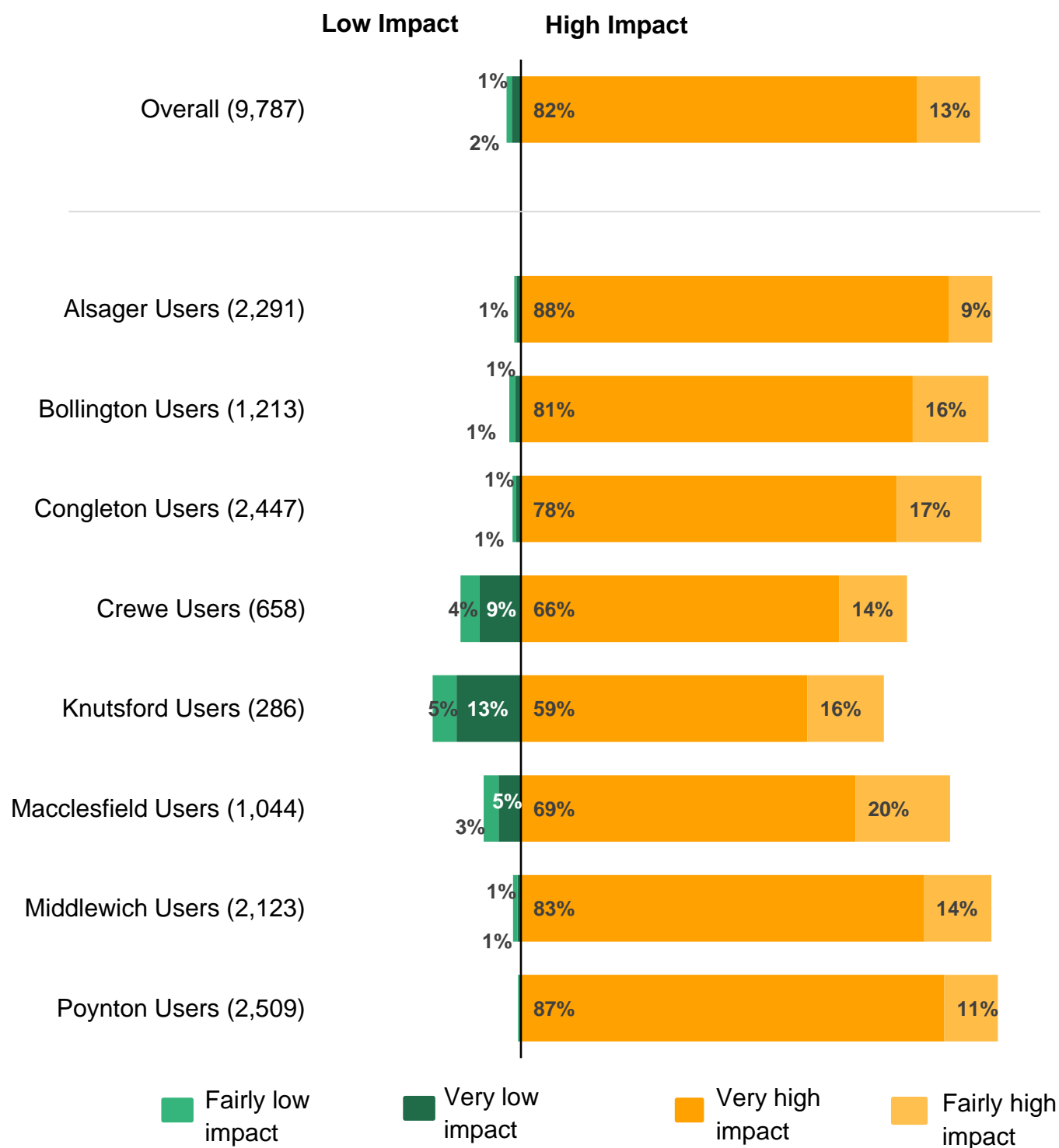
How long willing to travel

74% of respondents stated that they would be willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a HWRC site, with 24% willing to travel 10 to 20 minutes. The map below plots respondent postcodes (those that left a valid postcode, 8,822 respondents) against the current HWRC sites and a 10-minute drive time to each site. With the current service, it seems that many respondents live within a 10-minute drive time to their nearest HWRC. However, this would not remain the case for many respondents, for a number of the given alternative scenarios.

It is worth noting here, that even though respondent preference is a 10 minute drive time to their nearest HWRC, the Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) guidance suggests there should be a maximum driving time (for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions) of twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas) - this is looked at in the independent review documentation.

Current HWRC sites with 10 minute drive time boundaries and respondent postcodes

1:1

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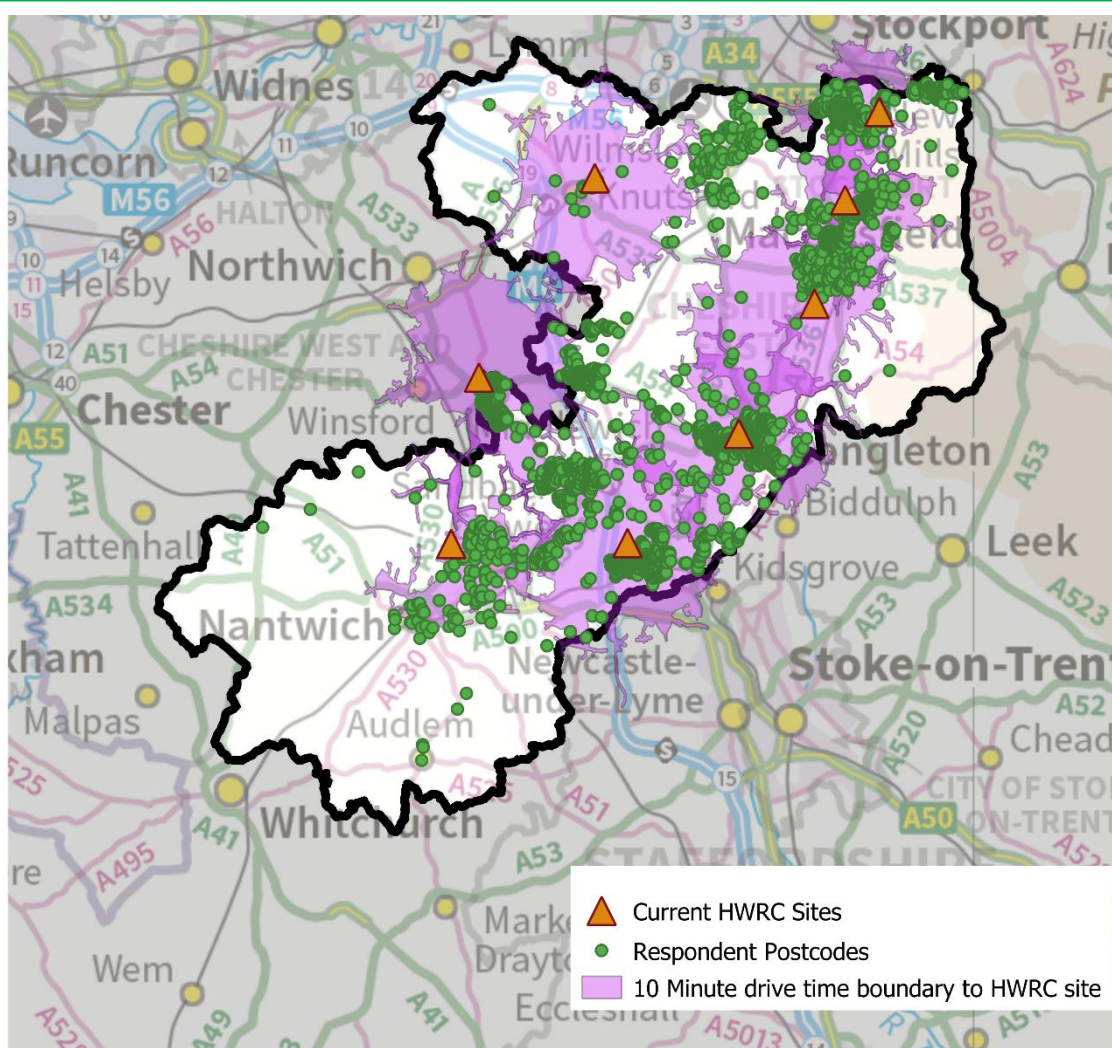
Section 3 - Comments / Considerations

Respondents were asked if they had any comments or considerations on the options presented within the consultation. A total of 6,049 respondents chose to leave a comment. Comments received through emails (31 responses) will also be included as part of this analysis.

Please note: This section highlights the top-level themes that have emerged from the comments. Further details of the comments including the number of references received for each theme will be available in the next version of this report.

Theme 1: Keep our HWRC Open

Respondents specifically expressed that their HWRC site was well utilised / always busy and therefore should remain open. The HWRC's specifically mentioned were: Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Middlewich and Poynton.

Theme 2: Environmental impacts / concerns

Respondents expressed great concern about an increase in fly tipping, carbon footprint, pollution and congestion if HWRC's were to close. Misuse of household waste bins as well as a reduction in recycling rates were also factors brought up as key environmental concerns.

Theme 3: Time, costs or demand

The impact of new houses and increasing population on the demand for HWRC services was mentioned as well as the inconvenience and increased cost of having to travel further to an alternate site. There were specific mentions to disability / age making it difficult for long travel. Others felt that they pay enough Council tax to cover the service so it shouldn't be removed.

Theme 4: Alternative suggestions

Some respondents gave an alternative income generating suggestion including introducing a charge for use of the tip / a charge to dispose of non-recyclable waste. Others gave an alternative scenario suggestion including a reduction in the opening times of HWRC sites.

Theme 5: General comments / concerns

General comments on personal use and concerns not directly related to the options were also received.

Appendix 1 – Demographic breakdowns

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All of the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 1: Number of survey respondents by representation	Count	Percent
As an individual (local resident)	9,995	98%
As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor	62	< 5%
On behalf of a local business	56	< 5%
On behalf of a group, organisation or club	34	< 5%
Other	46	< 5%
Grand Total	**10,153**	**100%**

Table 2: Number of survey respondents by gender	Count	Percent
Male	5,273	54%
Female	4,148	42%
Other gender identity	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	413	< 5%
Grand Total	**9,837**	**100%**

Table 3: Number of survey respondents by age group	Count	Percent
16-24	165	< 5%
25-34	1,004	10%
35-44	1,990	20%
45-54	2,307	23%
55-64	2,069	21%
65-74	1,569	16%
75-84	437	< 5%
85 and over	41	< 5%
Prefer not to say	352	< 5%
Grand Total	**9,934**	**100%**

Table 4: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin

	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	9,008	92%
Any other White background	79	< 5%
Asian / Asian British	25	< 5%
Black African / Caribbean / Black British	12	< 5%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian	34	< 5%
Other ethnic origin	29	< 5%
Prefer not to say	614	6%
Grand Total	**9,812**	**100%**

Table 5: Number of survey respondents by religious belief

	Count	Percent
Christian	4,534	49%
Buddhist	29	< 5%
Muslim	17	< 5%
Hindu	10	< 5%
Jewish	5	< 5%
Sikh	<5	< 5%
Other religious belief	92	< 5%
None	2,954	32%
Prefer not to say	1,598	17%
Grand Total	**9,293**	**100%**

Table 6: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability

	Count	Percent
Yes	1,322	14%
No	7,306	77%
Prefer not to say	855	9%
Grand Total	**9,483**	**100%**

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Household waste recycling centre new contract service provision

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
	1.0	Andrew Dunstone	
	2.0	Andrew Dunstone	Addition of no change option in consultation
	3.0	Andrew Dunstone	Additional detail
	4.0	Andrew Dunstone	Addressing specific closures

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	*Environment and Neighbourhood Services*	Lead officer responsible for assessment	*Andrew Dunstone Waste Contracts Manager*
Service	*Environmental Services*	Other members of team undertaking assessment	*State the full title(s) of all person(s) supporting/ completing the assessment.*
Date		Version	

Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Plan	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service ✔

Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New		Existing		Revision ✔	

Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	Household Waste Recycling Centre new contract service provision. The current HWRC contract ends in 2023 and therefore to give ample time to prepare for this a review of the service was carried out. A public consultation was carried out concerning the future shape of the household waste recycling centre (HWRC) contract. The volatility of the recycling market has severely affected the planned income from these materials, and therefore future contracts are expected to incur higher costs. An independent study was commissioned to model different scenarios and determine if they were feasible. The study showed that there is a generous supply of household waste sites, when compared with national guidelines, and that a reduction in these numbers was a viable option. The consultation considered the four scenarios from the study (all of which include the potential closure of sites) and a 'no change' option that included a replacement for Congleton household waste recycling centre, because the lease is ending in 2021. Following the consultation, the recommendation is to close the Congleton site in conjunction with new measures to provided fairer access to waste disposal services in rural areas of the borough through measures such as a mobile service. The recommendation takes into consideration results of the consultation balanced with the council's need to reduce estimated cost increases from 2023 in a new contract.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Who are the main stakeholders, and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)	Members, general public, Town and Parish Councils
What consultation method(s) did you use?	Following acceptance at Cabinet a borough wide web-based consultation was commissioned. Due to the ongoing Covid situation the provision of readily available paper copies at our household waste recycling centres was not considered a sensible method of distribution. Similarly, we would usually ensure that all our libraries had copies, but these we closed. In order to ensure their availability, signs were up at each of our sites advertising the consultation and providing a QR code to be scanned – a familiar process for anyone out using the Covid track and trace app. An email address and phone number on the signs was available so that names and addresses could be taken, and a paper copy individually posted. A press statement was released on commencement of the consultation and this should ensure that all local media will pick it up and raise it with their readers. Engagement with the consultation was extensive with over 10,200 responses, of these over 6,000 made comments

Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	Residents who are users of our sites. Not replacing Congleton in 2021 will have the greatest impact on those residents served by the site. Evidence of this impact comes from the independent report commissioned to review the HWRC service - Residents will need to travel further to dispose of their recycling/waste. In addition to the time that residents would have to travel to more distant sites, the sites they go to would be busier. The spatial analysis forecasts that Macclesfield will see increased use with an estimated 9% more households visiting it. In addition, an environmental impact assessment has been carried out.
Who is intended to benefit and how?	The presentation of clear information to potential bidders of the new contract will enable them to determine whether this is a contract worth bidding for. The procurement of a good contract will then ensure that all users of our household waste recycling centres will receive a quality, value for money service.
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	Yes. The option of closure for Congleton will impact all groups that are in the vicinity and the sites that are most likely to receive additional users – Macclesfield and Alsager.
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No. We feel that this does not affect individual characteristics because all users drive to the sites. In recognition of residents who rely on others to drive, it is expected that the new service provider will explore options to enable mobile units to be deployed.
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected?	Possibly. Depending on the preferred option chosen the communities who may be losing a site could be disappointed that others are not affected in the same way however, all options comply with Waste Resources Action Programme Advice for provision for residents.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(e.g. will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	The public consultation will give all residents the opportunity to engage with the council and present their views. Proposals being consulted on all comply with general guidance on acceptable levels of provision for our population numbers and acceptable distance to travel to a household waste recycling centre. The new service provider will be required to show consideration of residents who are in more rural areas or with limited means of transport – this may be in the form of mobile units visiting these areas. Historically, residents without access to a vehicle were unable to use the sites, we are seeking to address this with the new service provider.

Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)

	Y	N		Y	N		Y	N
Age	✓		**Marriage & civil partnership**		✓	**Religion & belief**		✓
Disability	✓		**Pregnancy & maternity**		✓	**Sex**		✓
Gender reassignment		✓	**Race**		✓	**Sexual orientation**		✓

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts		Consultation/ involvement carried out	
		Yes	**No**
Age	During the consultation 242 respondents raised the issue of age and disability as factors that would impact their ability to drive further to access any household waste recycling centres.		✓
Disability	During the consultation 242 respondents raised the issue of age and disability as factors that would impact their ability to drive further to access any household waste recycling centres.		✓
Gender reassignment	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓
Marriage & civil partnership	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓
Pregnancy & maternity	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Race	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓
Religion & belief	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓
Sex	Currently we do not feel that this impacts negatively.		✓
Sexual orientation	The possible closure of some sites does not negatively impact this group, all groups are equally impacted.		✓
Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)	**Yes**	**No** ✓	**Date**
Lead officer sign off		**Date**	
Head of service sign off		**Date**	

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	Is the policy (function etc….) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups? Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations *List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).*	Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc….) on any of the groups? Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations *List what positive impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).*	Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified *High:* Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation *Medium:* Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures *Low:* Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect	Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4) *Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.*
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				
Pregnancy and maternity				

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Race				
Religion & belief				
Sex				
Sexual orientation				
Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)				

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed			
Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	**How will this be monitored?**	**Officer responsible**	**Target date**
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions			
When will this assessment be reviewed?			
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?			
Lead officer sign off	A. Dunstone	**Date**	03/02/21
Head of service sign off	R. T. Keys	**Date**	03/02/21

Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website

Environmental Appraisal of closure of Congleton HWRC

Cheshire East Council

March 2021

Document prepared for

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Limitations

This report has been produced by SQ Planning LLP and Resource Futures on behalf of Cheshire East Council. Whilst the authors have taken all due care to interpret and collate the information presented within the report, any third party relying on the results of the analysis shall do so at their own risk and neither Resource Futures, SQ Planning LLP nor Cheshire East Council shall be liable for any loss or damages arising there from.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Resource Futures working with SQ Planning LLP was commissioned by Cheshire East Council (CEC) to undertake an Environmental Appraisal of the potential impacts of the closure of its Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Congleton.

Background

In September 2014, CEC produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of its Waste Strategy 2030. The SEA assessed the effects of 19 high-level objectives and the waste options contained within the Waste Strategy against 12 key sustainability themes.

The SEA concluded that CEC's Waste Strategy would make a significant positive contribution to sustainable waste management in the Council area because it provided comprehensive and efficient waste management solutions.

For some of the waste options considered, the effects on the environmental and amenity objectives of the SEA were unknown because both the location of the potential new infrastructure and those facilities that would close, were yet to be determined.

This report seeks to review the relevant environmental objectives set out within the SEA Report and provides detailed analysis of the environmental effects associated with the closure of CEC's HWRC located at Congleton.

This assessment should enable CEC to consider the wider sustainability credentials associated with the closure of its existing HWRC at Congleton and its contribution towards the wider delivery of its Waste Strategy.

Impact

This report and environmental assessment found that the majority of the key considerations were unaffected by the proposed closure of the Congleton HWRC. However, it was inevitable that the proposed closure would have some negative impacts that warranted further study and analysis. The table below summarises the findings of the environmental assessment in accordance with the appraisal scoring system contained within the SEA.

Summary of Effect

SEA Objective	Assessment	Impact	Possible Mitigation	Residual Impact
Population & Human Health Material Assets	**Transportation**	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems.	Minor Adverse
Air Quality Population & Human Health	**Air Quality**	Neutral	N/A	Neutral to Minor Beneficial
Climate Factors	**Climate Change**	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. Infrastructure Improvements.	Minor Adverse
Population & Human Health	**Amenity**	Neutral	Signage and CCTV.	Neutral
Employment Social Inclusion	**Socio Economic**	Minor Adverse	Redeployment and infrastructure improvements.	Neutral
Population & Human Health Material Assets	**Future Demand & Recycling**	Minor Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems. Wider Infrastructure improvements.	Neutral

The table shows that the residual impact of closing the Congleton HWRC is considered to be neutral to moderate adverse, if no mitigation measures are implemented. The table indicates the potential benefits of installing and implementing a range of practical and expedient measures which will reduce the impacts of the closure to **minor beneficial** to **minor adverse**. The adverse impact of the closure focuses on the additional distances that the waste will be transported by residents and the additional carbon that this transportation will generate.

Waste Strategy

The overall impact of the closure must be considered as an integral part of the impacts of the wider Waste Strategy. The **minor adverse** impacts identified by this report will be offset with respect to the following:

- The continued progress of residents to successfully reduce and reuse materials reducing the need to transport them to a HWRC.
- Consideration of onwards travel of the consolidated waste materials from the remaining HWRCs and the economies of scale that bulking of materials generally achieve.
- Optimisation of the existing HWRC sites to ensure they are fully utilised which will avoid increasing the carbon footprint and impacts of local amenity through the provision of a new site.

- The improvement of existing sites leading to an increase in recycling and reuse rates, which would typically have a greater carbon saving than a small additional distance travelled by residents.
- Wider carbon offsetting measures such as the utilisation of hydrogen collection vehicles and Council level carbon offsetting.
- Financial considerations associated with the management and running of the facilities.

Recommendations

This report assesses the worst-case scenario associated with the generation of traffic and usage of the alternate sites after the closure of Congleton. CEC have committed to monitoring the effects of the closure and will investigate the following recommendation measures based on an identified need.

- The provision of signage and CCTV at the Congleton site to deter fly-tipping.
- Investigation into the management of fairer access at the alternate sites such as the extension of opening hours and managed access arrangements.
- The provision of bring sites in locations which are over 8km from a HWRC.
- Investigation into the potential for further upgrades to existing infrastructure.

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1   Introduction

Resource Futures working with SQ Planning LLP has been commissioned by Cheshire East Council (CEC) to undertake an Environmental Appraisal of the potential impacts of the closure of its Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Congleton.

1.1   Purpose of this report

In September 2014, CEC produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of its Waste Strategy 2030. The SEA assessed the effects of 19 high-level objectives and the waste options contained within the Waste Strategy against 12 key sustainability themes which included:

- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna.
- Population and Human Health.
- Soil.
- Water.
- Air.
- Climatic Factors.
- Material Assets.
- Cultural Heritage.
- Landscape.
- Employment.
- Deliverability.
- Social Inclusion.

The SEA concluded that CEC's Waste Strategy would make a significant positive contribution to sustainable waste management in the Council area because it provided comprehensive and efficient waste management solutions.

For some of the waste options considered, the effects on the environmental and amenity objectives of the SEA were unknown because the location of the potential new infrastructure and those facilities that may close were yet to be determined.

This report seeks to review the relevant environmental objectives set out within the SEA Report to provide a more detailed analysis of the environmental effects associated with the closure of CEC's HWRC located at Congleton.

This assessment should enable CEC to consider the wider sustainability credentials associated with the closure of its existing HWRC at Congleton and its contribution towards the wider delivery of its Waste Strategy.

1.2   Background Context

CEC has a statutory duty to provide HWRCs free-of-charge and that are reasonably accessible to residents, in a controlled and sustainable manner.

The Council currently operates 8 HWRC's. The sites are managed by ANSA Environmental Services, a company wholly owned by the Council. At each HWRC the site operations are undertaken by HW Martin Ltd and subcontracted Site Managers. The current contract for the delivery of these services ends in 2023.

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The current facility in Congleton is on a site that is leased by the Council. The owner of the site has informed the Council that they will not consider a renewal of the lease. The current lease at the site will expire in 2021 and as such the facility will be closed.

Whilst there is an extensive body of work currently being undertaken to prepare for the end of the contract with HW Martin, this assessment considers the environmental impact of the closure of the Congleton site at the end of its lease in 2021.

2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the requirements and general approach followed by this Environmental Appraisal.

2.1 Requirements

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 require a SEA to be carried out when developing strategic 'plans and programmes'. SEA's are mandatory where a plan or programme is required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. Although not required by law, CEC undertook a SEA on the Waste Strategy in line with recommended best practice.

Actions associated with the implementation of a Waste Strategy, be it due to Council decisions or other factors, do not require further assessment under the SEA Regulations.

Notwithstanding this, CEC are committed to assessing the implications of the closure of the HWRC on the environment and local community to inform its wider decision-making process.

The proposal does not include demolition or the development of a new site. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 is therefore not required.

2.2 Consultation

In preparation for a new HWRC contract, Resource Futures were commissioned to undertake a review of the current service provision within CEC and to make recommendations regarding the provision going forward. This research concluded that it would be possible to reduce the number of HWRC's within the Council area without significantly affecting the ability of CEC to provide the required service level.

In November 2020, CEC's Cabinet considered the findings of this review and agreed that a public consultation on the options for the future pattern of provision for HWRC's should be undertaken.

Residents were consulted on the scenarios identified in the review and asked how they felt about the options being considered and what they considered the impact would be on them. Over 10,200 responses were received. Most residents supported the option to keep the current service provision pattern.

Respondents to the consultation were asked to provide comments that the Council ought to consider as part of statutory service provisions. The top themes emerging from the comments concerned the potential risk of adverse environmental impacts caused by the closure of sites, which may increase the incidence of fly tipping, increased carbon emissions from longer journeys, pollution and congestion from queuing to access the other sites in the area, misuse of kerbside bin collections and reduction in recycling rates. Other concerns included the increased time and cost it would take for individuals, especially those of an older age group and the disabled, to travel to an alternate site. It was also perceived that there would be an increase in demand for HWRC facilities due to new houses being built.

These concerns are addressed within this appraisal.

2.3 Existing Baseline

The Council currently operates 8 HWRC's in Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich and Poynton.

The subject of this assessment is:

- **Congleton Household Waste Recycling Centre:** Barn Road, off the A536 Congleton to Macclesfield Rd, CW12 1LJ.

The traffic utilising the Congleton HWRC currently access and exit the site via the A34 Clayton bypass.

2.4   Projected Future Scenario

When the HWRC at Congleton closes, the nearest alternative sites for the great majority of the residents will be:

- **Alsager Household Waste Recycling Centre,** Hassall Road, Alsager ST7 2SJ.
- **Macclesfield Household Waste Recycling Centre,** off the A536 Macclesfield to Congleton Rd, Gawsworth, Macclesfield SK11 9QP.

The locations of these sites are identified in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1:HWRC locations

It is assumed that traffic travelling from Congleton to the alternate facilities would be likely to travel via:
- Alsager: A34 Newcastle Road / Congleton Road North; and

- Macclesfield: A536 Congleton Road.

2.5   Timeframes

The key time frames examined within this environmental appraisal have been sub-divided as follows:

- **Short term**: Comprising temporary arrangements made when the Congleton site has been closed.
- **Long Term**: Comprising the permanent arrangement made when the Congleton site has been closed.

Within these broad timeframes, the impact of the changes can be categorised as being direct or indirect as follows:

- **Direct effects** are those that impact on local residents and local businesses.
- **Indirect effects** are those that impact on the remaining HWRC network or wider area.

2.6   Assessment Structure

The SEA for the CEC Waste Strategy 2030 identified key sustainability themes which are relevant to the delivery of the Waste Strategy.

This Environmental Appraisal has identified those themes of relevance and assesses the impact of the closure of the Congleton site against them.

2.6.1   Specific Assessment Criteria

Table 1 below replicates the SEA topics and objectives as established in Table 3.2 in the SEA Report. Some of the SEA topics fall outside the scope of this appraisal as will be identified and justified in section 2.7 of this report.

The table allocates appropriate assessment criteria based on those assessment criteria set out within the SEA, and the comments raised by members of the public outlined in section 2.2 of this report. The environmental assessment of each criterion is presented and discussed in individual chapters under the relevant headings.

Table 1: SEA Framework adaptation

SEA Topic	SEA Objective	Assessment Criteria to establish if the closure of the HWRC at Congleton will:	Report Chapter No
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	To protect and enhance biodiversity, habitats, geo-diversity and important geological features from adverse effects of waste development; with particular care to sites designated internationally, nationally, regionally and locally	- protect or enhance biodiversity? - help protect any species at risk - protect or enhance geo-diversity and geological sites and features - protect or enhance designated sites or species	**Outside the scope of this report**

SEA Topic	SEA Objective	Assessment Criteria to establish if the closure of the HWRC at Congleton will:	Report Chapter No
Population and Human Health	To protect the living conditions and amenities of local residents from adverse effects of waste development, including noise, vibration, dust, odour and traffic effects.	- effect of noise, vibration, dust or odour. - impact on congestion? - impact on time and cost to travel?	**Outside the scope of this report** **3** **(Transport)**
	To minimise adverse effects of waste management activity on human health.	- impact on air quality?	**4** **(Air Quality)**
	To protect community safety and well-being.	- impact on fly tipping? - impact on litter?	**6** **(Amenity)**
	To avoid adverse cumulative environmental effects of waste management and associated development on local communities.	- impact on future demand in particular from new housing?	**8** **(Future demand & Recycling)** **Cumulative impacts addressed in all chapters**
Soil	To protect agricultural resources from waste management activities.	- seek the protection or enhanced use of the best quality agricultural land?	**Outside the scope of this report**
Water	To protect water quality, quantity and manage flood risk in relation to waste management activities within the Council area.	- seek the protection of water quality and manage flood risk?	**Outside the scope of this report**
Air	To minimise adverse effects of waste management activity on air quality.	- impact on air quality & pollution?	**4** **(Air Quality)**
Climatic Factors	To minimise the effect of waste management on climate change	- reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, in particular carbon dioxide and methane?	**5** **(Climate Change)**
Material Assets	To reduce the consumption and wasteful use of primary resources and encourage the development of alternatives to primary resources.	- impact on kerbside collections?	**8** **(Future Demand & Recycling)**

SEA Topic	SEA Objective	Assessment Criteria to establish if the closure of the HWRC at Congleton will:	Report Chapter No
	To minimise the requirement for energy use and increase the use of energy from renewable sources.	- encourage the efficient use of energy? - result in energy efficient development? - result in the high-quality design and layout of development? - promote and encourage the use of renewable energy? - incorporate renewable energy technologies?	**Outside the scope of this report**
	To secure the sustainable management of waste, minimise its production, and increase re-use, recycling and recovery rates.	- impact on recycling rates?	**8** **(Future Demand & Recycling)**
	To minimise the transport effects of waste management activity.	- maintain or enhance necessary transport infrastructure?	**3** **(Transport)**
Cultural Heritage	To minimise the effects of waste management on places, features and buildings of historic, cultural and archaeological importance.	- protect or enhance the area's internationally, nationally, or locally designated heritage and asses their setting?	**Outside the scope of this report**
Landscape	To protect the quality, integrity and distinctiveness of the landscape and townscapes from waste management activity, including historic landscapes of cultural significance.	- protect or enhance the landscape? Will it protect or enhance the townscape? - protect or enhance the existing built and natural environment, ensuring that the area remains distinctive?	**Outside the scope of this report**
Employment	To provide employment opportunities and promote economic wellbeing through waste management activities.	- increase access to jobs and employment opportunities?	**7** **(Socio Economic)**

SEA Topic	SEA Objective	Assessment Criteria to establish if the closure of the HWRC at Congleton will:	Report Chapter No
Deliverability	To provide reliability, deliverability and operational flexibility in waste management solutions.	- positively contribute to the maintenance of reliable waste management solutions - positively contribute to the delivery of waste management solutions - positively contribute to the maintenance of the operational flexibility of waste management solutions?	Outside the scope of this report
Social Inclusion	To enhance opportunities for public involvement, education and engagement in waste management.	- increase access to education and training opportunities?	Outside the scope of this report
	To promote social inclusion in waste management activities.	- impact on vulnerable or older age groups?	7 (Socio Economic)

2.6.2   Combined Effects

Whilst individual environmental impacts have been considered in individual chapters of this report, there is the potential for environmental subject areas to impact upon others. The potential combined effects are addressed in each of the respective chapters within this report, where relevant.

2.6.3   Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are those that may interact in an additive or subtractive manner with potential impacts of HWRC's within the network. Such cumulative effects have been addressed in each of the respective chapters within this report, where relevant.

2.6.4   Mitigation of Effects

Where appropriate, potential mitigation measures are suggested to limit or to offset any potential adverse impacts of the closure of the HWRC at Congleton.

2.6.5   Residual Effects

Residual effects are any effects which are likely to remain after mitigation measures have been applied.

2.6.6   Appraisal Scoring System

The appraisal scoring system used in the SEA has been utilised to determine the level of significance that the closure of the Congleton site may have on the identified sustainability objectives. The appraisal scoring system is provided in Table 2 (slight amendments have been made to the definition of the scoring system to provide effective application within this assessment).

Table 2: Appraisal Scoring System

Rating	Meaning	Explanation
++	Moderate beneficial effect	The closure will have a significant positive effect on the achievement of the objective
+	Minor beneficial effect	The closure will have a positive effect on the achievement of the objective.
0	Neutral effect	The closure will have no impact on the achievement of the objective.
-	Minor adverse effect	The closure will have a negative impact on the achievement of the objective.
--	Moderate adverse effect	The closure will have a significant negative impact on the achievement of the objective.
?	Unknown / dependent upon implementation	The impact of the closure on the achievement of the objective is unknown.

2.7   Topics that are outside the scope of this environmental assessment

The closure of the existing HWRC at Congleton does not involve the demolition or the movement of existing site infrastructure to a new location.

The following topics have, therefore, been 'scoped out' of this Environmental Appraisal.

- **Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna**: The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work which could have the potential to impact on ecological assets.
- **Noise, Vibration, Dust**: The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work, however, the removal of skip loading/unloading at the site may have a moderate beneficial impact on the local environment.
- **Odour**: The site does not process odorous materials and as such its closure will not have an impact on odour.
- **Soil**: The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work.
- **Water**: The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work.
- **Energy**: The proposal does not involve renewable energy or an energy intensive use.
- **Cultural Heritage**: The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work.
- **Landscape:** The proposal does not involve demolition or construction work; however, the removal of the site may have a moderate beneficial impact on the visual amenity of the area.
- **Deliverability**: This has been assessed as part of other studies commissioned by CEC.
- **Education**: A HWRC can have a beneficial impact on the education of members of the public regarding recycling and waste. The closure of one such facility will not have an impact on the wider education role which HWRC's provide.

2.8   Limitations

Technical difficulties encountered and limitations of the study include:

- Traffic survey data are based on a postcode search and does not allow for user preferences.
- Travel times do not account for congestion.
- Traffic data is based on a worst-case scenario and does not allow for residents' behavioural changes resulting from the closure.
- The assessment of air quality and carbon production does not account for congestion.
- Business users are not considered as part of this assessment.
- This assessment does not include an assessment of effects on the Waste Strategy and associated SEA.

3   Transport

3.1   Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential impact of the closure of Congleton HWRC on traffic and transportation.

3.2   Aims and Objectives

Its aims and objectives are to determine the impact of the closure on distance and travel times.

3.3   Methodology

This assessment has been based on data generated from distances of residential postcodes to their nearest HWRC's.

The assessment of significance has been derived from The Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) published HWRC Guide (2012). The guidance recommended that the distribution of HWRCs should enable driving times to be up to 20 mins for the great majority of households in good traffic conditions. Travel times might be up to about 30 minutes in very rural areas.

3.4   Baseline assessment

As indicated within the limitations section of this report, limited real time traffic data is available. The data below is based on a postcode survey which distributes potential usage according to proximity to the nearest HWRC in travel time.

The number of households which potentially utilise each of the HWRC sites at the current time within the CEC area are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Household usage per site

Site	Current Number of households and % (approx.)
Alsager	21,756
	12%
Bollington	17,944
	9%
Congleton	17,761
	9%
Crewe	59,678
	32%
Knutsford	21,609
	11%
Macclesfield	23,692
	13%
Middlewich	14,349
	8%
Poynton	12,300
	7%

The current distances travelled by users of HWRCs in the Council area are shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Distance travelled (proportion of households)

	Less than 2 km	2 to 4 km	4 to 6 km	6 to 8 km	More than 8 km
No	28,448	59,858	29,196	26,257	45,330
%	15%	32%	15%	14%	24%

The current time taken to travel by users of HWRCs in the Council area set out in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Time travelled (proportion of households)

	Less than 5 minutes	5 to 10 minutes	10 to 15 minutes	15 to 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
No	41,511	78,480	52,241	12,499	4,358
% (approx.)	22%	42%	28%	7%	2%

In addition to the public usage at the Congleton site, it also receives 13 service vehicles per week which averages at approximately 2 per day.

The data indicates that the local road network often becomes congested during peak times around the site in late morning and early afternoon.

3.5 Timeframe

The closure of the Congleton HWRC is to be permanent and the effects, therefore, will extend over the long-term.

The effects will be of both a direct and indirect nature, affecting both the existing site area and alternate HWRC sites.

3.6 Assessment of effect

The environmental impact of the Congleton closure is likely to re-distributed trips to either to Alsager or Macclesfield as these are the closest. Whilst it is likely that the number of overall trips will reduce because of the closure, with residents making fewer trips with a larger quantity of material, this assessment is based on the worst-case scenario of a complete re-distribution of trips on the network.

The assumed redistribution of trips based on travel time is shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Assumed trip redistribution (per no of households)

Site	Current	After Site Closure
Alsager	21,756	24,173
	12%	13%
Bollington	17,944	17,939
	9%	9%
Congleton	17,761	
	9%	
Crewe	59,678	59,678
	32%	32%
Knutsford	21,609	21,609
	11%	11%
Macclesfield	23,692	38,698
	13%	20%
Middlewich	14,349	14,693
	8%	8%
Poynton	12,300	12,300
	7%	7%

The impact on both distance and time travelled on users of the wider HWRC network with the closure of the Congleton HWRC is provided in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7: Impact of closure on distance travelled (proportion of households)

	Less than 2 km	2 to 4 km	4 to 6 km	6 to 8 km	More than 8 km
No	22,262	51,240	28,452	25,915	61,220
%	12%	27%	15%	14%	32%

Table 8: Impact of closure on time travelled (proportion of households)

	Less than 5 minutes	5 to 10 minutes	10 to 15 minutes	15 to 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
No	33,958	70,827	62,754	17,171	4,379
% (approx.)	18%	37%	33%	9%	2%

The data indicates that there is a fall in the number of people travelling in all categories under 8km, with a 35% increase in the number of households required to travel more than 8km when the Congleton HWRC closes. This equates to a **moderate adverse impact** on residents in distance travelled.

However, when assessed against time travelled, the data show that:

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- There is an 18% fall in the number of people who might travel for less than 5 minutes.
- There is a 10% fall in the number of people who might travel between 5 to 10 minutes.
- There is an increase of 20% in the number of people who might travel between 10 to 15 minutes.
- There is an increase of 37% in the number of people who might travel between 15 to 20 minutes.
- There is no change to those households who might travel over 20 minutes.

This analysis therefore suggests that because of the closure of Congleton most people will travel between 5 and 10 minutes longer to reach a HWRC, with no increase in the numbers of residents who might travel over 20 minutes to reach a facility.

In accordance with the WRAP HWRC Guidance published in 2012, this equates to a **neutral impact** on time travelled to a HWRC within the Council area. However, it is recognised that the additional time would be considered to have **a minor adverse impact** on users of the services.

The closure of the HWRC at Congleton should have a **moderate beneficial impact** on road congestion and the number of HGV/Roll on Roll off (RORO) vehicles operating in the local area.

3.7   Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

The cumulative effects of the proposal include the wider impacts on the alternate HWRCs in particular Alsager and Macclesfield. Without mitigation measures, the closure could increase the potential for congestion at these sites having a **moderate adverse effect**.

Although the assessment has assumed that an equal amount of waste that is disposed currently at the Congleton site will be transferred to the facilities at Alsager and Macclesfield, it is considered that the number of service vehicles travelling may not increase relatively due to the potential to achieve economies of scale at Alsager and Macclesfield. It is concluded, therefore, that the cumulative effects of service vehicles at the alternative sites could have a **minor beneficial impact** through the reduction of these vehicles on the local road network.

The combined effects of traffic on air quality are considered in chapter 4 of this report.

3.8   Mitigation measures

Future improvements to waste management infrastructure and continued improvements in reuse has the potential to reduce the need to travel to HWRCs.

In addition, the possibility of additional bring sites should be investigated in locations which are over 8km from a HWRC. These measures may reduce the total travel time and distance travelled by residents to **minor adverse** if the overall number of trips is reduced.

To mitigate potential queuing traffic and congestion at other HWRC sites, fairer access management should be investigated, this could include the extension of opening times of Alsager and Macclesfield and a number plate access option (amongst others). These measures may reduce the cumulative impact of the scheme to **neutral**.

3.9   Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Travel Distance	Direct	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites	Minor Adverse
Travel Time	Direct	Permanent	Minor Adverse	Bring sites	Minor Adverse
Congestion	Indirect	Permanent	Moderate Beneficial	n/a	Moderate Beneficial
Service Vehicles	Direct	Permanent	Minor Beneficial	n/a	Minor Beneficial
Cumulative Impact	Indirect	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	Fairer access management systems	Neutral
Overall	Direct	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	As above	Minor Adverse

4   Air Quality

4.1   Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential impact of the closure of Congleton HWRC on local air quality and pollution.

4.2   Aims and Objectives

The aim of this assessment is to review the impact of the closure on local air quality and air pollution through the consideration of traffic routing and the associated impacts on Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA).

4.3   Methodology

CEC have published a list which represents a non-exhaustive indication of when an Air Quality Impact Assessment may be required.

1.   Any development within an AQMA, or within 500m of existing Air Quality Management Areas
2.   food retail development >0.2HA (1000m_2 gross floor space)
3.   office development >0.8Ha (2500m_2 gross floor space)
4.   housing development >1.0 Ha or >80 units
5.   development likely to lead to an increase of >60 vehicle movements per hour
6.   development likely to result in increased traffic, congestion, or changes to vehicle speeds (new junctions, roundabouts etc)
7.   development likely to significantly change the traffic composition
8.   development significantly increasing car parking provision (>300 spaces or 25% increase)
9.   development in close proximity (<100m) to busy roads / junctions
10. development likely to result in a significant change in air quality, or development of residential properties in an area of already poor air quality
11. poultry establishments > 400,000 birds (mechanical ventilation) or 200,000 (natural ventilation) or > 100,00 (Turkeys) and with relevant exposure within 100m of the unit; and,
12. biomass / CHP / Industrial Installation (see guidance under the biomass and clean air act pages).

In accordance with points 1 and 7 above, this assessment considers the re-routing of traffic caused by the closure and investigates how these routes impact on local AQMAs.

4.4   Baseline assessment

The Cheshire East Council Annual Status Report 2020 (June 2020) provides details of all the air quality management areas (AQMAs) within its administrative area. The three locations of interest are considered below.

- **Congleton**: There are 3 AQMAs with the potential to be affected by existing and future traffic movements associated with the Congleton HWRC.
- **Alsager**: There are no AQMAs located in Alsager.
- **Macclesfield**: There are no AQMAs located between Congleton and the Macclesfield Household Waste Recycling Centre.

The locations of the Congleton AQMAs are presented in Figure 2 below.
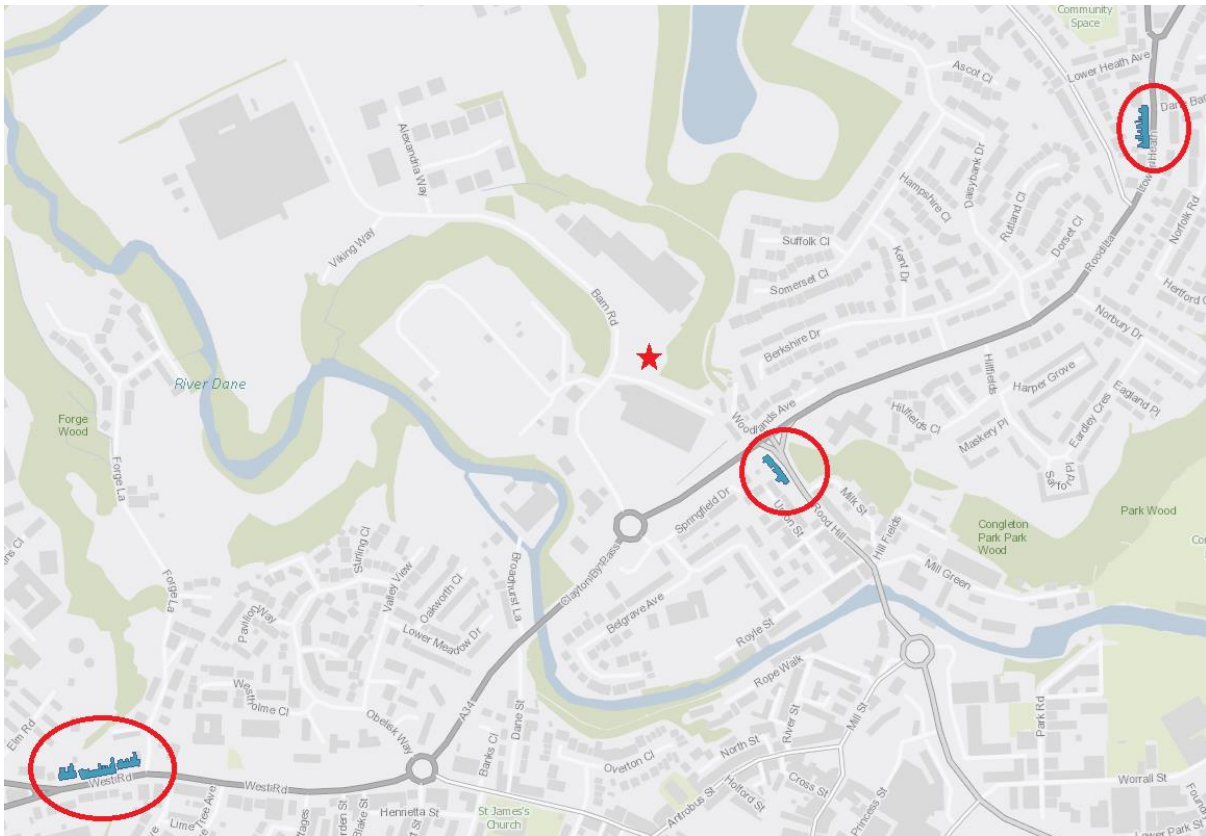
Figure 2:Congleton AQMA

The plan shows that the existing Congleton HWRC is not located within any of the AQMA's however traffic using the facility which travel along the A34 / A54 does have the potential to travel through them.

Cheshire East Council monitors levels of Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) within its administrative area, including within the 3 Congleton AQMAs. The Council ASR 2020 shows the following monitoring locations within the Lower Heath AQMA.

Figure 3:Lower Heath AQMA monitoring locations.

The 2019 monitoring results for these locations are as follows:

- CE115 1 Lower Heath: 22.33 μg/m^3
- CE114 28 Lower Heath: 47.44 μg/m^3
- CE110 Lights outside 99 Lower Heath: 28.05 μg/m^3.

Of these monitoring locations, only the CE114 28 Lower Heath result is above the annual average limit of 40.0 μg/m^3.

The Council ASR 2020 shows the following monitoring locations within the Rood Hill AQMA:

Figure 4:Rood Hill AQMA monitoring locations

The 2019 monitoring results for these locations are as follows:

- CE116 68 Rood Hill: 33.42 μg/m^3
- CE117 Rood Hill takeaway 62/64: 35.92 μg/m^3.

Of these monitoring locations, neither result is above the annual average limit if 40.0 μg/m3.

The Council ASR 2020 shows the following monitoring locations within the West Road AQMA:
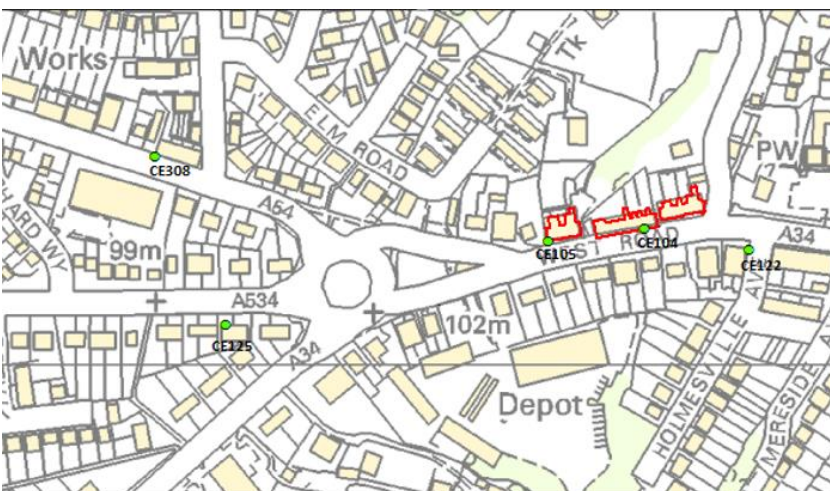
Figure 5: West Road AQMA Monitoring locations

The 2019 monitoring results for these locations are as follows:

- CE105 35 West Road: 25.31 µg/m^3
- CE104 13 West Road: 43.59 µg/m^3.

Of these monitoring locations, only the CE104 13 West Road result is above the annual average limit if 40.0 µg/m^3.

4.5   Timeframe

The closure of the Congleton HWRC is to be permanent and the effects, therefore, will extend over the long-term.

The impacts associated with air quality are considered to be indirect as they relate to emissions generated by users and not activities on the site itself.

4.6   Assessment of effect

As stated earlier within this chapter, the impact of the closure of the Congleton HWRC on air quality is linked to traffic and their associated flows.

The Congleton HWRC serves approximately 17,761 households. Traffic flow data shows that the Annual Average Daily traffic (AADT) for the 3 HWRCs is currently as follows:

- Alsager: 289
- Congleton: 243; and
- Macclesfield: 406.

As would be expected the peak flows coincide with weekends when users have the time to visit the HWRC. Closing the Congleton HWRC would therefore immediately remove 243 AADT trips from the network in the immediate vicinity of the HWRC.

Detailed trip routing is currently not available however it is considered that the most likely options for the resulting displacement are:

1. A proportion of traffic from West Heath which currently travels to the Congleton HWRC would continue to pass through the West Road AQMA and would now pass-through Congleton through the Lower Heath AQMA.
2. A proportion of traffic from West Heath which currently travels to the Congleton HWRC would now use the Alsager HWRC. All existing flows would cease to pass through the West Road AQMA.
3. Traffic accessing the Congleton HWRC from the A54 Rood Hill (from Congleton Centre) would continue to do this, however traffic would then pass through either the West Road AQMA if visiting the Alsager HWRC or Lower Heath AQMA if visiting the Macclesfield AQMA.
4. Traffic from Eaton would use the Macclesfield HWRC and would not pass through the Lower Heath AQMA.
5. Traffic from Lower Heath would use the Macclesfield HWRC and would not pass through the Lower Heath AQMA.

The total AADT using the Congleton HWRC is 243 and it is assumed that all of these trips would be distributed across the network (as the worst-case scenario), particularly the A34 and A54 to the south, north and east of the HWRC. This assessment has therefore assumed that the number of vehicles on the network would not materially change, however there is likely to be a redistribution.

For the users who are to the south and north of Congleton, the diversion to the Alsager and Macclesfield HWRCs respectively may result in a **minor beneficial impact** (i.e. reduction in traffic through the 2 AQMAs at Lower Heath and West Road respectively). For the users in Congleton, there is expected to be no change in numbers through the Rood Hill AQMA, however these would now travel north or south on the A34 through the Lower Heath and West Road AQMAs. As such this may result in a **minor adverse impact**.

In overall terms, based on the information available, it is considered unlikely that there will be any material difference in the concentration of traffic pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in the AQMAs as a result of this traffic redistribution. It is therefore concluded that the closure would have a **neutral effect** on local air quality.

As a result of the closure of the HWRC, 2 HGV collections per day would no longer be required. Whilst in theory these movements will take place elsewhere, as material is diverted by residents to other sites, it is considered that economies of scale would be achieved through bulking up of material into larger vehicles for collection from these sites, and as such there would be a **minor beneficial impact** associated with the closure of the facility.

4.7   Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

There should be no cumulative effect because the closure of a site will not generate additional vehicle movements on the local road network.

4.8   Mitigation measures

The proposed development will not result in any adverse impact on local air quality and as such no mitigation measures are proposed.

4.9   Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in table 10 below.

Table 10: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Impact on AQMA	Indirect	Permanent	Neutral	N/A	Neutral to minor beneficial

5 Climate Change

5.1 Introduction

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. They provide regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impact and future risks, and options for adaption and mitigation.

The IPCC has published five comprehensive assessment reports reviewing the latest climate science, along with several special reports on specific topics. The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) is the latest key report, finalised in 2014. These reports recognise that reduction in carbon emissions is key to reducing climate change.

This chapter assesses the closure of the facility on carbon emissions and as such its impact on climate change.

5.2 Aims and Objectives

The scope of the assessment is primarily focused on carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions associated with transport, specifically the consideration of increases (or decreases) in distances that local residents are required to travel in order to access their closest HWRC, and the resultant changes in carbon dioxide emissions.

Changes in frequencies/patterns of waste collection vehicles removing material from the HWRC is also briefly considered.

The effect that the closure of the HWRC will have on recycling rates and/or the volume of material collected by the system, and the carbon implications of those effects, is not considered. It is assumed that the waste will be diverted to other facilities in similar volumes and that onward processing continues with the same technologies or methods.

5.3 Methodology

For the purposes of this assessment, traffic data and analysis has been utilised. The information includes postcodes for all residents for whom the Congleton facility is their closest HWRC. Distances from these postcodes to the HWRC is provided in km.

The assessment has assumed a complete re-distribution of trips across the network as a worst case, in reality (prior to any mitigation measures being employed) the number of trips is likely to reduce with residents making fewer trips but with larger quantities of materials.

From this information, the additional distance each resident would theoretically be required to travel to access their closest HWRC can be calculated. Based on the average number of daily and weekly visits by local residents to the HWRC an estimate can be made as to the additional distance in km that residents will be required to travel as a result of the closure.

This assessment has utilised available figures for the average carbon emissions per km from road vehicles registered in the UK. The carbon intensity per km of road vehicles has been falling significantly over the last 20 years and the most recent data (second quarter of 2015 - April to June) puts the average carbon dioxide

emissions of cars at 122.1 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre. Given the number of electric vehicles now on the road in the UK, alongside numerous older, more carbon intensive vehicles, the figure above is considered reasonably accurate for the purposes of this assessment.

Figures are also available for a range of heavy goods vehicles. For the purposes of this assessment, waste collection vehicles have been assumed to comprise 14-20 tonne rigid HGVs at Euro VI standard. The average carbon dioxide emissions of these vehicles is $540gCO_2$/km.

Based on the parameters above, estimates are made of the annual CO_2 changes as a result of the closure of the HWRC.

There is no established threshold for assessing the significance of individual project's contributions to climate change. However, IEMA guidance on considering Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions within EIAs states that *'…it might be considered that all GHG emissions are significant and an EIA should ensure the project addresses their occurrence by taking mitigation action…'*.

Appendix C of the above guidance states that '*When evaluating significance, all new GHG emissions contribute to a significant negative environmental effect; however, some projects will replace existing development that have higher GHG profiles. The significance of a project's emissions should therefore be based on its net impact, which may be positive or negative. Where GHG emissions cannot be avoided, the EIA should aim to reduce the residual significance of a project's emissions at all stages. Where GHG emissions remain significant but cannot be further reduced… approaches to compensate the project's remaining emissions should be considered.*'

5.4   Baseline assessment

Based on the six-week reporting period there was an average of 243 visits to Congleton HWRC per day. Whilst it was generally higher at the weekend and on specific weekdays, this figure is considered the most suitable to consider annual carbon emissions contributions. Based on the facility being open for 365 days a year, this equates to 88,695 visits.

The average distance that local residents (for whom the Congleton site is their closest HWRC) are required to travel is 3.2 km. This would mean a 6.4km round trip on average for each visit. Based on the annual number of visits above, this equates to 567,848km travelled per annum by local residents to and from the HWRC.

Assuming that residents are travelling in the average modern passenger car, $122.1gCO_2$ would be emitted for every km driven, equating to an annual contribution of 69,309,820g CO_2, or 69.3 tonnes a year.

5.5   Timescales

The closure of the Congleton HWRC is to be indirect and permanent extending over the long-term.

5.6   Assessment of effect

The most significant potential for effects on climate change from the closure of Congleton HWRC are from changing journey distances, as local residents are required to travel further to an alternative HWRC. The average distance for local residents to their next closest HWRC is 10.9km, which equates to an average increase in journey distance of 7.7km for each resident.

Based on the annual total trips of 88,695 and an average round trip of 15.4km, this equates to an additional 1,365,903 km driven per annum by local residents. Using the figure above of 122.1gCO$_2$/km this equates to approximately 166.7 tonnes CO$_2$ per annum.

As a result of the closure of the HWRC, 2 HGV collections per day would no longer be required. Whilst in theory these movements will take place elsewhere, as material is diverted by residents to other sites, it is considered that economies of scale would be achieved through bulking up of material into larger vehicles for collection from these sites, and as such there would be some CO$_2$ savings. Based on an assumed round trip for waste collection vehicles of 20km this saving equates to 7.88 tonnes (540g CO$_2$/km x (365 x 2 x 20)).

This gives a net CO$_2$ increase of 158.8 tonnes per annum.

Overall, the development will have a **moderate adverse effect** as it will result in higher carbon emissions associated with transport emissions than if the HWRC remained open.

5.7 Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

Climate Change is a global concern and as such the cumulative effects of the scheme have been considered as part of the assessment above.

5.8 Mitigation measures

Further consideration into improvements to existing waste management sites and possibilities of introducing bring sites in areas which are in locations of 8km or more is further assessed in chapter 8 of this report. This may reduce the number of trips that residents require to take and will therefore reduce the trip rates and with it, carbon emissions.

This will reduce the impact on climate change to **minor adverse**.

5.9 Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Climate Change	Indirect	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	Provision of bring sites. Infrastructure Improvements.	Minor Adverse

6 Amenity

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the potential for the closure of the facility to cause environmental nuisance.

6.2 Aims and Objectives

This assessment will review the impacts of the closure on noise, fly tipping and litter.

6.3 Methodology

There is no specific methodology set down to determine the amenity value of a HWRC. This chapter identifies the potential impacts of the closure of the HWRC on the local communities at and around the existing site and determines the significance of any impact on local receptors.

6.4 Baseline assessment

Due to effective on-site management, the area is not subject to a high or significant proportion of fly tipping, littering and vermin.

The material deposited at the site is not odorous and the area has not been subject to complaints about unpleasant smells and noxious odours.

The operation of the site causes noise at times, which is associated with depositing material into the skips and vehicles entering and moving around the site. Noise is also generated from the service vehicles and the associated changeover of RORO (roll on – roll off) containers.

6.5 Timescales

It is anticipated that there could be some short-term, temporary effects following the closure of Congleton's HWRC if members of the public are not prepared to drive to the alternative facilities at Alsager and Macclesfield.

Over the long term, any temporary effects will be mitigated by custom and practice of using the alternative sites and there should be no permanent effects subject to any proposed re-use of use of the site by the leaseholder and approval by CEC.

6.6 Assessment of effect

The removal of the site will remove the existing noise source which will result in a **minor beneficial effect** on the local area.

There is no evidence to suggest that the closure of a household waste recycling centre leads to an increase in litter and fly-tipping. A **minor adverse effect** has been assumed in the short term if members of the public drive to Congleton find the site closed, fly tipping instead of travelling to an alternate site.

6.7 Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

The impacts associated with litter and fly tipping are associated with the immediate area and as such wider impacts on the remaining HWRC network is not considered likely.

The redistribution of traffic will have a combined impact on amenity. The impacts of the closure of traffic are considered in chapters 3 and 4 of this report.

6.8   Mitigation measures

It is recommended that signage of the closure, location of alternative facility and information on penalties for unlawful entry onto the site is erected at the site gates.

It would be prudent to install CCTV at the site entrance to deter potential fly tippers in the short term. These measures will reduce the impact to **neutral**.

6.9   Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Noise	Direct	Permanent	Minor Beneficial	N/A	Minor Beneficial
Fly tipping and litter	Indirect	Temporary	Minor Adverse	Signage & CCTV	Neutral
Overall	Both	Both	Neutral	As above	Neutral

7 Socio Economic

7.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential impact of the closure of the Congleton HWRC on socio-economic factors.

7.2 Aims and Objectives

This assessment will review the impacts of the closure of the HWRC on local employment opportunities and on vulnerable or older age groups who have made use of the existing site.

7.3 Methodology

There is currently no formal guidance or regulation setting out the preferred method or content for an assessment of potential economic and social impacts. This chapter identifies the potential impacts on socio-economic factors and determines the significance of this impact on local receptors.

7.4 Baseline assessment

The existing site currently consists of 6 central skips with a number of smaller collection units. The site employs 4 members of staff at any one time. Staff work in shifts, 2x5 day shifts, 1x3 day shift and 1x1 day shift.

In addition, the site employs one service vehicle driver, who is part of a wider fleet that service the wider HWRC network.

7.5 Nature of effect

Due to the closure of the Congleton HWRC any effects are direct, long term and permanent.

7.6 Assessment of effect

The closure of the Congleton HWRC will not impact on employees associated with the service vehicles (or wider management) as they will still be required to service the remaining HWRC network.

However, the site closure will necessitate the loss of 4 jobs which is considered to give rise to a **moderate adverse impact**.

The existing site is not considered to be user friendly for residents who are vulnerable or elderly, requiring a member of the public to transfer materials into their car, drive, unload and return home. Owing to the constraints of the site, it was not feasible to improve the working arrangements at the site significantly within the operational service life of the facility.

As identified in Chapter 3, the impacts of the proposal will result in an additional drive time of approximately 5 to 10 minutes from many locations. This is considered not to introduce an impediment to users of the site who already drive and load/unload their vehicles. The closure is therefore considered to have a **neutral** impact on these users of the HWRC.

7.7 Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

Cumulative or combined effects on the wider HWRC network are considered unlikely.

7.8   Mitigation measures

Opportunities for redeployment of staff members should be identified, possible extension to opening hours at Alsager and Macclesfield (as recommended in Chapter 3) and a possible re-use shop at Macclesfield may provide opportunities. Should redeployment be achieved, this will lead to a **minor adverse** to **neutral impact** on jobs and the local economy.

Further consideration into the possibilities of future infrastructure improvements and for bring sites in areas which are in locations of 8km or more from a HWRC site are further assessed in chapter 8 of this report. This may reduce the need to utilise the HWRC sites for vulnerable and older age groups leading to a **minor beneficial impact** for these groups of residents.

7.9   Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in Table 13 below:

Table 13: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Employment	Direct	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	Redeployment.	Minor Adverse to Neutral
Vulnerable and elderly groups	Direct	Permanent	Neutral	Bring sites. Infrastructure improvements.	Minor Beneficial
Overall	Direct	Permanent	Minor Adverse	As above	Neutral

8 Future Demand & Recycling

8.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential impact of the closure of the Congleton HWRC on recycling and future demand for HWRC sites generated by new developments in the area.

8.2 Aims and Objectives

The assessment of future demand and the impact on the Waste Management Strategy is subject to assessment as part of CEC assessment of the wider HWRC provision. This is outside the remit of this report.

This chapter focuses on the prime concerns expressed by members of the public as part of the consultation procedure undertaken by CEC in the last quarter of 2020. Those were that:

1. The closure would increase the risk of the misuse of kerbside collections.
2. The closure would have an adverse impact on recycling rates.
3. The impact of future housing/commercial growth ought to be investigated.

8.3 Methodology

There is currently no formal guidance or regulation setting out the preferred method or content for an assessment of this nature. This chapter reviews the amount and type of waste received at the Congleton site, identifies where this waste is likely to be redirected and qualitatively assesses the impact of this and any projected future growth.

8.4 Baseline assessment

The latest data (2019 to 2020) on tonnages received and managed by the Congleton HWRC is provided in the Table 14 below:

Table 14: Tonnages received at Congleton HWRC in 2019 to 2020

Waste Type	Tonnages	Percentage
Disposal (tonnes):		
Civic Amenity Waste to Energy	658.19	23.61
Civic Amenity Waste to Landfill	238.69	8.56
Green Waste (tonnes):		
Green Waste for composting	438.70	15.74%
Inert (tonnes):		
Hardcore	99.84	3.58%
Recyclables (tonnes):		
Batteries - Automotive	6.07	0.22%
Batteries - Domestic	1.52	0.05%
Hard Plastic	-	
Card	123.72	4.44%

Waste Type	Tonnages	Percentage
Chipboard or Mixed Wood/Chipboard	287.15	10.30%
Ferrous Metal	153.93	5.52%
Non-Ferrous Metal	93.96	3.37%
Glass	17.33	0.62%
Cooking Oil	0.62	0.02%
Engine Oil	5.22	0.19%
Paper	47.34	1.70%
Plastic Bottles	2.13	0.08%
Wood	246.07	8.83%
Textiles	63.40	2.27%
Waste Paint / Chemicals - Recycled	0.99	0.04%
Fridges & Freezers	32.74	1.17%
Small WEEE (SDA)	92.86	3.33%
Large WEEE (LDA)	32.68	1.17%
TVs/CRTs	28.98	1.04%
Tubes	0.27	0.01%
Reuse (tonnes):		
Bric-a-Brac (Re-use)	115.16	4.13%
Total	2787.57	100%

The waste types which made up the majority of waste at the HWRC during 2019 to 2020 included:

- 32.17% of waste taken to the Congleton HWRC is taken for final disposal (or energy recovery).
- 15.74% of waste is green waste for composting.
- 10.30% of waste is made up of Chipboard or mixed wood/chipboard.
- 8.83% is made up of wood.

8.5   Timescales

Due to the closure of the Congleton HWRC any effects will be direct, long term and permanent.

8.6   Assessment of effect

As identified in section 8.4, the largest proportion of materials taken to the HWRC at Congleton includes residual waste, wood waste and garden waste. Due to the bulky nature of these materials, and the provision of green waste doorstep services by CEC during summer months, the closure of the Congleton HWRC is unlikely to result in these materials being disposed of as part of the residual 'black bag' waste by the residents in significant quantities.

With regards to smaller items such as metals, glass, textiles, it is possible that these may be disposed of within black bags/bins for collection. However, these materials can be disposed of locally within existing bring sites which includes glass and textiles.

With regards to electrical items and bric-a-brac, charity shops and the proposed re-use centre at Macclesfield will provide a more sustainable solution to managing this type of waste and increase re-use in line with the waste hierarchy. This will offer an improvement on the current services.

It can therefore be concluded that the closure of the facility may result in a **minor adverse effect** at worst on recycling rates should residents add one or two items to the residual waste bin from time to time.

For new developments, the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy adopted in 2017 and the validation checklist (for housing over 50 units) requires that all developments must consider sustainable waste management methods (such as internal and external storage) as an integral feature in design. Consideration of the impact of the waste generated from the proposals should be considered at the planning stage and planned for as part of CEC's wider waste management strategy.

As referred to previously, the Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) published HWRC Guide (2012) recommended that distribution of centres should enable driving times to HWRCs to be up to 20 minutes for the great majority of households in good traffic conditions and 30 minutes in very rural areas). As identified in Chapter 3, the remaining HWRC centres provide this coverage which allows the waste authority to ensure that all new developments are serviced in accordance with guidelines.

It is concluded, therefore, that the proposed closure would have **a neutral impact** on future demand.

8.7   Assessment of combined and cumulative effects

The closure of the HWRC is likely to result in greater tonnages of waste being transported to Alsager and Macclesfield, which could result in an in-direct impact on recycling rates at these sites should they already be at (or close to) maximum.

This could also give rise to increased levels of congestion at the alternative sites if they become congested due to the additional users.

The combined and cumulative effects of the closure on recycling rates and congestion at alternative sites is therefore considered to be **moderate adverse.**

8.8   Mitigation measures

To enable residents to easily access recycling for some waste types, it is recommended that CEC investigates options to provide bring sites in the area which are outside a 15-minute travel time.

A geographical illustration which identifies the required area is provided within the figure 6 below.
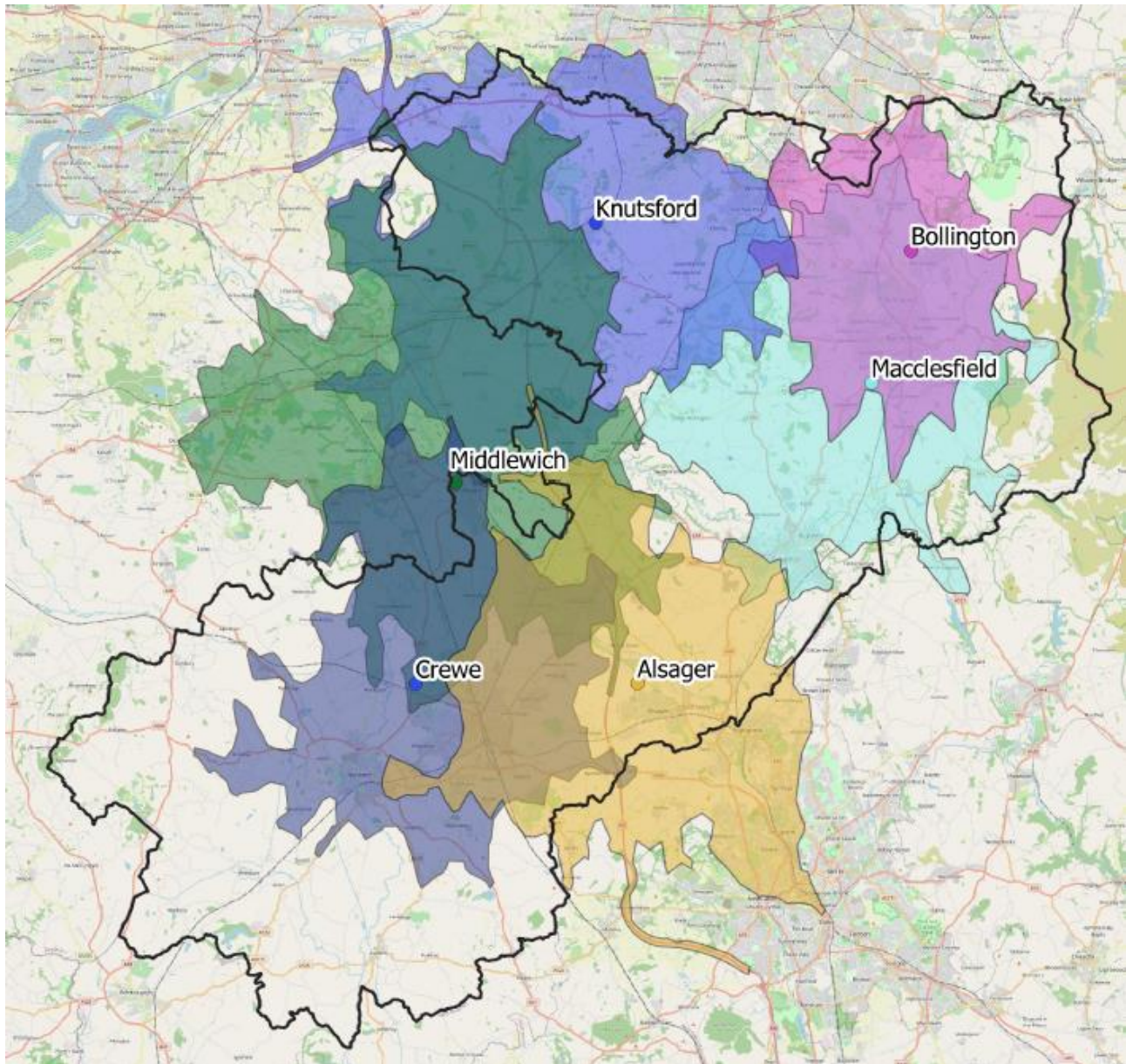
Figure 6: 15 Minute Travel Time.

This boundary covers an area to the West of Congleton, which runs between the River Dane and the A54. This area encompasses the villages of Somerford, Brereton Heath, Davenport, Sandlow and Swettenham to Twemlow Green.

An investigation of potential sites/options for 'bring' facilities within these locations such as supermarket or council car parks should be undertaken.

Although it is not possible to provide bring bank facilities for wood or green waste, the following items are possible:

- Glass
- Card
- Paper and,
- Textiles.

This may reduce the proportion of these wastes being taken to an alternate HWRC reducing some of the 9.03% of these wastes, which are currently being taken to the Congleton site. This will reduce the impact of the closure of Congleton HWRC to **neutral** and potentially to **minor beneficial** as such bring sites will encourage greater local recycling.

To insure against cumulative impacts associated with the pressure on alternate HWRC sites, the efficiency of the operations should be optimised. In addition, further investigation regarding the potential of fairer access such as extended operating hours and managed access systems could reduce congestion at these sites. With the implementation of these measures, cumulative impacts of the closure could reduce to **neutral**.

In addition to mitigating potential effects associated with recycling rates, these mitigation measures may provide a beneficial impact on:

- Traffic: The provision of bring sites will reduce the need to travel to a HWRC.
- Congestion: The provision of a managing fairer access will reduce congestion at the alternate sites.
- Journey times: The provision of longer opening hours may serve to reduce congestion.
- Vulnerable People and the Elderly: The provision of bring sites will increase accessibility for the recycling of these materials.
- Employment: The provision of longer opening hours and the need to service the 'bring' sites may provide redeployment opportunities.

8.9   Residual Impacts

A summary of residual effects is provided in Table 15 below:

Table 15: Summary of Residual Effects

	Nature of effect	Duration	Significance	Possible Mitigation	Residual
Recycling Rates	Direct	Permanent	Minor Adverse	Bring Sites & Infrastructure improvements	Minor Beneficial
Future Demand	Direct	Permanent	Neutral	n/a	Neutral
Cumulative effects on recycling provision at alternate sites	Indirect	Permanent	Moderate Adverse	Bring Sites The management of fairer access systems. Wider infrastructure improvements.	Neutral
Overall	Direct	Permanent	Minor Adverse	As above	Neutral

9   Conclusions

Table 16 below summarises the findings of the environmental appraisal in accordance with the appraisal scoring system contained within the SEA.

Table 16: Summary of Effect

SEA Objective	Assessment	Impact	Possible Mitigation	Residual Impact
Population & Human Health Material Assets	**Transportation**	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems.	Minor Adverse
Air Quality Population & Human Health	**Air Quality**	Neutral	N/A	Neutral to Minor Beneficial
Climate Factors	**Climate Change**	Moderate Adverse	Bring sites. Infrastructure Improvements.	Minor Adverse
Population & Human Health	**Amenity**	Neutral	Signage and CCTV	Neutral
Employment Social Inclusion	**Socio Economic**	Minor Adverse	Redeployment and infrastructure improvements.	Neutral
Population & Human Health Material Assets	**Future Demand & Recycling**	Minor Adverse	Bring sites. The management of fairer access systems. Wider infrastructure improvements.	Neutral

As indicated in Table 1 and section 2.7 of this report, the SEA objectives associated with the closure of the Congleton HWRC generally have the potential to offer the local area a benefit due to the removal of the existing site or are not applicable.

This assessment has identified that there are several areas where the proposal has a neutral to moderate adverse impact before mitigation measures are applied, these are summarised in Table 16 above.

Following implementation of the recommended mitigation measures summarised above, the residual impact of closing the Congleton HWRC ranges between **minor beneficial to minor adverse**. The adverse impact on the closure focuses on the additional distances that the waste will be transported by residents and the additional carbon that this transportation will generate.

The minor adverse impact is likely to be offset by improvements in the sustainability of the existing facilities network CEC's Waste Management Strategy. These include:

- The continued progress of residents to successfully reduce and reuse materials reducing the need to transport them to a HWRC.
- Consideration of onwards travel of the consolidated waste materials from the remaining HWRCs and the economies of scale that bulking of materials generally achieve.
- Optimisation of the existing HWRC sites to ensure they are fully utilised which will avoid increasing the carbon footprint and impacts of local amenity through the provision of a new site.
- The improvement of existing sites leading to an increase in recycling and reuse rates, which would typically have a greater carbon saving than a small additional distance travelled by residents.
- Wider carbon offsetting measures such as the utilisation of hydrogen collection vehicles and Borough level carbon offsetting.
- Financial considerations associated with the management and running of the facilities.

10   Recommendations

This report assesses the worst-case scenario associated with the generation of traffic and usage of the alternate sites after the closure of Congleton. CEC will need to monitor the effects of the closure and investigate the following recommendation measures based on need.

The following mitigation measures are recommended to limit the potential impacts of closing the Congleton HWRC.

- The provision of signage and CCTV at the Congleton site to deter fly-tipping.
- Investigation into the management of fairer access at the alternate sites such as the extension of opening hours and managed access arrangements.
- The provision of bring sites in locations which are over 8km from a HWRC.
- Investigation into the potential for further upgrades to existing infrastructure.

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Cheshire East
Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: Y
Date First Published: 18/1/21

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13th April 2021

Report Title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nick Mannion, Environment and Regeneration

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan - Executive Director Place

1. Report Summary

1.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty upon local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy for the future, based on the results of that review.

1.2. In 2018, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched their Rough Sleeping Strategy, which stipulates that Local Authorities should update their Homelessness Strategies to incorporate rough sleeping.

1.3. A full review was undertaken in 2019 in relation to the 2018 – 2021 Strategy to inform the priorities for the 2021 - 2025 Strategy.

1.4. This report outlines the key findings from this review and the priorities which have been set out within the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025 (appendix 1) and seeks approval to go out to wider public consultation for a period of 12 weeks.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That Cabinet

2.1.1. Approve the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as outlined at appendix 1 for the basis of consultation.

2.1.2. Following consultation, note that the final version of the strategy will be presented for approval to the Economy and Growth Committee.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty upon local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy for the future based on the results of that review. The strategy is required to set out how services will be delivered to prevent and relieve homelessness

3.2. As a statutory document, it was important that the Council can demonstrate that they have consulted widely with internal services, external agencies and residents.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. There are no alternatives to the recommendations as it is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy in place, which now incorporates rough sleeping.

5. Background

5.1. Homelessness or the threat of becoming homeless can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families. It can have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing.

5.2. Rough sleeping is the sharp edge of homelessness and the Government launched its Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018, which set out its vision to half rough sleeping by 2022, ending it by 2027.

5.3. The Government's strategy outlines how it wants to support every person who sleeps rough to move into a home. The expectation from Government is that local government, business, communities, faith and voluntary groups and the general public work together in new ways to tackle the issue.

5.4. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has required local authorities to make significant changes in how they work and their response to ensure households who are homeless or facing homelessness are kept safe.

5.5. The Government's "Everyone In" programme required all local authorities to provide suitable accommodation for rough sleepers and those in shared accommodation. Cheshire East Council successfully accommodated 117 individuals under this programme. As a follow-up to "Everyone In", Cheshire East Council are now progressing with the "Next Steps" accommodation scheme, which seeks to deliver long-term accommodation in the form of

supported move-on homes for people recovering from rough sleeping. This will be delivered in partnership with a local housing provider.

5.6. Cheshire East Council's ongoing response to the pandemic is detailed within the document. Additional learning and intelligence was reviewed throughout 2020 to ensure that the draft strategy provides the most up to date picture of homelessness and that the key objectives took this into account.

5.7. Councils are expected to review their strategies to ensure they not only meet the requirements outlined in the Homelessness Reduction Act, but also how they are tackling rough sleeping.

5.8. The existing Homelessness Strategy was adopted and launched in 2018 and set out a number of priorities including working towards ending rough sleeping.

5.9. In 2019, the Housing team, started the review process, examining national and local data, reviewing evidence from other related projects including the recommissioning of the Housing Related Support contracts. The key objectives from the previous strategy were re-examined and an event was organised to challenge those objectives was undertaken in May 2019, to which over 50 people representing key stakeholders attended.

5.10. The strategy review showed strong support from stakeholders that the current priorities and actions were working well and should be continued. As such, they have been replicated in this draft strategy.

Other comments throughout the review focused on:

- A greater need for all agencies to be working more closely – housing, hostels, social housing, health, mental health, drug and alcohol services, etc

- A mix of both generic and specialist services are required. Many people made homeless have had difficult lives and are often complex and chaotic. Having both specialised and generic services means the offer is more likely to fit the person rather than the person fitting the offer.

- There is value is providing specialist money advice services / dealing with debt issues but also financial capability that encourages, trains, and supports people to better manage and understand their finances.

- There is value in specialist mental health support for adults with mental health problems around managing their problems, as well working as an advocate when engaging with statutory services.

5.11. The data included within the draft Strategy covers the full year of 2019/20 (this the latest available data at the time of writing). Additional intelligence has been reviewed throughout 2020 to ensure that the draft strategy provides the most up to date picture of homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough.

5.12. The key objectives which are outlined in the draft strategy are to:

- Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless
- Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation
- Provide interventions so no one has to sleep rough in Cheshire East
- Ensure adequate support is in place to help people maintain and sustain accommodation

5.13 The aim of the consultation is to seek views on the strategy including:

- Whether the priorities and themes of the strategy accurately reflect the local picture and provide the right amount of detail
- To determine if the evidence base included within the strategy reflects other organisations understanding
- If the proposed action plans for each priority will achieve the aims of the strategy
- Are there other issues relating to homelessness which should be prioritised in 2021?
- Any further observations on the strategy as a whole?
- The contribution other services can provide to support the delivery of the strategy to provide wrap around support to some of our most vulnerable

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that local authorities have a strategy in place to prevent and deal with homelessness. This strategy is not only aimed at preventing homelessness in the local area but to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless.

6.1.2. The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2021 – 2025 outlines how the Council proposes to secure the appropriate support for people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

6.1.3. The Council as both the local housing authority and social services authority must take their Homelessness Strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.

6.1.4. Before adopting a Homelessness Strategy, the Council must consult with public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.

6.1.5. This report requests authority to undertake the consultation process, such consultation process will require modification to ensure that it is approached in a COVID safe way, which is set out in section 8, below.

6.1.6. A new Homelessness Strategy must be published every five years.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. There are no additional financial asks of the Council within the draft strategy, and ongoing tasks will be met through existing budgets held within the department, along with Government grants which have been allocted to the department including Rough Sleeping Inititive funding, Next Steps, Flexible Homelessness Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant.

6.2.2. There is a potential risk that strategically important external partners may be unable, through pressures on their service, to meet demand. In this case funding arrangements may be reviewed, or partners may be supported in exploring funding streams or shared services with other partner organisations. Budget holders and decision makers would be made aware of a lack of capacity in strategically relevant services.

6.2.3. The financial implications of the consultation for the draft strategy will be met within existing budgets for the Housing service.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. The strategy will contribute towards the vision of the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 to be an open, fair and green Council and help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.

6.3.2. The Cheshire East Council Housing Strategy 2018-23 details a number of key priorities for the Council's Housing service. One of these priorities focuses on 'Preventing Homelessness' under the remit of 'Health, wellbeing and quality of life'. This draft strategy seeks to set out the strategic direction of the Council in achieving this priority.

6.3.3. The development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a statutory requirement under the Homeless Act 2002.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the draft strategy and has been approved by the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer. The completed EIA is appended to this report.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. It is not anticipated that there will be any additional staff resources required to enact the actions in the strategy, and any resulting tasks and workgroups will be facilitated and completed within existing staff resources.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. It is not foreseen that the objectives set out within this strategy will cause significant risk to residents or the local authority. Priorities are derived from a strong evidence base which have taken consideration of resident requirements, as well as other local authority departmental ambitions.

6.6.2. A number of actions within the strategy will involve working with external partners, stakeholders and other CEC departments. This may assist in mitigation of risk due to a consistent and approved narrative taking place.

6.6.3. There is a risk that delivery of actions within the strategy may be delayed due to staff resources and availability. This can be mitigated somewhat via a robust action plan for the priorities and use of SMART objectives between projects.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities, however the strategic priorities within the strategy will apply to all communities in the borough.

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

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. A report by Public Health England – Health matters: rough sleeping February 2020 indicates that "those who are rough sleeping or homeless experience some of the most severe health inequalities and report much poorer health than the general population".

6.9.2. This was also highlighted in the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 which states that "People who sleep rough regularly over a long period are more likely to die young than the general population. In an international review of all available evidence, homeless populations, along with other excluded groups (including sex workers and prisoners), are ten times more likely to die than those of a similar age in the general population. They are also much more likely to die from injury, poisoning and suicide (eight times greater risk in men, 19 times in women). In another report, the average age of death for a person who dies whilst living on the streets or in homeless accommodation in England was calculated as 47 years old compared to 77 for the general population,3 and it was estimated that around 35% of people who die whilst sleeping rough or living in homeless accommodation died due to alcohol or drugs, compared to 2% in the general population"

6.9.3. The strategic priorities within the draft strategy aim to benefit households and residents who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or those who are currently sleeping rough. These interventions are aimed to have a positive effect on the health of individuals.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents, and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. Whilst it is not the aim or remit of this strategy to address these issues specifically, the proposed strategic priorities aim to assist households who are homeless or facing homelessness to access suitable accommodation options and maintain their health and wellbeing throughout.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All wards have the potential to be affected by this strategy. During the recommended external consultation period, Members will have the ability to provide comments on the strategy that are specific to their ward, as well as the wider borough.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Due to current and ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the proposed method of consultation will entail a number of different approaches:

- A copy of the published Strategy will be made available at the Council's principal offices for inspection and copies can be provided on request, if the offices are open to the public.

- The Strategy will be published on the Council's website along with an online survey/questionnaire to receive and quantify comments.

- Relevant stakeholders, including partners, Members and town/parish councils will be notified of the consultation and encourage responses.

- A comprehensive social media campaign and press release will be launched to make residents aware of the Council's consultation and to encourage local people to engage with the Council's ambitions within the Strategy.

- An online meeting will be held, due to perceived COVID-19 restrictions preventing interaction with stakeholders. This will ensure that as many stakeholders as possible have opportunity to feed into the draft document.

- Staff will attend Stakeholder meetings to promote the strategy and seek views including the Adults Safeguarding and Self Neglect Boards

9. Access to Information

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

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:
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Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025

Cheshire East
Council

Contents

Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been written in unprecedented times during the Covid – 19 global pandemic. The economic outlook is uncertain as the pandemic continues to cause huge disruption to normal life. Cheshire East Council has kept essential services open for our residents and customers as the pandemic continues.

Delivering a first-class service to those requiring assistance is Cheshire East Council's priority, and any person who is homeless or facing homelessness will receive all the advice and support they need, when they need it.

We have continued to fulfil our homelessness prevention and relief work 7 days a week but impacting on this work has been the impact of the pandemic, in putting already vulnerable groups at extra risk. They may be rough sleepers, young people who have fallen out with family members, couples facing relationship breakdown, and victims of domestic abuse.

Nationally since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic over 15,000 people have been housed in emergency accommodation, such as hotels, student accommodation and B&Bs under the **Everyone In** scheme. Cheshire East has seen 117 individuals moving into accommodation through Everyone In.

The **Next Steps Accommodation Programme** made available the resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to ensure that the current provision that has been set up to safeguard people who were taken safely from the streets is able to continue for an appropriate length of time. Cheshire East received £56,000 from the Government to provide assistance to move those accommodated in emergency provision into the private rented sector, ensuring they have support, to help address immediate need, and £450,000 to deliver long-term accommodation in the form of supported move-on homes for people recovering from rough sleeping, which was procured in partnership with Plus Dane.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the **Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI)** in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020-21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support. This has seen Cheshire East experience a reduction in the recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. 178 individuals have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, and Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer - term outcomes for individuals into accommodation which is for 6 months or more.

Key Achievements and Strategy Review

Cheshire East's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021 has been reviewed to:

- Identify the main reasons for homelessness, and present future levels of homelessness and housing need
- Look at services in place to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation and support to those in need
- Identify resources available to provide support for homeless people through prevention activity, and to divert people away from becoming homeless
- Identify gaps in provision

Engagement with a range of partners has increased our understanding around local pressures, and how services could work better together to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Since 2018 the Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. Our key achievements are listed below:

Preventing Homelessness:
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been embedded into services
- 83% successful preventions (national target 65%)
- No-one homeless as a result of welfare reform
- We have recruited a Welfare Advice Officer to support with prevention in addition to the Money Advice Officer
- Joint working with the Benefits Section with regards to Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Emergency Assistance

Access to secure, affordable accommodation:
- Reduced homelessness from hospital
- Health and housing link worker in place to see people on the wards and is working with health colleagues to ensure more successful discharges
- Reduced B&B use

Supporting people to maintain and sustain accommodation:
- Duty to refer is working well
- Duty to refer leaflet is in circulation
- Our staff attend multi-disciplinary meetings to raise the profile of the resident
- Reviewed our literature and ensured it was provided in appropriate formats

Our vision

Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness takes many forms. Rough Sleeping is the sharp end of homelessness, however within Cheshire East those sleeping on our streets make up a small proportion of the total number of those who are homelessness. Homelessness can be:

- Statutory homeless households in priority need in temporary accommodation such as hostels or Bed and Breakfast
- Single homeless living in supported housing or in a hostel
- 'Hidden homeless', in insecure arrangements with friends or others, known as 'sofa surfing'
- Households in fear of losing their home, or on the verge of actually losing their home

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force from 1st April 2018. The Act places new duties on Local Authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The services provided to residents will be determined by the individual's situation, if they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days, if they are homeless tonight or within 7 days, or if they are rough sleeping.

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out what we intend to do over the lifespan of the strategy and what priorities we are focusing on between 2021 and 2025.

It is a strategy to enable us to:

- prevent homelessness
- secure sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) that is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless
- provide satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Our Vision: To prevent homelessness, giving residents the ability to access and sustain affordable housing and an improved quality of life.

National and local context

National Context

There have been several Government interventions aimed at assisting those who are homeless and sleeping rough.

Everyone In

The Government aim is to ensure that the 37,000 vulnerable people and rough sleepers have somewhere to stay during the Pandemic. About 26,000 of those supported by the programme are now in long term accommodation.

Next Steps

Funding has been allocated for 3,300 new homes for rough sleepers. Over £150 million is to be made available across England to provide a permanent place to live for some those who are the most vulnerable.

Protect Programme

A new scheme to help protect vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19. which provides extra support to areas that need it most. £15 million has been allocated to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This scheme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter.

Housing First

Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Midlands are supporting around 800 vulnerable people off the streets and into secure homes. 600 are now in permanent accommodation. Over 2,000 other Housing First places have been created, many funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

Rough Sleeper Initiative fund is for short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping. MHCLG have announced funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme.

Local Context

MHCLG statistics suggest that homelessness levels nationally are going up. Increasing numbers of people are unable to find a home and the loss of a private sector tenancy is now the most common cause of homelessness nationally.

However, the scale of homelessness is greater than that captured in the statistics. The scale of hidden homelessness is unknown, and people are homeless but have not approached local authorities for help,

and some who do seek help but are turned away before a formal application is made are still homeless and should be taken into account in national statistics. The MHCLG is considering how these groups can be captured effectively in the data it collects.

The Cheshire East position

Homelessness prevention and relief cases during 2018–2020 have increased by 15.4%, with the main causes of homelessness including eviction by family and friends, domestic abuse, and the end of assured shorthold tenancy. This data[1] contains statistics on statutory homelessness and rough sleeping. The MHCLG has changed the way it collects data from local authorities on statutory homelessness. H-CLIC contains information on more people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, rather than only those who are considered to be in priority need. National statistics attempt to outline whether councils are taking action to stop someone becoming homeless (Prevention) or stepping in to offer assistance afterwards (Relief). This can be recorded in different ways.

Prevention – this refers to positive actions taken by Cheshire East (or partner organisations funded by us) to provide assistance to households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness. Prevention enables households to remain in their existing accommodation or obtain an alternative for at least the next 6 months.

Relief – this refers to positive actions to secure accommodation for households that have already become homeless.

This data is broken down by Prevention or Relief in the next table. Prevention cases account for 66.2%, with Relief recorded at 33.7%.

Table 9: Cheshire East total Homelessness Prevention and Relief April 2018 – March 2020

	April 2018 - March 2019	April 2019 - March 2020	Total
Prevention	808	1,044	1,838
Relief	488	452	938
Total	1,296	1,496	2,776

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness

Appendix 2 details the reason for the loss of the home of those owed a Prevention or a Relief duty, the accommodation at the time of homeless application, household type, referral sources, and ethnicity.

Current activity

The Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. There are many examples of:

•   Effective early interventions
•   Management of complex needs and crisis situations
•   Increased levels of support, and
•   Provision of additional affordable accommodation

A study of the likely impact of Welfare Reform on eligible cohorts has been carried out. The new Tenancy Strategy 2021 has the aim of making the best use of affordable housing to meet local housing need.

Data does not capture those people helped by more informal methods by Cheshire East or by family members before they are classed as homeless.

Homelessness applications and acceptance figures may misrepresent the amount of demand Cheshire East is facing at a local level.

Rural homelessness

About 50% of Cheshire East residents live in rural locations. There are significant levels of inequality and deprivation to which rural communities are vulnerable. Often there are limited transport options. Circumstances in rural areas can make delivering services to prevent and relieve homelessness particularly difficult.

Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has said that central to addressing homelessness in rural areas is making sure rural housing markets work for their resident populations by providing affordable accommodation across a range of tenures and types of home.

Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as a rural-specific homelessness strategy, new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.

Future intentions

The Housing Service will explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home. This will be done through an efficient process to pick up homelessness triggers from contact via the new Homechoice and Single Point of Access, and an understanding of the triggers of homelessness through the new 56 days run in through the HRA.

More details about these and other issues, and what Cheshire East is doing and will do to prevent homelessness is covered next under the 4 Strategic Priorities.

Welfare Reform

Cheshire East Council is proud to not have any homelessness presentations as a result of welfare reform. However, there are still ongoing issues which we need to be aware of.

Benefit issues can be complex. Financial issues can impact a range of areas including employment, family and social life and the ability to sustain a tenancy.

Cheshire East's ambition for economic growth continues to present employment opportunities in the borough, although impacts from Covid-19 have the potential to affect this.

We will work together with local partners to address employment and training needs, which will ensure that households have the opportunity to obtain higher value employment opportunities.

The provision of employment, financial and housing advice will:

(1) Increase the number of adults moving off 'out of work' benefits and into continuous employment, and

(2) Increase the number of individuals not claiming unemployment benefit over 6 months and who are on a pathway to work.

Cheshire East will positively support partnerships with voluntary sector stakeholders and other local partners to address the support, education, employment, and training needs (including bespoke training around partnerships and operational working).

Cheshire East has explored options with the DWP for working on joint local initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness and unemployment, such as improved communication and direct dialling between services to fast track cases to prevent homelessness.

Repossession

Repossession can affect all housing tenures and households. In 2019/20. 411 households were subject to repossession and have therefore lost their home.

Homelessness presentations to Cheshire East show there were 41 households (3.9% of all presentations) recorded as owner-occupiers or shared owners who required a Prevention duty in 2019/20.

The table below outlines the repossession data across a number of housing tenures in Cheshire East.

Table 11: Repossession data

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Mortgage claims	117	121	146	384
Mortgage possessions	24	26	21	71
Private landlord claims	72	86	92	250
Private landlord possessions	15	25	22	62
Social landlord claims	357	375	353	1,085
Social landlord possessions	97	92	89	278

Locally, up to 20% of new tenancies are failing within the first 12 months. The CAB provides debt advice to households facing financial hardships. Money advice is a key homelessness prevention tool.

<u>Domestic Abuse</u>

Domestic abuse accounts for over 20% of all homeless cases over the last 3 years. The majority of referrals are made to local specialist domestic abuse services, and also referrals to the commissioned sexual violence support provider.

Responses to domestic abuse, including housing need, are specifically co-ordinated through the work of the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP). CEDSAP has the prevention of homelessness as a key priority, working to keep people safe in their homes where possible, and only sending people out of the area as a last resort. This is done by, amongst other things:

- Support for victims to remain in their accommodation where it is safe to do so
- Target hardening of properties
- Support for victims to use Council services to get help with accommodation problems

The CEDSAP hub service receives people seeking support including accommodation, and provides quality services to respond to need, including housing.

The CEDSAP Strategy aims at strengthening joint working with recently commissioned providers of 14 units of local accommodation for those with additional needs across Cheshire East.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy links into other key documents and is shaped by them. This can be illustrated as follows:

The Corporate Plan 2021-2025 vision is to be an open, fair, and greener Council and this strategy will help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.

One of the priorities of the Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2025 is to 'articulate the aspirations, needs and priorities of the people of Cheshire East and the places they live in' through:

- Planning for a range of housing to meet the needs of older people, families, and young people, and developing suitable types of housing and tenures to ensure that residents have a choice of accommodation to meet their current and future needs, and
- Working in partnership to provide specialist accommodation and housing support for those residents who have complex needs and requirements

The Cheshire East Housing Strategy's aim is "that all residents in Cheshire East are able to access affordable, appropriate and decent accommodation." The key priorities are:

- Growth and Quality of Place and Health, and
- Wellbeing and Quality of Life

The Housing Strategy contains identified actions aimed at stimulating the housing market and preventing homelessness.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy section called 'Strategic Priorities' details the strategic context of each Priority then sets out:

- The issue
- The Cheshire East position
- Current activity, and

- Future intentions

The aim is to set out a broad rationale for the Priorities, and to enable discussion and development of new ideas as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is implemented. The ambition is to prevent homelessness, and deliver homelessness prevention services which are more efficient, and provide better value for money.

During the lifespan of the last Homelessness Strategy, the Council reviewed strategic outputs through consultations with service providers, commissioners of services, and with service users.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group has played a major role in monitoring the Strategy's action plan. The Steering Group is made up of people from a range of partner organisations and meets quarterly.

The four Strategic Priorities outline how homelessness will be prevented, as shown below. The Priorities incorporate tasks from the 2018-2021 Homelessness Strategy which have been carried forward.

PRIORITIES

To achieve our ambition to prevent homelessness, we will focus on the following priorities

Priority 1 - Enabling people to remain in their own home

Priority 4 - Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation

Prevent Homelessness

Priority 2 - Enable people who are homeless to secure appropriate accommodation

Priority 3 - Provide interventions to prevent / reduce rough sleeping
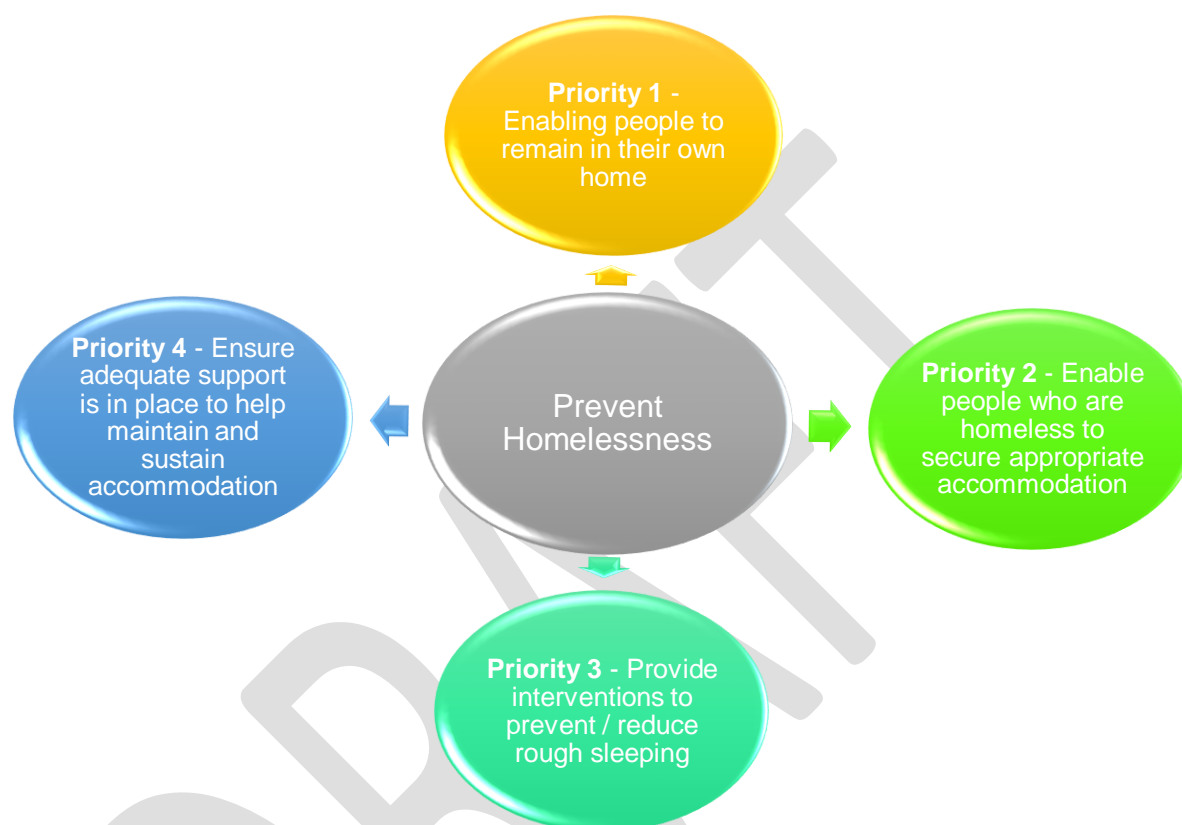
Strategic Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless

The issue

The MHCLG collects data on prevention and relief efforts by local authorities, which are now included in the same statistical release as statutory homeless figures.

Homelessness Prevention involves councils helping people to avoid homelessness through measures such as helping them to secure alternative accommodation or to stay in their current home. Homelessness Relief is when an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but has helped someone to secure accommodation, even though it was not under a legal obligation to do so.

According to a 2020 data release, 304,290 cases were assessed, with 288,470 owed a duty. Of these, 148,670 (48.9%) had a Prevention

duty, and 139,800 (45.9%) had a Relief duty.

More is needed to prevent homelessness by supporting households at risk before they reach crisis point, as well as reducing rough sleeping.

The Cheshire East position

The number of successful prevention and relief cases has increased year on year, with 2,776 households assisted between 2018 and 2020.

Good levels of prevention have been recorded which shows a preference for prevention. Between 2018 – 2020, 1,838 (66.2%) were assisted to find alternative accommodation, rather than remain in their own home (406). A priority for this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home.

Early intervention can help prevent households from losing their homes. Almost 50% of cases had homelessness prevented through a resolution of rent or service charge issues.

Homelessness prevention involves providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

Homelessness prevention data accounts for cases previously at risk of homelessness, for which homelessness was prevented through positive action (either allowing the household to remain in their existing home or assisting the household to obtain alternative accommodation).

Homelessness relief data accounts for cases that had become homeless (but were not accepted as owed a main duty), for which homelessness was relieved through positive action.

Homelessness relief occurs when an authority has made a negative homeless decision, that is, that a household is either intentionally homeless or is non-priority as defined within part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002), but helps someone to secure alternative accommodation, even though it is under no statutory obligation to do so.

Prevention and Relief work are carried out with partner agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, floating support providers, etc.

The number of successful prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 3 years, with an increase from 808 to 1,044 (+29.2%). The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice, evidence that the Cheshire East Allocations Policy gives 'reasonable preference' to those households threatened with homelessness.

The number of people on Cheshire Homechoice exceeds the number of affordable housing properties available. The number is high each year, with the number of people on Homechoice varying year to year based on annual reviews of applicants, applicants' circumstances changing, and on affordable housing stock availability (the number of lets available).

Table 10: Total households on Homechoice on the 1ˢᵗ April 2018 - 2020

Year	Total
2018	7,931
2019	9,212
2020	8,691

This includes ex - members of HM Armed Forces who are awarded the appropriate banding and local connection.

Current activity

Successful interventions are carried out, through means such as mortgage arrears interventions, family mediation, the Emergency AssistanCE Fund, and support at Court via the Money Advisor.

Over 60% of preventions have involved resolving money problems with 50% rent or service charge problems, and 13% Housing Benefit problems.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used to prevent homelessness to assist people who have been affected by welfare reforms including the benefit cap, the removal of the spare room subsidy in the social rented sector and changes to Local Housing Allowance rates. They can also be used to cover rent in advance and rent deposits.

The DHP fund is administered by the Benefits Section. Private sector liaison officers work closely with Benefits Officers to maximise the chance of successful outcomes. Payments from the Discretionary Housing Payments and the Emergency AssistanCE Fund may be offered to eligible households.

The largest single prevention action (almost 50%) concerns rent or service charge arrears in social housing,

followed by Housing benefit problems and mortgage arrears.

Mortgage arrears and rent arrears in Cheshire East have remained at low levels as the causes of loss of accommodation. The Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol (MPAP) has led to a reduction in the number of repossessions. These findings suggest that steps taken by Cheshire East to reduce homelessness have been effective, such as:

- Participating in and funding court desks in Macclesfield and Crewe which assists in representing the resident in court in cases of mortgage and rent arrears
- Promoting the work of the money advice officer and monitoring referrals to the service to assessing the impact of any increases in mortgage interest rates on owner-occupiers

The data for Cheshire East is static, although the repossession activity by social landlords is something which will need specific work in order to establish why this is the case, and what can be done to produce reductions to match those seen in the private landlord and mortgage sectors.

Future intentions

Prevention work has seen an increase with the Homeless Reduction Act with people assisted 56 days before they are likely to become homeless. A new Section 195 inserted into the 1996 Act requires Cheshire East to take steps to help prevent homelessness for any eligible households threatened with homelessness.

Steps to be taken will be informed by the assessment set out in the Personalised Housing Plan. This will include things such as mediation to help keep families together, or financial payments. There will be a demonstrable focus on delivering proactive advice and support to enable clients to sustain their existing accommodation wherever practicable and appropriate, or, to access alternative accommodation.

A pathways model has been devised to connect young people with appropriate services such as supported accommodation leading to self-contained sustainable accommodation via Housing Related Support.

A reduction in homelessness has been achieved from mental health hospital through a discharge protocol signed up to by Cheshire East and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership / NHS, which outlines key roles and responsibilities of each service and what each can expect from the others. A Link Worker assists people leaving hospital, with no home to go to, into appropriate commissioned bed spaces, for a short duration, as the Link Worker finds a more permanent housing solution.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 1 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless		
Task	**What will be the outcome?**	**By when?**
Map the prevention and relief options and develop a menu of support options which are available to anyone, and identify any gaps: - **Floating support** - **Mediation** - **Access to the PRS** - **Access to Social housing** - **Access pathways to supported housing**	Improved partnership working and data sharing	April 2022
Review partnership working and information sharing between the CAB, Job Centres, DWP, Benefits Section and Housing	Improved partnership working and preparedness for any increase in evictions, money management and debt problems	August 2021
Support partnerships with the 3rd Sector, voluntary sector, and other local partners to address support, education, employment, and training needs	More vulnerable residents in non-benefit reliant households	April 2022
'Duty to Refer' processes are in place, reviewed and developed across all key services	Improved partnership working and data sharing	August 2021
Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that support is available to those clients affected by welfare reform issues, such as Universal Credit.	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Explore 'early identification' triggers and information sharing with key agencies such as DWP, Benefits Section, supported accommodation and Registered Providers	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Review evictions from RP properties for rent arrears, and UC problems, and work with providers in identifying causes.	Provision of timely advice for people in rent arrears in the social sector	April 2022
Develop our private landlord relationships and encourage landlords to pre-notify Housing Options about 'notices to quit' given to tenants	Improved engagement with landlords and developing an early-warning system	October 2021
Work collaboratively with key partners to review the use of financial payments to reduce arrears	Prevention of homelessness for people with affordability issues	October 2021
Review the effectiveness and develop our prevention tools for homeowners at risk of mortgage repossession and respond to economic conditions	Reduction in the number of households evicted from owner-occupied properties	April 2022

Use appropriate prevention tools to reduce evictions from family and friend's	Reduction in eviction from family and friend's accommodation	October 2021
Youth Homelessness - Map the prevention and support options and develop a menu of prevention and support	Developed pathways model for young people, working in partnership with youth agencies (such as Children's Services, other statutory partners, and local 3rd sector agencies)	October 2021
Ensure that homeless pathways work alongside pathways agreed by Care Leavers Service	Reduction in care leavers facing homelessness	June 2022
Ensure services for complex domestic abuse cases are adequately delivered in housing services	Domestic abuse cases are	October 2021
Increase links with services addressing domestic abuse, for e.g. MARAC	Reduction in homeless domestic abuse victim households	October 2021
Create a DA Safer Families or MARAC champion within Housing Options	Identification of where people may face barriers in accessing help	October 2021
Establish strategic and operational links with drug and alcohol services, developing and coordinating our services jointly, particularly with commissioned providers.	Reduction in substance misuse related anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance, and domestic abuse particularly connected to the risk of homelessness	April 2022
Create a working group to review the provision of tenancy sustainment and life skills training for service users before moving into settled accommodation	Improve tenancy sustainment for service users coming from supported accommodation in commissioned and non-commissioned providers and reduced repeat homelessness	October 2022

Strategic Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation

The issue

Homeless households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need are owed the full housing duty. Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 requires that where it is 'reasonably practicable', local authorities should secure accommodation within their administrative boundary. However, the combination of a limited supply of social housing and rising costs in many areas means that some authorities are increasingly struggling to accommodate homeless households in their locality.

The Cheshire East position

Detailed and clear advice is given, with a particular focus on affordability and support, to access the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Cheshire East is developing a private sector landlord offer. Accreditation of landlords is on-going; however it will be reviewed to ensure it is working effectively.

The Scheme aims to recognise private landlords who operate good management practices and maintain good property standards. Cheshire East Private Landlord Liaison Officers provide support and advice to private landlords. The Cheshire East scheme works well and has been seen as an example of good practice.

Current activity

The number of successful Prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 2 years. The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice.

No homeless households have had their homelessness addressed through the use of low-cost home ownership housing products (at the point of homelessness relief, although as household circumstances improved some may have entered shared ownership, for example).

A new housing-related support contract began in Cheshire East in April 2020. It has split services into 2 areas: Cheshire East North, and South. There is a requirement to link this into tenancy sustainment as a key element of prevention work.

The Single Point of Access (SPA) receives referrals, almost half made by the Housing Options team, of which, 80% come from the Homelessness Team, with the remainder from enhanced housing options or Homechoice. Referrals to the SPA are high, but often services available are not always appropriate for those with complex needs. It is necessary to improve use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst partners and stakeholders.

Typically, clients who left services in a negative or an unplanned way are more likely to return, needing more

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support than clients that leave services in a positive or a planned way.

Future intentions

The design of the new Housing Related Support service is outcome - focused, allowing families and single people the opportunity to access the support they need. This approach will ensure that those with complex needs, such as substance misuse and mental health, will be supported into independence where this is achievable, or will have a suitable service in place to support them to maintain accommodation and prevent homelessness.

The service providers are bringing innovative approaches to the programme of early intervention and prevention, which will provide significant value for money to Cheshire East, with a reduction in demand to front line services.

Work is being done to develop an enhanced PRS offer. This will see increased access to the PRS, especially for homeless and vulnerable households. It may also include incentives offered to private landlords to rent out their properties to nominated households.

The has been a re-commission of the Cheshire East Substance Misuse Service. A core value and key principle is engagement, co-production and co-design with service users. Priorities include the aim of reducing homelessness and the risk of homelessness related to alcohol-related crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. One aim is to examine what levels of homelessness originate from social and private rented accommodation as a result of

substance misuse and clarify if households were known to services.

Younger people have difficulty finding rented accommodation as a substantial proportion of private landlords have actively cut back on renting to under-35s. Although nearly all landlords are willing to rent to under-35s, nearly a third have changed their letting strategy, mostly to ensure that they have security of rent payment.

National Research by the Residential Landlord Association (RLA) stated there are particular sub-groups to whom landlords say they are less willing to let to. Two-thirds of landlords (68%) are not willing to let to under-35s on Housing Benefit / Universal Credit (HB / UC). More than two-fifths of landlords (44%) are not willing to let to students. The most common reasons why landlords were not willing to let to particular groups of under-35s tend to fall into two categories − difficulty in managing the accommodation, and fears about financial loss.

This supports evidence that HB / UC claimants are viewed as relatively distinct sub-markets which some landlords specialise in and others avoid. There was some regional variation in the willingness to let to both these groups. Recently migrants represented the third largest group that landlords were not willing to rent to.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 2 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation		
Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Develop different methods of communicating information and giving advice, via social media, advertising, etc.	Stakeholders are more aware of services for those at risk of homelessness	December 2022
Explore prevention and housing options for single males	Increased accommodation options and support given to single males	June 2022
Map the options available for people with complex needs and the demand, and identify gaps in provision and services	Housing pathways in place or in development with each key partner for each client group	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop our client engagement and involvement in reflective reviews of service offers for single homelessness.	Services are reviewed and developed in relation to clients own lived-experience, comments and opinions	June 2022
Promote and implement the Hospital Discharge Protocol and increase understanding of Mental Health Capacity	Increased knowledge and understanding of pathways for Mental Health clients reaching different thresholds	March 2023
Work with health services to reduce the number of unplanned discharges, especially from mental health units, through use of the discharge protocol and effective use of the Link Workers and commissioned emergency beds.	Reduction in the number of people homeless after leaving hospital	June 2022
Develop our knowledge base and relationships with private landlords of shared and HMO accommodation	Easier access to the Private Rented Sector	March 2023
Review the effectiveness of the Common Allocations Policy in awarding priority to prevent or relieve homelessness.	Households are receiving appropriate offers of accommodation	June 2022
Examine options for joint meetings, profile raising, and joint training with Care Leaver Service	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022
Review of the Corporate parenting strategy in line with Homelessness Reduction Act	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022

Ensure care leavers / young people are appropriately represented within the Cheshire East allocations policy	**Earlier identification of those vulnerable Children in Care and Looked After Children, in line with the Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Responsibility**	**June 2022**
Identify private landlords with rented properties of a suitable standard willing to accept nominations for Housing Options	Development of an enhanced private sector offer	May 2022
Limit the use of B and B accommodation for all client groups, justified by a 'spend to save' approach	Resourcing of the local prevention model using cost benefit analysis of alternatives / reduction in B&B use	May 2023

Strategic Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping

The issue

Rough sleeping is the most visible face of homelessness. According to the latest figures, collected in the Autumn of 2019, there were 4,266 individuals sleeping rough on a single night across England. This represents a decrease of 8.7% from the 2018 levels of 4,677.

National Rough Sleepers Strategy

In August 2018 the MHCLG published its Strategy for providing long term reductions to the numbers of individuals sleeping rough, and to work towards preventing individuals having to sleep on the streets. This was to further support the Government's pledge to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027.

The Strategy and 2027 vision are built around 3 principles of Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery:

Prevention

- Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- £20 million of targeted funding for 48 projects providing prevention and early intervention for at risk clients
- £20 million fund for establishment of Homeless Prevention Trailblazers

Intervention

- Rough Sleeping Initiative - Working with 83 LAs in 2018/19 - £30 million
- Somewhere Safe to Stay Pilots - Builds on the NSNO principles
- Rough Sleeping Navigators - ensuring rough sleepers have support to access support
- Hostels - providing supported placements

Recovery

- Working to boost supply of affordable housing
- Supported Lettings
- Supporting individuals to overcome and issues / needs they have
- Housing First models - £28 million for 3 pilots across England
- Move on Fund - £100 million to provide further affordable housing

The Government believes that the above approach will provide the necessary support to individuals who are currently sleeping rough, as well as preventing those individuals at risk of rough sleeping from going onto the streets.

The Cheshire East position

The number of rough sleepers is continuously monitored by the Council, through information from partners and a new dedicated outreach worker team, who provide an estimate of rough sleeping on one night each year chosen between 1st October and 30th November. This is a snapshot on a single night, and not an assessment of the total number of rough sleepers over the whole year.

Table 12: Rough sleeping recorded on a single night each year in Cheshire East

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4	21	10	8	6

The above figures reveal that Cheshire East experienced a reduction in recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. However, the 2017 figure showed a substantial increase and rough sleeping became a much more visible problem in the borough for the first time.

The Housing Options Team is committed to tackling rough sleeping and has a range of solutions available to people who find themselves sleeping on the streets.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020/21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support.

In April 2020, Cheshire East commissioned a new housing related support service, providing supported accommodation, emergency accommodation and support. Emerging Futures were awarded the contract for emergency accommodation and 24-hour access provisions across the Borough. As part of this service, Emerging Futures delivers 36 units of emergency accommodation, and provides interventions to support the health and wellbeing of service-users, preventing them from falling into further crisis, and reducing potential demand on expensive social care, health and homelessness services. More detail on Housing Related Support is provided in Strategic Priority 4.

Current activity

The aim of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) was to establish a cross-Governmental plan of action to significantly reduce the number of

people sleeping rough across England. The initiative was supported with an additional £30 million funding to be used in 2018 - 2019 for authorities which had experienced high numbers of people sleeping rough, or those where rough sleeping numbers had increased substantially from the 2017 formal count figures compared to previous years.

Cheshire East was one such area with the number of rough sleepers encountered on our "typical" night in 2017 increasing to 21 from 4 the year before.

In October 2018 Cheshire East, using RSI funding, created 4 interventions to tackle rough sleeping in the Borough which were co-produced with the new Rough Sleepers Team at MHCLG.

The interventions were designed to address key challenges which the Housing Options Team has

experienced concerning rough sleepers in recent years:

1) Ability to adequately **respond to reports** of people sleeping rough and have the ability to engage with those individuals on their terms,
2) To enhance the **levels and types of emergency accommodation available** – (additional to the commissioned No Second Night Out provision existing in Cheshire East to cater for more complex needs presented by rough sleepers.
3) To create a **more accurate database of intelligence** with regards to the demographics of those sleeping rough as well as locations (hot-spot areas) and the needs those individuals have, to better deliver services to them.

To reflect these areas the interventions were created to run from October 2018 until March 2019:

1	**Creation of an Outreach Team**
2	**Enhancing Emergency Accommodation**
3	**Housing - Led Provision**
4	**Rough Sleepers' Co – Ordinator (changing to Rough Sleepers' Monitoring Officer in Year 2)**

The ultimate aim of each of the interventions was to enable a substantial reduction in the number of people currently sleeping rough, as well as working to prevent people

from ending up on the streets in the future, in line with MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Future Intentions

MHCLG have announced that there will be a further year's funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme. In 2020/21, MHCLG awarded £438,339 to Cheshire East Council through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) fund, to continue short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping.

A further £450,000 RSI capital grant was secured to purchase 8 new properties to accommodate individuals with complex issues and provide intensive floating support, in partnership with Plus Dane Housing. The cost for intensive support will be funded via the Flexible Homelessness Grant.

Funding was secured from RSI in 2020/21 to deliver a 'Fresh Start' programme that aims to deliver 6 units of self-contained accommodation with intensive support for service-users with multiple barriers to housing, including those released from prison with complex needs. This contract was recently awarded to P3 with the aim of moving service-users in from March 2021.

The Homelessness Service has embedded the RSI interventions within its core services through the re-commissioning of the Housing Related Support service, in April 2020.

Cheshire East will continue to implement and support the RSI. Furthermore, Cheshire East is exploring opportunities for partnership working with voluntary groups to reduce rough sleeping in Macclesfield.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 3 is outlined on the next page.

Action Plan for Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping

Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Use service data and in consultation with commissioned services, explore funding opportunities under the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative to address gaps in service or opportunities to reduce rough sleeping	Reduction in rough sleeping numbers	June 2024
Explore funding options to assist in periods of cold weather SWEP provision (SWEP will primarily cover the months of November to March)	Successful implementation of SWEP each winter	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options via a multi-agency approach to ensure that progress is made in providing a pathway for clients with a poor housing history.	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop links with partners and local churches / faith groups to provide services to rough sleepers	An expanded voluntary sector offer is in place	June 2022
Develop a profile of local rough sleepers to enable effective targeting of pathways and resources	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Identify people at risk of rough sleeping at an early stage through information sharing, partnership networks and development screening tools and Duty to Refer.	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Develop a joint protocol with Adults and Mental Health teams in the assessment, support and treatment for rough sleepers who have Care Act eligible needs, long-standing Mental Health issues and self-neglect concerns.	Clear pathways for the assessment and engagement of rough sleepers to receive necessary support and treatment for long-standing issues, including dual diagnosis.	October 2021

Strategic Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation

The issue

Supported housing is housing for vulnerable people to maintain their dignity and be part of a community.

Schemes provide both housing and support to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible in their community and maintain their tenancies, so preventing homelessness and poverty. These schemes are designed for client groups such as people with mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, substance misuse issues, victims of, or at risk of domestic violence, teenage parents, ex-offenders, or older people.

More than 700,000 people in the UK benefit from the support and supervision provided within the supported housing sector. The vast majority of provision is sheltered accommodation for older people.

The Cheshire East position

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence.

In 2019 Strategic Housing carried out a re-modelling and delivery of services to enable a sustainable Housing Related Support service for 2020 – 2023. The new service commenced in April 2020 This will be linked into tenancy sustainment as a key part of homeless prevention.

Table 14: breakdown of the Housing Related Support Service

PROVIDER	SERVICE	UNITS
Concrete	Floating Support North and South	55 units North 70 units South
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health North	30 units
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Statutory Beds South	27 Units
Plus Dane	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North	20 Units
Concrete	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South	18 Units (can be flexible to provide more)
Emerging Futures	Emergency, NFNO, 24/7 access North and South including SWEP	12 Units North 24 Units South

The services work individually with people to provide support to:
- Gain skills to maintain a tenancy
- Manage finances, such as addressing debts and help to maximise income
- Gain access to other services (e.g. Mental Health, Substance Misuse)
- Access education, training and employment
- Address drug or alcohol problems.

All these services provide support to:
- Residents facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days
- Residents who would be in need of short - term housing related support to enable them to move to a sustainable long - term tenancy
- Residents that need support to maintain a tenancy
- Residents that have barriers to accessing housing.

Floating Support

Service Provider: Concrete
This service provides short term floating support (resettlement and sustainment). Floating support services can work with clients wherever they are in Cheshire East. This could be for resettlement, for example to help someone settle into their new home after moving out of a hostel or hospital etc. It could also be to help someone where they may be at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless. There are 70 placements in the South and 55 in the North.

Short-term Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South
Service Provider: Concrete
This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 18 placements in the South.

Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North
Service Provider: Plus Dane
This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 20 placements in the North.

Supported Housing: Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health
Service Provider: Emerging Futures
This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people experiencing homelessness with complex needs, mental health issues, and people over the age of 25. Complex needs clients have multiple, interconnecting needs, which affect their ability to access temporary accommodation and / or living independently. This service provides 27 placements in the South, and 30 placements in the North.

Single Point of Access

Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing - related support needs.

The SPA links clients to services to help clients to live independently and manage their own tenancy, and if appropriate prevent a return to needing further support.

The Cheshire East Allocations Policy underpins the ability to move people who are in housing need to appropriate social housing. With an average of 8,611 registered for housing on Homechoice each year, and an average of 1,300 properties available annually, it is vital the Policy strikes the balance between supporting sustainable, settled neighbourhoods whilst giving priority to those people who are in urgent housing need.

The Policy has been reviewed to:

- ensure that the Policy is Homelessness Reduction Act compliant
- respond to customers' comments
- respond to Elected Members' comments
- tackle under-occupation to make best use of housing stock

An improved understanding and awareness of the SPA needs to be developed, as some providers are making referrals via the SPA for clients with welfare reform issues and rent arrears. This may lead to evictions from social housing. Increased awareness of the SPA amongst partners such as the Prison Service and Young Offender's Institutions is also required to ensure that clients are aware of where to go to access services. An exercise to promote the SPA to partners and stakeholders will be carried out.

Current activity

Emergency AssistanCE scheme

Emergency AssistanCE is a scheme introduced by Cheshire East following the changes to the Social Fund by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from April 2013. Following the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, the Council has developed this policy to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Any award is intended to:

• support vulnerable people facing immediate hardship, following a crisis or disaster
• prevent homelessness, in conjunction with support from the Housing Options Team
• keep families together and safeguard vulnerable people

The Emergency AssistanCE scheme is available to vulnerable people who are in receipt of state benefits. In exceptional circumstances awards may be allowed to those on a low wage.

The majority of funding has helped households to purchase essential items for the home such as fridges and washing machines, and furniture. The next largest funding allocation was for rent deposits.

Expenditure by type

1% 4%

26%

2%

67%

- Furniture & white goods
- Emergency food
- Rent deposits
- Other
- Additional grants/funding
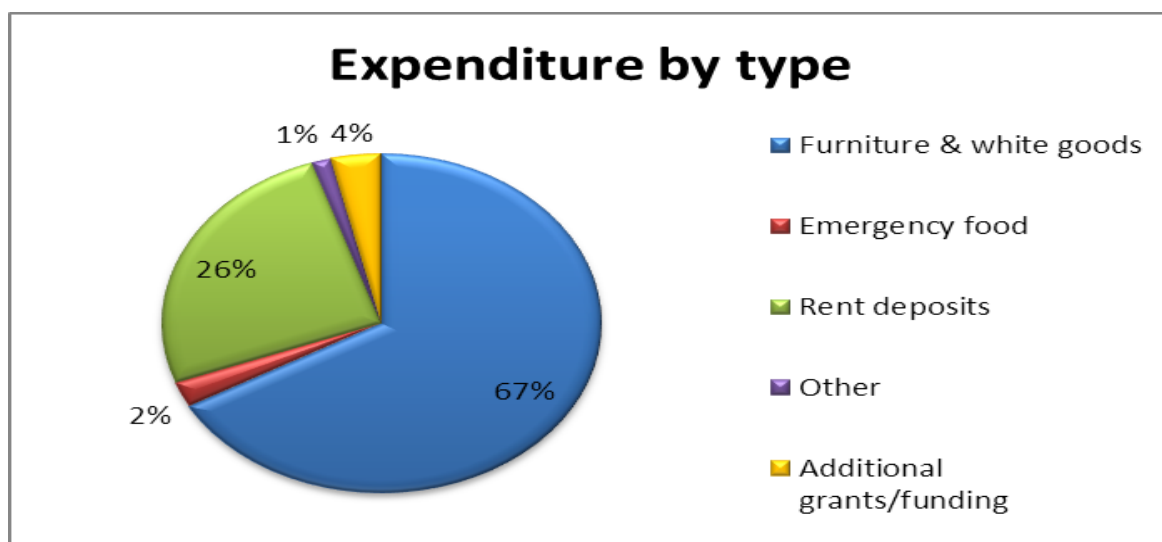
The Homeless Prevention Fund

The Homeless Prevention Fund is used for anything that would stop someone from being homeless and this can be adapted to be a personalised approach for someone who is sleeping rough. Rough sleepers have a variety of needs to get them back into accommodation and for some financial support is needed to start a new tenancy or to clear off debts which make it difficult to be able to move into a property.

This scheme has limits, but the approach of the service attempts to be open minded and flexible so that applications can be received to cover individual and exceptional circumstances. The Fund is retained fully within the Housing Options Service, with a case for its retention based on the quality of the service and the value for money it provides, especially in 'spend to save' scenarios.

Financial assistance and advice are also available at the Citizens' Advice.

Website and information

Cheshire East meets the standard for public websites. There is a good range of information which is easy to locate. The information is clear on the main areas required, with a good range of links. There is also a good range of telephone numbers for customers to contact for help. It also makes best use of the template available.

The website offers effective and relevant housing advice and information at the earliest possible stage which enables a customer to make choices about which option is best for them. It enables an exploration of possible tenure options and a tailoring to their individual circumstances, such as information about social rented housing from housing associations, or the private rented sector.

The website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links. Information sharing and drop-in sessions, newsletters and increased understanding of roles and responsibilities of organisations and agencies will be developed.

Future intentions

The Housing Options Team during a recent Diagnostic Peer Review was assessed as being sympathetic to the customer's needs with a clear methodical approach in one to one contact with clients. The Team was assessed as having excellent levels of engagement with customers, with detailed and clear advice being given. There was a focus on affordability and support with accessing the Private Renter Sector. Clear and appropriate next steps were discussed with the customer.

However, information sharing was been identified as an issue. Third sector (voluntary sector, the economic sector consisting of non-governmental organisations and other non-profit organisations) services are used by Housing Options but information is sometimes erratic.

Under the HRA there are opportunities for applicants to request a Section 202 review (concerning the decision about someone's eligibility for assistance or the offer of accommodation). More cases are likely to be reviewed due to the number of clients that this new duty will affect. There will also be increased legal costs.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 4 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation		
Task	**What will be the outcome?**	**By when?**
Engage with third sector and voluntary Initiatives to develop closer working arrangements with the Housing Options team to identify homeless triggers, develop awareness and support people to come in off the streets	Rough sleepers are provided with an enhanced offer of support and assistance to resolve homelessness	June 2022
Examine how promotion and marketing of housing, homelessness and Homechoice services can be carried out	The Housing Options Team is better promoted, including hard to reach groups and those with accessibility issues	Dec 2021
Provide briefings and training for Elected Members, and joint training for teams and partners on the local response to homelessness	All departments are signed up to the Homelessness Strategy to deliver the aims, and understand the importance of, preventing homelessness	June 2022
Homelessness support and assessment teams are well-trained, knowledgeable, and empathetic to current issues affecting the street homeless populations	Increased knowledge of Mental Health and substance misuse issues across all services	June 2022
Carry out periodic quality checks by customer feedback review and ensure case management is to a high standard	Improvement in the quality of service received by the client and senior officer review	Dec 2021
Liaise with providers and promote the SPA and Homechoice, and promote any training opportunities	Improved use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst stakeholders	Dec 2021
Complete an analysis of the type of issues that are referred to SPA but which are not able to be placed	Increased understanding of referrals to the SPA	June 2022
Use HRS outcomes to measure progress towards increased wellbeing and move on rates into long-term tenancies	Better understanding of the reasons for clients' housing need	June 2023
Ensure that the website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links (ensuring accessibility features, such as different font sizes, audio/visual, and translation)	Easy access to free information when it is needed to help people find their own housing solutions	Dec 2021
Provide a range of relevant policy, performance, and strategic documents on the Housing Service webpages	Local policy and strategy documents are monitored, reviewed, and adapted to reflect local priorities and good practice	Dec 2022
Clearly set out on the HO website what a customer may expect when getting in contact, such as service standards and procedures for dealing with clients (appointments, drop-in, telephone calls, etc.)	The customer has clear expectations of service levels	Dec 2021
Correct and updated Housing information is provided on the CE and 'Live Well Cheshire East' websites and regularly reviewed	There is easy access to free information when it is needed to help people find their own housing solutions	Jan 2022

How will we deliver this strategy and who will be involved?

This Strategy outlines a series of homeless interventions which will reduce homelessness levels in Cheshire East. The problem of homelessness is multi-faceted, requiring a range of co-ordinated activity. Each of these interventions will have short-term resource implications for the Council, either directly or indirectly.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025 sets the framework for activity to deliver homelessness reductions in the short to medium term, and will both support, and be supported, by strategic documents such as the Housing Strategy and Tenancy Strategy, and work on an enhanced private rented sector interface.

The Council is working towards reduced homelessness through this Strategy, as it ties together the strategic priorities for improving services to communities. We consulted with partners in 2019 – 2020 who said that the strategic priorities were still relevant, with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group identifying key priorities for the new Strategy.

Strategic approach

Improved partnership working will help to deliver identified outcomes for service users. With limited resources and reductions in funding, innovation and good practice will deliver improvements and savings. It is essential to avoid duplication of work and of services within, and between, services.

Cheshire East has already adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy - in across all Cheshire East services. However, strategically important external partners may be unable, through pressures on their service, to meet demand. In this case funding arrangements may be reviewed, or the partners may be supported in exploring funding streams or shared services with other partner organisations. Budget holders and decision makers would be made aware of a lack of capacity in strategically relevant services.

Monitoring

The Strategy will be monitored in partnership, with accountability for delivery resting with identified leads to support performance management of the Strategy. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. It is intended that the Steering Group will be a strong and effective partnership. Membership will be reviewed to ensure that it is as inclusive as necessary, with a wider role for voluntary, third sector, and Faith groups.

Task and Finish groups will support the work of the Steering Group, focusing on specific projects and will report back to the Steering Group on progress and on any areas of concern.

The Delivery Plans

Cheshire East knows our priority areas to focus on and the Council has identified the major gaps that need to be addressed. Cheshire East knows that it is essential that it works in partnership to achieve the shared vision of preventing homelessness and have produced delivery plans with tasks clustered under the 4 key priorities.

Appendix 1 Local Data

Housing delivery in Cheshire East

The housing market needs to diversify, opening up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient ways of working. Housing associations are supported to build more, and the Self Build Register assists people who want to build their own homes. Cheshire East can evidence a 5-year land supply, using a standard formula of build rates and lead-in times which are applied to all housing sites.The next table shows how the delivery of affordable housing units only goes some of the way to meeting housing need.

Table 1: Housing completions 2015 – 2020

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Net completions	1,473	1,762	2,321	3,062	3,065
Affordable completions	360	398	613	727	482
Additional social rented	29	36	81	98	49
Additional affordable rented	253	162	294	320	222
Additional intermediate	78	200	238	309	211

Human Trafficking / Human Slavery

Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty for Adult Safeguarding under the Care Act. The types of abuse include categories for human trafficking, and therefore, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to identify, report, and support victims of human trafficking as well as the duty as first responders.

Given the seriousness of trafficking there is a need for joined up working between departments and local agencies, to promote a strategic response and good practice in supporting people in need. The Council's Emergency Response Plan will assist with the management of an incident, and Housing Services in attendance will establish how much temporary accommodation will be needed.

Local context

There are 178,158 homes in Cheshire East[2]. There are more social rented than private rented properties.

Table 2: Housing tenures

Tenure	Number of properties
Owner –occupied	134,430
Private rented or living rent free	21,755[3]
Social rented	21,973[4]

Table 3: Private Rental Market rents[5]

The next tables show a Private Rental Market Summary of monthly rents recorded in 2019 / 2020 in Cheshire East:

	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Summary	3,840	784	550	650	850

and a Private Rental Market summary of monthly rents by number of bedrooms recorded between 2018/2019 in Cheshire East:

Table 4: Private rented monthly rent in £'s[6]

Number of beds	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
One bed	500	516	425	495	590
Two bed	1,900	672	550	625	750
Three bed	990	853	650	795	950
Four bed	350	1,670	995	1,395	1,950

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2019-in-england

[3] Tenure by household size by number of bedrooms, Source: Small Areas; Office for National Statistics

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2018-to-2019

[5] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland

[6] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland/april2019tomarch2020#local-authority-analysis

Local Housing Allowance

Welfare reform has affected LHA rates, which were frozen until 2020. The Council pays out the following in LHA monthly figures in Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) (£s).

Table 5: LHA by BRMA monthly figures April 2021 – March 2022

	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
East Cheshire	360.00	495.01	599.99	824.99	1,300.01
West Cheshire	318.29	449.99	550.02	650.00	894.99
South Cheshire	260.71	394.98	495.01	594.99	824.99
South Manchester	359.83	524.99	650.00	749.99	1,100.00
Staffordshire North	264.84	374.99	425.01	550.02	744.99

There are implications of LHA levels for the major towns and settlements. Properties are above the LHA level, resulting in a shortfall which means households are going to struggle to pay their rent and fall into arrears. See **Appendix 2**.

Required income levels to meet housing costs

Traditionally households have needed at least the average income to purchase a property. Those on less than average have been encouraged to take up sub-prime mortgage offers. The level of debt caused by households being overstretched can lead to extreme hardship for households, in many cases resulting in repossession. Similarly, working households have needed an average income which enabled access to private rented homes.

Required household income to purchase lower quartile housing (x3.5 times income)	Required income to rent lower quartile housing (third of monthly earnings)
£41,428	£1,670 (or £20,040 per year)

The average household income in Crewe, for example, is £20,960, which gives a lower quartile house price to earnings ratio of 6.4.

Many tenants on benefit in the private rented sector encounter 3 main difficulties: (i) LHA which doesn't cover all the rental costs, (ii) a shortage of affordable properties, and (iii) landlords unwilling to rent to benefit-reliant households.

The Cheshire East 'Local Welfare Safety Net' report says that there are currently just 26,000 households in Cheshire East in receipt of one or more welfare benefit.

Table 6: Universal Credit - reliant households

Total households	Universal Credit - reliant households	% of households
169,460	17,773	10.4

Housing Related Support

Housing Related Support has been re-commissioned, and the new services commenced in April 2020.

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence. This is covered in Strategic Priority 4.

Empty properties in Cheshire East

The number of empty residential properties in Cheshire East has increased by 6.9% between 2017 and 2019.

Table 7: The next table shows the number of empty properties in Cheshire East[7]

	2017	2018	2019
All vacant dwellings	4,166	4,332	4,635
Empty for 6 months or more	1,396	1,685	1,781
Private registered provider vacant	111	186	230
Private registered provider vacant for 6 months or more	49	74	118

Although empty properties are not the solution to homelessness, they may help to reduce it.

As properties are bought and sold, or re-let, there will be a period of vacancy in between the changes in occupation. Such 'transactional vacancies' are not usually the cause of problems but are a normal part of the operation of the housing market. Household flows exist which affect both the number of households in an area and the number of properties which are occupied, as seen in the next table:

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[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants

Table 8: The impact of household movement on the number of households and properties in Cheshire East

	Household flow	Number of			
		Households		Properties occupied	
1	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an empty property	Increases	⬆	Increases	⬆
2	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an occupied property	Unchanged	▬	Unchanged	▬
3	HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering empty	Unchanged	▬	Unchanged	▬
4	Whole HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering occupied	Decreases	⬇	Unchanged	▬
5	Whole HH leaves Cheshire East	Decreases	⬇	Decreases	⬇
6	Splitting HH, person leaving enters vacant	Increases	⬆	Increases	⬆
7	Splitting HH, person leaving enters occupied	Unchanged	▬	Unchanged	▬
8	Splitting HH, person leaving leaves Cheshire East	Unchanged	▬	Unchanged	▬
9	Household Dissolution	Decreases	⬇	Decreases	⬇

A number of empty properties are necessary for a healthy housing market and to allow household flows 1, 3, and 6 above. It may be possible for some empty properties to be brought back into use which may accommodate homeless households via leasing schemes or nominations.

Commercial properties are typically unsuitable for habitation.

Appendix 2

Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed April 2019 – March 2020[8]

	Number of households	Number as %
Total number of households assessed	1,514	
Total households assessed as owed a duty	1,496	
Households assessed and duty owed:		
Threatened with homelessness - **Prevention duty owed**	1,044	69.0%
Of which: due to service of valid Section 21 Notice	102	6.7%
Homeless - **Relief duty owed**	452	29.9%
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	18	1.2%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	188	18.0%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	271	26.0%
Domestic abuse	22	2.1%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	82	7.9%
End of social rented tenancy	210	20.1%
Eviction from supported housing	16	1.5%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	16	1.5%
Other violence or harassment	9	0.9%
Left institution with no accommodation available	8	0.8%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	0.5%
Other reasons / not known	217	20.8%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	124	27.4%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	37	8.2%
Domestic abuse	37	8.2%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	55	12.2%
End of social rented tenancy	19	4.2%
Eviction from supported housing	69	15.3%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	17	3.8%
Other violence or harassment	17	3.8%
Left institution with no accommodation available	10	2.2%

[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2019-20

Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	*1.1%*
Other reasons / not known	62	*13.7%*
Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty:		
Private rented sector	289	*27.7%*
Living with family	216	*20.7%*
No fixed abode	0	*0.0%*
Social rented sector	240	*23.0%*
Living with friends	113	*10.8%*
Homeless on departure from institution	16	*1.5%*
Rough sleeping	0	*0.0%*
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	41	*3.9%*
Temporary accommodation	88	*8.4%*
National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) accommodation	4	*0.4%*
Refuge	2	*0.2%*
Other / not known	35	*3.4%*
Household type of households owed a prevention duty:		
Single parent with dependent children - Male	23	*2.2%*
Single parent with dependent children - Female	288	*27.6%*
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	1	*0.1%*
Single adult - Male	290	*27.8%*
Single adult - Female	234	*22.4%*
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1	*0.1%*
Couple with dependent children	108	*10.3%*
Couple / two adults without dependent children	73	*7.0%*
Three or more adults with dependent children	7	*0.7%*
Three or more adults without dependent children	19	*1.8%*
Not known[8]	0	*0.0%*
Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer		
Total households assessed as a result of a referral	118	*100.0%*
Total households referred under the Duty to Refer	77	*65.3%*
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	9	*7.6%*
Youth Secure Estate	0	*0.0%*
National Probation Service	8	*6.8%*
Community Rehabilitation Company	2	*1.7%*
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	1	*0.8%*
Mental Health in-patient care	13	*11.0%*
Jobcentre Plus	10	*8.5%*

Adult Social Services	9	*7.6%*
Children's Social Services	5	*4.2%*
Nil Recourse Team	0	*0.0%*
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	0	*0.0%*
Other / not known	20	*16.9%*
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	40	*33.9%*
Households referred by another local authority	1	*0.8%*
Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty[7]:		
White	1,387	*92.7%*
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	17	*1.1%*
Asian / Asian British	18	*1.2%*
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	9	*0.6%*
Other ethnic groups	10	*0.7%*
Not known[8]	55	*3.7%*

Appendix 3 – Rough Sleeping Initiative Outcomes

Intelligence & Outcomes

Since Cheshire East began the RSI it has:
- secured a substantial number of successful longer - term accommodation placements for individuals who were sleeping rough
- reduced the number of visible rough sleepers across the Borough
- built new and enhanced agency partnerships
- gathered a large amount of intelligence to give a much clearer picture of who has been accessing the services
- Recently secured capital grant funding to purchase new properties to provide sustainable accommodation with intensive support
- Embedded emergency accommodation, such as No First Night Out and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, into accommodation services provided by our commissioned partners.

Also, as part of the funding from MHCLG, Cheshire East has been required to undertake bi-monthly rough sleeper counts, in addition to the formal count required by Government to be carried out between October and the end of November each year.

The approach to these counts has been to utilise the new services / interventions to create a dedicated database of where individuals have been sleeping rough in each of the main towns of the Borough, and then use of that data to inform where and when to search areas for individuals sleeping rough.

Table 13: Cheshire East counts

Bi-Monthly Counts	Informal / Formal	Rough Sleepers Located	Known to services
September 2018	Informal	4	3
November 2018	Formal	10	7
January 2019	Informal	11	11
March 2019	Informal	6	6
July 2019	Informal	2	2
September 2019	Informal	2	2
November 2019	Formal	8	8
January 2020	Informal	6	6

As the RSI services were implemented, the numbers of rough sleepers located increased but the number of those individuals who were known to, and engaging with, services to assist them off the streets increased. Throughout the interventions, the RSI teams have been engaging with 100% of those sleeping rough in the Borough.

Referrals

Since the introduction of the RSI in Cheshire East and the promotion of the service there has been a substantial increase in the number of individuals being referred to the services. Referrals are received from sources such as Streetlink, and other partner agencies.

There was an increase in the number of referrals in 2018 - 2019, which was welcomed as it proved that the approach of promoting the service with agencies and the wider public had been successful. Each referral is an opportunity to gather more information, but also to engage with those individuals sleeping rough and to create a successful outcome for them.

During the course of the initial RSI period the service successfully engaged with 260 individuals. There was an expected peak in October as the services began, and then decreased and stabilised over the remaining winter months.

There was a split of engagements between Crewe, which has become a "hot spot" for rough sleeping, and the rest of the Borough. There were 135 individuals involved with services within the Crewe area, compared to 125 for the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

People classed or likely be classed as not in priority need under homelessness legislation were provided with emergency accommodation. This was either in the No Second Night Out (NSNO) or Extended Winter Provision (EWP) provisions (over the winter months only). As expected, the number of EWP placements were lower than NSNO placements in this area to reflect the fact that EWP is an extended provision, and not the main accommodation.

Another element of the enhanced accommodation offer is in relation to the creation of dedicated, complex needs statutory temporary accommodation, in both North and South of the Borough. This was done to reflect the needs of clients who are in priority need under homelessness legislation, but also have a substance misuse issue which would normally place them at a higher risk of losing statutory temporary accommodation.

The model adopted enabled the team to place individuals with a partner agency operating the service in Macclesfield and Crewe, who were able to provide bespoke substance misuse - related support to individuals accessing those accommodation units. The service has been able to keep people in those units at times when individuals would have been evicted from other types of accommodation due to their support needs / behaviour.

The complex statutory accommodation model has also been recognised by MHCLG within the national Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan as good practice.

This shows that during October 2018 – March 2019 a total of 29 individuals accessed the complex needs temporary accommodation units. The lower numbers are to be expected due to there being less beds compared to

other types of accommodation, and to the complex nature of the individuals accessing the services generally and requiring placements.

Outcomes

The Cheshire East RSI has achieved a high number of successful move - on resolutions for individuals, both those accommodated, and those managed in the community, into accommodation which is available to them for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 61% of all placements being within current commissioned Housing Related Support (HRS) services in the Borough. Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (18%). The "other" category accounts for around 14% of all resolutions across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals moving back with family members, for example.

Successful move on Year 1
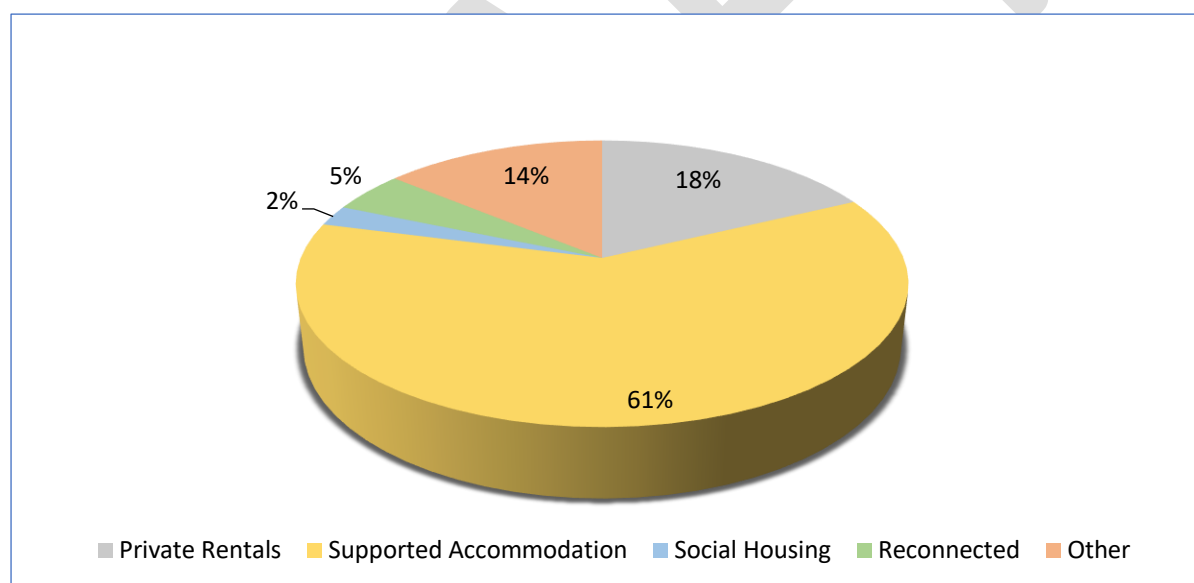
A further area of successful progress has been in relation to the gathering and collation of intelligence on the rough sleeping cohort, and of a dedicated database monitoring the individuals through the service, and which are reviewed frequently. A large amount of intelligence on the locations of where individuals have been sleeping has also been collated and plotted, and this has been used to inform the bi-monthly counts undertaken as part of MHCLG funding.

RSI Intervention Reflection

Cheshire East Council has been continually evaluating the interventions in place to ensure they remain fit for purpose, particularly with regards to meeting the needs of the rough sleeping cohort.

As part of that reflection, several elements were identified as requiring modification to our approach. These were:

- Broadening the spectrum of longer - term outcomes

Although the number of outcomes is good, it is clear that the private rented and especially social housing sectors need to be targeted more effectively to engage with the RSI process. Work has been ongoing with the private rented sector and new relationships are being sought between Housing Options and individual landlords in particular. Further exploration of those relationships and work with local registered social landlords forms a key area of work in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

- Providing accommodation on a 24 / 7 basis

When some elements of the enhanced accommodation interventions were established, they were designed to build on already commissioned services.

However, as the project was evolving and more intelligence was gathered about the cohort in Cheshire East, it became clear that the way NSNO provision was operating in the north and south of the Borough could be seen as contributing to the day-time visibility of rough sleepers and in particular, street drinking. This was due to individuals being required to leave the accommodation during the day and going back onto the streets.

It also provided less opportunity to effectively engage with individuals who were being accommodated.

These two main issues were highlighted to be addressed in the second year of RSI funding.

Rough Sleepers Initiative – Cheshire East – Year 2

Due to the successes of the RSI Nationally between October 2018 and March 2019 MHCLG announced further funding to be made available to continue the good work already started and to build on it across England.

A further funding bid was made by Cheshire East and was successful in securing an additional **£388,303** of funding to be used in 2019 - 2020 financial year.

A process of co-production was again undertaken between Cheshire East and MHCLG with interventions used in year 1 reviewed to see if they were still relevant and fit for purpose. As the funding provided was lower than had originally been requested, especially in regard to the accommodation interventions, the numbers of

units needed was re-visited whilst addressing the challenges identified during the initial 6 month period.

Changes were also made to the Rough Sleepers' Co-ordinator role which altered that role to become a contract monitoring position. We were successful in embedding this role, as well as two Rough Sleeper Outreach posts, as permanent posts within the Housing Options and Homelessness Service in 2020-21.

Intelligence & Outcomes

Building on the work which was commenced during the first phase of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to deliver successful outcomes for individuals sleeping rough and has begun to move towards a more preventative approach in line with the principles in the Government's national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The general number of engagements has been lower than the first year, as many individuals have already been assisted. In terms of the split of engagements between North and South of the Borough, 60% have been engaged with in the south, compared to 40% in the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

The lower number of clients is to be expected due to the lower level of provision generally compared to other types of accommodation, and the complex nature of individuals accessing the services.

However, this number is higher than the initial period of the RSI which may indicate that there are greater numbers of rough sleepers with complex needs coming through the system.

Outcomes

As well as **178 individuals** who have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer term outcomes for individuals into accommodation, which is for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 78% of all placements being within the currently commissioned HRS services in the Borough.

Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (10%). The "other" category accounts for around 6% of all outcomes across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals back with family members, for example.

Successful move on year 2
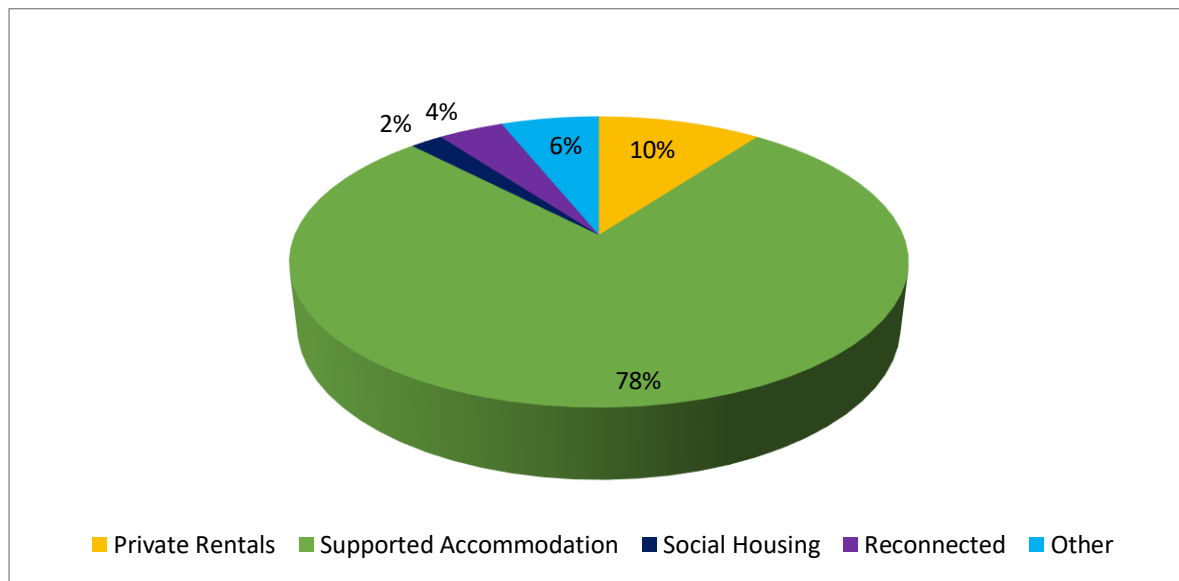
More work needs to be undertaken with private landlords in order to increase the numbers of placements into that tenure, although accessing this type of accommodation is proving increasingly difficult.

Glossary

Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) Black And Minority Ethnic, term used to describe minority groups recognised as falling under the Race Relations Act 1976.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is an extra amount of money that the Council can give someone already receiving some Housing Benefit or housing costs in Universal Credit, to help them pay their rent (it cannot be awarded to help pay for non-rent charges like water rates and service charges). It is not a benefit, and there is no automatic right to it. It is awarded at the discretion of Cheshire East. There is no fixed amount and the amount to be paid is assessed. This is a limited fund and cases are considered individually in line with the policy.

Emergency AssistanCE This policy has been created to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, or to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Extended Winter Provision Accommodation and support provided to rough sleepers throughout the winter months and not just during the coldest periods.

Homechoice Cheshire East does not have any council housing of its own and does not operate its own council housing waiting list. However, it is partnered with Guinness, Plus Dane, Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trusts, and over 20 other social landlords, who advertise affordable, rented properties (referred to as 'social housing') via a website called Cheshire Homechoice. Housing applications can be made through the Homechoice website.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) The Homelessness Reduction Act makes changes to legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act of 1996. The HRA paces a duty on Cheshire East to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness, and to take reasonable steps to help homeless people to fiend accommodation. It also requires Cheshire East to expand the category of people who we have to help to find accommodation.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements are a way of working out Housing Benefit (HB) or housing costs in Universal Credit for people who rent from a private landlord. Local authorities use LHA rates based on the size of household and the area in which a person lives to work out the amount of rent which can be met with HB. HB paid under the LHA arrangements is normally paid to the tenant, who will then pay the landlord.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) The Government department that sets policy on supporting local government: communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning, building and the environment, and fire.

No First Night Out (NFNO) is an innovative approach to preventing people from sleeping rough for the first time in London, which enhances the No Second Night Out (NSNO) with a more preventative approach.

No Second Night Out (NSNO) NSNO helps to identify where rough sleepers are coming from and improve prevention and recovery services so that they don't have to sleep rough.

Registered Provider (RP) A registered provider is defined as providing social housing. Social housing includes low cost rental (such as affordable rent properties) and low-cost home ownership. Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers (such as not-for-profit housing associations and for-profit organisations).

Rough sleepers / street homeless Households who find themselves with no support networks such as friends or family who are able to offer short term accommodation will likely end up street homeless (rough sleeping). Anyone who is sleeping rough or street homeless is the most visible sign of homelessness.

Single Point of Access (SPA) Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing related support needs

Shared accommodation rate: Changes to exemptions
The shared accommodation rate of the LHA applies to those who are under the age of 35, living alone and renting privately. The market cost of sharing accommodation is cheaper than renting a self-contained property and this is reflected in how the shared accommodation rate is set.

Exemptions from the shared accommodation rate
There are a number of exemptions which enable claimants to receive the higher one-bedroom LHA rate in certain circumstances, such as for those in receipt of the SDP, Care leavers up to the age of 22 and those aged 25 and over who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel.

Changes to the exemptions
In March 2020, the government announced that, from October 2023, it would be extending the age thresholds for the Care Leavers and homeless hostels exemptions so that they both applied to under 25 year olds. For Care Leavers, this means extending the qualifying age from 22 up to 25 years old and for those who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel, the lower age limit will be removed to include all claimants aged under 35.

At the Spring Budget this week it was confirmed that due to the impact of COVID-19 on young people, the implementation date has been brought forward by over two years to the end of May 2021. Regulations will be laid on 6 May 2021 and come in to force on Monday 31 May 2021. Affected claimants will be entitled to claim the exemption from that date.

While LAs may choose to identify and contact claimants they believe to be in scope of the updated exemptions there is no expectation of this. Claimants will be expected to self-identify to claim an exemption.

Streetlink is a website that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about people sleeping rough in their area. This service offers the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and is the first step someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. The service is funded by Government as part of its commitment to end rough sleeping.

SWEP Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) aims to prevent rough sleeping during extreme cold weather. When night-time temperatures are predicted to fall below zero for 3 nights in a row SWEP provides emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. During periods of extreme cold housing authorities must provide facilities for rough sleepers to prevent deaths as a result of weather conditions. Cheshire East activates SWEP also based on wind chill and extreme weather conditions.

Universal Credit A monthly payment for people who are on low income or who are unemployed. It is being rolled out in stages across the UK and is replacing other benefits. How much is paid depends on the customer's circumstances, including their income, how many children they have and also the Local Housing Allowance Rate.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
4th February 2021	1.0	Christopher Hutton	Adoption of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	Place	Lead officer responsible for assessment	Chris Hutton – Senior Policy Officer
Service	Strategic Housing	Other members of team undertaking assessment	John Howard – Housing Policy Officer Kath Bradley – Equalities and Diversity Officer
Date	4th February 2021	Version	1.0

Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Plan	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service
	√					

Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New		Existing		Revision	
	√					

Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes , operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation)	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 - 2025. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025 is to prevent homelessness in collaboration with partners and customers. It will identify housing needs and put in place initiatives to address these needs.

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Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	The Strategy links into other corporate strategies, including Housing Strategy, Vulnerable and Older Person's Housing Strategy, and the Tenancy Strategy. It contributes to the delivery of the Council's priorities to the residents of the Borough.
Who are the main stakeholders, and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)	*If yes, who did you engage with? Please state below:* (i.e. if risk increases, vulnerability increases etc. services should include methods of adaptation to meet these increased needs without creating client uncertainty, or loss of services). *Name any groups/ stakeholders that you have involved or consulted with during the Equality Impact Assessment. Provide a brief summary of how they have been involved and what they said – positive or negative.* *For example, asking disabled people about access issues and gender groups about gender specific issues before a service is introduced. Involving people with protected characteristics in training, policy review, satisfaction surveys etc.* Residents across the Cheshire East area who find themselves homeless and in need of support to enable them to move into a more permanent housing solution, or to retain their accommodation. Stakeholder client groups to be assisted through the Strategy are: - Single homeless - Homeless couples - Young people - Older people - People with substance misuse issues - People with disabilities - Offenders - People suffering with mental health problems - Young parents - Families Service-users, partner agencies, and internal colleagues were consulted on the framework for the new Strategy.

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What consultation method(s) did you use?	Interviews, workshop, and focus groups.

Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	*Such as a 'Process Map' of your service (assessment of customer journey through service) / analysis of complaints / analysis of patient satisfaction surveys and feedback from focus groups /consultations / national & local statistics and audits etc.* *List what other information you have reviewed.* In evaluating who would be affected, account has been taken in relation to existing service - users of Homelessness services. This includes residents who are vulnerable and require accommodation, supported accommodation, or floating support to enable them to remain in their home, or help moving into alternative housing. Quarterly data and household flow information shows successful outcomes and why some failures occur.
Who is intended to benefit and how?	The Strategy will impact on all residents of the Borough and people referred from outside the Borough through Duty to Refer. This will form a basis for the working relationships and practices with both internal colleagues and external agencies.
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	No, as the Strategy will help to address the particular needs of each client included in Protected Characteristics. The Strategy allows for flexibility and thinking outside the box by providing pathways suited to individual characteristics.
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	Yes, as the individual service – user's needs will be assessed and signposted to appropriate and specific services as required.
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	No, as the Strategy will ensure equality in service provision for all Cheshire East residents and people from outside the area who access our services. There will be improved communication between different stakeholders and organisations.

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	It is anticipated this will show improved outcomes for vulnerable household members, such as engagement with services, successful throughputs, and increased quality of life. This will be monitored by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group which meets about 4 times a year.

Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)

	Y	N		Y	N		Y	N
Age			**Marriage & civil partnership**			**Religion & belief**		√
Disability		√	**Pregnancy & maternity**		√	**Sex**		√
Gender reassignment		√	**Race**		√	**Sexual orientation**		√

For Age: √ in N column; Marriage & civil partnership: √ in N column.

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts		Consultation/ involvement carried out	
		Yes	**No**
Age	There will be negative and positive impacts dependent on age, as seen in Homechoice data, H-Click homelessness data, prevention and relief statistics, and information from partners and stakeholders.		√
Disability	Work is being done to identify adapted properties and to improve knowledge of adapted Registered Provider properties and record where they are located to make better use of resources. Homelessness Services, such as interview rooms, are Disability Discrimination Act compliant.		√
Gender reassignment	Services consider each case individually based on the individual's thoughts and feelings. We expect partner providers at all times to carry out a risk assessment of the existing clients and the service to ensure the individual presenting is safeguarded.		√

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Marriage & civil partnership	No specific impact.		√
Pregnancy & maternity	Positive impact as evidenced as priority under homelessness legislation. We will ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation, and Housing Related Support accommodation is available for pregnant women.		√
Race	Positive impact as strategic actions will ensure that the diversity of the local population is reflected based on Census data, Homechoice data, and other local research. There exists a dual concern about race relations and inequality, and there is a duty on CEC to promote race equality and good race relations. It will be possible to signpost families who have / are experiencing racism to relevant services, such as Police.		√
Religion & belief	All assessment and support plans will be individualised and address issues specific to the individual which will include issues related to religion or belief. Service – users new to the area may be signposted to local church / faith groups.		√
Sex	All assessment and support plans will be individualised and address issues specific to the individual which will include issues related to sex. This will reflect specific cultural sensitivities through things like single gender accommodation, for people fleeing domestic abuse for example.		√
Sexual orientation	It will be possible to signpost individuals to services such as Health, and Mental Health. The engagement of service - users will be sensitive to their needs and ensure compliance with data protection policies and procedures. It will be possible to signpost individuals to build relationships with, and receive support from, relevant organisations, such as BodyPositive.		√
Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)	**Yes**	**No** √	**Date**
Lead officer sign off	Chris Hutton	**Date 4th February 2021**	
Head of service sign off	………………………….	**Date xx March 2021**	

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

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Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	Is the policy (function etc....) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups? **Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations** *List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).*	Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc....) on any of the groups? **Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations** *List what positive impacts were recorded in **Stage 1** (Initial Assessment).*	Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified *High:* *Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation* *Medium:* *Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures* *Low:* *Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect*	Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4) *Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.*
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				

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Pregnancy and maternity			
Race			
Religion & belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)			

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed			
Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	**How will this be monitored?**	**Officer responsible**	**Target date**
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions			
When will this assessment be reviewed?			
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?			
Lead officer sign off		**Date**	
Head of service sign off		**Date**	

Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website

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Cheshire East
Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N
Date First Published: N/A

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2021

Report Title: Consultation on the Assistive Technology Charging Policy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Laura Jeuda – Adult Social Care and Health

Senior Officer: Jill Broomhall - Director of Adult Social Care Operations

1. Report Summary

1.1.   Assistive Technology is an important means by which people can be supported to live independently in their own homes in lieu of traditional care support (such as care at home).

1.2.   The Council wishes to develop this service; by increasing the number of people who can access it, and the range of devices they can obtain to address their care needs. However, a necessary step in implementing this change, is to review the charging structure for the service. This would see the same charge levied to those aged 85 plus and living alone, as all other users (these users currently pay no charge). It is important to note that these service users could request a financial assessment. This would ensure those unable to pay, would not need to do so.

1.3.   This paper requests permission to begin consultation with those affected.

1.4.   A number of priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 relate to Assistive Technology. These include reducing health inequalities; reducing reliance on long term care and protecting the most vulnerable.

2. Recommendations

2.1.   That Cabinet:

2.2. Agree that a consultation exercise is undertaken on a proposed change to the Assistive Technology charging policy. This proposal would mean that those aged 85+ and living alone would pay the standard charge of £5 per week for this service like all other Assistive Technology service users. No one unable to afford the service, would have to pay for it.

2.3. Note that a report will be presented to the Health and Social Care Committee outlining the results of the consultation and seeking a decision on the proposed change.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. Sevice users have told us that the Assistive Technology is important in supporting them to be independent and safe at home, whilst increasing choice and control. However, access to the service cannot be enhanced without reviewing the current charging policy.

3.2. Levelling out the payment structure, would enable us to increase the usage and scope of the service. Thus enabling the offer to people with dementia, carers, those with a physical disability etc, to be improved.

3.3. Making a service free of charge, has the side effect of encouraging people who do not really benefit from it, to request it. This has been reflected in anecdotal feedback from social care staff and will be tested through the proposed consultation exercise.

3.4. Additionally, individuals who have requested the service have not always benefitted from an overall assessment of need and therefore may require further support. Following the consultation, we would wish to undertake an assessment of all those receiving the service, to ensure their care needs and aspirations are being appropriately met. This step will provide further assurance.

3.5. It is also of note that analysis has shown that the current approach disproportinately benefits people in areas where life expectancy is higher, by making the service free to those living longer. This conflicts with the Council's corporate policy of reducing health inequalities.

3.6. Additionally, expenditure for the service has exceeded income over the last two years and will continue to do so. Assistive Technology is currently funded via a combination of monies from the Better Care Fund as well as a flat rate charge levied against Assistive Technology service users. The charging proposal would help reduce this pressure.

3.7. Undertaking the consultation would allow us to engage with users about the change and to better understand the impact. This would inform the final

proposal. A key message would be that people are eligible to receive a full assessment of need together with a financial assessment. This will ensure that care needs are being proportionally assessed and that only those who are able to pay for the service will be charged.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. *Maintaining current charges* –this would result in the Assistive Technology related savings detailed within the Medium Term Strategy not being achieved, meaning that significant funds would need to be found from elsewhere, which would create a further budget pressure

4.2. *Increasing overall charges* – This would impact a far greater number of people and would mean that in effect these users would continue to subsidise those aged 85+ and living alone.

4.3. *Graduating the charging structure* – this would be complex and expensive to implement and administer

5. Background

5.1. Assistive Technology is an important means to address the assessed care needs of service users by supporting people to stay independent in their own home for longer, whilst providing improved choice and control. For instance, falls detectors can help safeguard individuals more likely to fall due to frailty by alerting a call centre and a mobile response team. It can also provide this support at reduced cost in comparison to traditional care packages. A survey was conducted with users in 2018, in which 74% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it improved their quality of life.

5.2. However, it should also be understood that the reassurance Assistive Technology can provide for families/carers, needs to be set against the rights of the individual for self-determination and privacy.

5.3. A number of priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 relate to Assistive Technology. These include:

o Reducing health inequalities across the borough

o Reducing the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

o A commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities

o   Increasing the life opportunities for young adults and adults with additional needs.

5.4. The current Assistive Technology charging structure was implemented in December 2015 following a public consultation. This sees each service user charged £5 per week for receiving the service, unless they are aged 85+ and living alone, in which case the service is provided at no charge. There are 1,234 service users benefitting from this currently, in comparison to a total Assistive Technology user base of 2,426.

5.5. However, the number of people receiving the service at no charge is unsustainable in the future, particularly as the Council wishes to increase the number of people obtaining the service, as well as the level of support. This will help increase choice and control for people, as well as addressing rising demand, due to the ageing population in the Borough.

5.6. Moreover, there is evidence that users have opted to take up the service in part because it is free and not always because it significantly addresses their care needs or serves a genuinely preventative function. This has been reported in a range of anecdotal feedback from staff.

5.7. A review is currently being undertaken of Assistive Technology which is exploring how a greater range of need can be supported in the future through technology. For instance, many more older people use mobile phone based apps which could be utilised, and smartwatches provide a non-medicalised means of providing support. This is with a view to recommissioning the service. However, improving support will also put increased strain on the service budget.

5.8. As part of this review, analysis has also found current uptake of the service to be uneven. For instance, the number of people (per thousand, of those aged 65+ receiving the service) is 9 in the most deprived wards (Index of Multiple Deprivation Score of 1 or 2) in comparison to 56 in the least deprived wards (Index of Multiple Deprivation Score of 9 or 10).

5.9.   This can be viewed as a nature consequence of lower life expectancy in areas of deprivation. For instance, average life expectancy in the most deprived ward in the Borough: 'Crewe Central' is only 72.6 in comparison to the least deprived area 'Wilmslow East' where it is 84.3. But it also means that the policy is widening rather than reducing health inequalities.

5.10. It is proposed that a consultation is conducted on the change to the charging policy to explore the impact on users. This consultation would be as

comprehensive as possible, whilst taking account of COVID-19 risks. As such, it is proposed that:

- A letter would be sent to Assistive Technology users aged 85+ and living alone informing them of the proposed policy change.
- This letter would give them the opportunity to comment via a bespoke telephone or online meeting; paper survey or by providing comments via the Council's website.
- Follow-up would take place with those not providing feedback, to encourage them to participate.
- Members of the public would have the opportunity to give views by completing a survey on the Council's website.
- The Equality Impact Assessment would be updated to take account of views.

5.11. Following the consultation, a report would be produced on findings. This would then be taken to the Health and Social Care committee together with final recommendations.

5.12. Additionally, assessments would take place with all users in receipt of the service. This would ensure that they were receiving support in line with their care needs and aspirations. It would also check that individuals were benefitting from the service and not being controlled by it.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this proposal.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The Assistive Technology service should be funded in full via the Better Care Fund and by client contributions. However, the service has been significantly overspent for the last few years. The forecast overspend in 2020/21 is around £480k at Third Quarter Review.

6.2.2. The current value of client income received for Telecare services is around £280k per year, which means that for the under 85 cohort we charge around 80% of clients. The reason for this is that although Telecare services are not formally financially assessed if a person can truly not afford to contribute to the costs then the charge is waived.

6.2.3. Assuming that 80% of the 1,234 over 85 service users were to be charged the additional income could be up to £257k per year.

6.2.4. However many clients who are 85+ may also have care packages that they already make client contributions towards. This could mean that Telecare income could increase, but contributions to their other care costs could decrease, as their financial assessment of affordability would be impacted.

6.2.5. This means the overall increase in income will be lower, but we are not able to estimate accurately what the likely additional income will be at this time as each person's circumstances will be different.

6.3. **Policy Implications**

6.3.1. The paper concerns a change to the Council's Assistive Technology charging policy

6.4. **Equality Implications**

6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. However, consultation feedback will be used to update this.

6.5. **Human Resources Implications**

6.5.1. There are no human resource related implications

6.6. **Risk Management Implications**

6.6.1. A risk management process will be followed when implementing this work to ensure that risks are properly managed and mitigated where possible.

6.7. **Rural Communities Implications**

6.7.1. Assistive Technology is helpful in safeguarding and supporting vulnerable people in rural locations

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

6.8.1. There are no implications for children and young people.

6.9. **Public Health Implications**

6.9.1. Reducing health inequalities is a key principle of a Public Health approach

6.10. **Climate Change Implications**

6.10.1. There are no implications for this theme

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All wards

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. The paper specifically addresses the subject of consultation

9. Access to Information

9.1. The following documents were fundamental to the recommissioning process:
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- People Live Well for Longer Commissioning Plan
- Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024

10. Contact Information

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

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Agenda Item 10

Cheshire East Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N
Date First Published: N/A

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2021

Report Title: Tree Risk Management Strategy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Toni Fox, Planning
Cllr Laura Crane, Highways and Waste
Cllr Nick Mannion, Environment and Regeneration

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place

1. Report Summary

1.1.   Cheshire East Council recognises the many important benefits trees provide to our landscape, our quality of life, and their contribution to the climate change emergency. Although the overall risk to public safety from the failure of trees is low, the Council has a duty of care to manage that risk, considering the benefits and costs.

1.2.   The Council has developed a Tree Risk Management Strategy to set out its approach to managing trees within its ownership by managing risk to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable. This will be achieved by undertaking regular tree inspections and any remedial action in a proportionate and cost-effective manner according to their priority in relation to public safety.

2. Recommendation

2.1.   That Cabinet approve the Tree Risk Management Strategy.

3. Reason for Recommendation

3.1.   The Tree Risk Management Strategy will ensure a proactive approach to risk management of the Council's trees. This is necessary to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations to ensure public safety according to the priority of works and its financial resources.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. There was no alternative option considered. The Council has a duty of care to ensure that it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner and consider the risks posed by its trees.

5. Background

5.1. Trees and woodlands are an essential part of our rural and urban landscapes. They add greatly to the quality of all our lives through their visual amenity and other benefits such as urban cooling; reducing air pollution; mitigating flood risk and carbon sequestration. They are part of the solution to the climate change emergency and Cheshire East like most local authorities and the government is aiming to increase woodland and tree cover over the next few decades. It is important that we retain as many of our mature amenity trees as possible while we also plant trees for the future.

5.2. The Council owns or is responsible for trees along our streets and highways; within our urban and country parks; in public open space within residential areas; within public cemeteries; and around our properties. The Council also undertakes regulatory functions that affect trees and woodlands such as those immediately adjacent to highways and public rights of way; within Conservation Areas and those protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

5.3. The Council recognises that generally the risk from falling trees is low; however, as a large public landowner with responsibilities for a considerable public highway network it has duty of care to ensure it avoids acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk of harm to persons or property.

5.4. The Council will therefore undertake regular inspections of its tree stock and undertake work as necessary to maintain public safety in accordance with published guidance and case law. The level and periodicity of inspection will be dependent on an assessment of the risk of harm posed by the location of trees relative to visitors and the public, so that for example, trees in a public square will be inspected more frequently than trees in a rural location.

5.5. Works to trees that present an unacceptable risk will be considered a priority above those perceived to be causing a nuisance to residents such as lack of light, shading, leaves and television reception. This is to ensure that resources are effectively allocated based on priority and efficient use of the Council's budget.

5.6. The implementation of the Tree Risk Management Strategy will be the responsibility of individual services. A Principal Arboriculture Officer within the Environmental Planning Service will provide guidance and advice and monitor compliance.

5.7.   The services with responsibility for tree risk management are:

5.7.1. Highways – responsible for 1,600 miles of highway managed under a long term service contract by Cheshire East Highways (Ringway Jacobs).

5.7.2. Environmental Services – responsible for parks, play areas, open spaces, cemeteries and crematoria managed under contract by ANSA Environmental Services, a company wholly owned by the Council.

5.7.3. Countryside Management – responsible for country parks, trails and nature reserves.

5.7.4. Tatton Park – the Council is responsible for managing the 2,000 acre Tatton Park Estate and House owned by the National Trust.

5.7.5. Estates – responsible for management of the Council's land and property.

5.7.6. Cheshire Farms – responsible for a portfolio of farms extending across 4,850 acres.

5.8.   All services with responsibilities for tree risk management have some work to undertake in order to comply with the strategy. An action plan has been developed and a working group of relevant services has been established to share policies and practices and collaborate on common challenges such as the electronic recording of inspections. The first full survey of all of the council's land ownership should be completed within 3 years, starting with all areas within zones 1 and 2 (highest priority).

5.9.   The Strategy shall be reviewed as necessary, for example following new guidance, case law or statute law, and/or every three years.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1.   **Legal Implications**

6.1.1. The draft Tree Risk Management Strategy includes extensive legal commentary at Appendices 1 & 2.

6.1.2. The Strategy provides a balanced approach to tree management. It will enable the Council to discharge its duties and responsibilities.

6.2.   **Finance Implications**

6.2.1. Service budgets already fund tree inspections and maintenance to varying extents depending on the service.

6.2.2. To ensure timely implementation of the strategy the 2021-25 Medium Term Financial Strategy includes growth of £0.5m from 2022/23 for the

implementation of a strategy to fund a Senior Arboriculture Officer for Tree Risk, additional resources for tree inspections, and additional resources for emergency tree maintenance.

6.2.3. Additional resources required for tree risk management in 2021/22 will be funded from an earmarked reserve. To recognise potential uneven spending, due to the nature of the work, over or underspending in this area will continue to be managed through the use of an earmarked reserve.

6.3. **Policy Implications**

6.3.1. The strategy supports the vision set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 for an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East. The plan prioritises safe neighbourhoods and safer roads and includes an action to introduce a borough wide tree policy.

6.4. **Equality Implications**

6.4.1. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and concluded that there is no negative impact on specific groups from the Tree Risk Management Strategy. The strategy prioritises trees that present a risk to public safety as a whole rather than specific groups or individuals.

6.5. **Human Resources Implications**

6.5.1. There are no HR implications arising from the strategy.

6.6. **Risk Management Implications**

6.6.1. An effective Tree Risk Management Strategy and tree risk management regime will significantly reduce the Council's risk of prosecution and / or civil claims and will minimise the Council's liability in such actions.

6.7. **Rural Communities Implications**

6.7.1. There are no specific implications for rural communities, however the strategy will apply to the whole borough including all rural communities.

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

6.8.1. There are no implications for children and young people.

6.9. **Public Health Implications**

6.9.1. The Tree Risk Management strategy is aimed at reducing a risk to public safety.

6.10. **Climate Change Implications**

    6.10.1. Trees are part of the solution to the climate change emergency through carbon sequestration. Through the Carbon Neutral Action Plan the Council is aiming to increase tree planting within the borough. The Tree Risk Management Strategy aims to balance the risk from our trees with the ecological, environmental and social benefits that trees bring.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All wards.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. All council services and service delivery partners with responsibilities for tree risk have been consulted during the development of the strategy.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The Tree Risk Management Strategy accompanies this report.

10. Contact Information

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

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Document No:	Issue No: 2A	Issue Date: February 2021	
		Review Date:	
Title: **FINAL DRAFT – TREE RISK MANAGEMEMENT STRATEGY**			

CONTENTS   Page

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Issue Number	Date issued	Draft/Revision / Change
1	January 2020	Draft
1B	October 2020	Final Draft
2A	February 2021	Final Draft for SMT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cheshire East Council recognises the many important benefits trees provide and that although the overall risk to public safety from the failure of trees is very low, there is a duty of care to manage that risk, considering the benefits and costs. This Strategy sets out the approach to managing trees within the Council's ownership by managing risk to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP). This will be achieved by undertaking regular tree inspections in a proportionate, and cost- effective manner according to their priority in relation to public safety. Trees located in areas of high use (e.g. those next to busy roads, buildings, busy paths and play areas) will be inspected more regularly than those in less well used places. This approach accords with the current national guidance published in: *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees – The National Tree Safety Group* (NTSG).

This Strategy will provide a proactive approach to risk management of the Council's trees which will prioritise trees that present a significant risk over complaints from the public unless there is an urgent need for the works. This is necessary to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations to ensure public safety according to the priority of works and its financial resources.

PART 1 - BACKGROUND

2. INTRODUCTION

Trees and woodlands are an essential part of our rural and urban landscapes from the hedgerow Oaks on the Cheshire Plain to our tree lined streets and urban parks. They add greatly to the quality of all our lives through their visual amenity and a variety of other benefits such as urban cooling; reducing air pollution; mitigating flood risk and carbon sequestration. They are part of the solution to the climate change emergency and Cheshire East like most local authorities and the government is aiming to increase woodland and tree cover over the next few decades. It is important that we retain as many of our mature amenity trees as possible while we also plant trees for the future.

While seeking to increase woodland and tree planting the government also recognises the importance of our existing trees stock. In the introduction to the 2018/19 DEFRA consultation about "Protecting and Enhancing England's trees and woodlands", David Rutley MP who was Minister for Food and Animal Welfare (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State) at the time, said "*Trees are a critical component of the country's green infrastructure network, and a precious natural asset which we must protect for future generations. In urban areas, trees play a pivotal role in creating healthy and economically successful communities, helping to clean and cool the air, reduce flooding, and improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing*."

Cheshire East Council owns or controls many of the most valuable trees to our society - along our streets and highways; within our urban and country parks; at Tatton Park; in public open space within residential areas and within public cemeteries; on other land holdings and around our properties. The authority also undertakes regulatory functions that affect trees and woodlands such as those immediately adjacent to highways and public rights of way; within Conservation Areas and those protected by Tree Preservation Orders. All landowners and occupiers of land have a legal duty of care for the safety of trees within their control and in exercising this duty of care it is important that they have a high regard for the benefits that trees provide while balancing this against the need to keep the public safe.

The Council recognises that generally the risk from falling trees is low; however, as a large public landowner and with additional responsibilities such as over 2700km of road network, it has a specific legal and moral responsibility to visitors to its land and generally to members of the public. The Council will therefore undertake regular inspections of its tree stock and undertake work as necessary to maintain public safety in accordance with published guidance and case law. The level and periodicity of inspection will be dependent on an assessment of the risk of harm posed by the location of trees relative to visitors and the public, so that for example, trees in a public square will be inspected more frequently than trees in a rural location. This Strategy sets out the corporate approach to tree risk management and individual services will implement the strategy through procedures and processes that best fit their individual circumstances.

3. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

This Strategy describes the Council's approach to the management of the risk from trees within its ownership. Works to trees that present an unacceptable risk will be considered a priority above those perceived to be causing a nuisance to residents such as lack of light, shading, leaves and television reception. This is to ensure that resources are effectively allocated based on priority and efficient use of the Council's budget.

This document is part of the Council's commitment to protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment of the Borough and supplements the following documents:

- Cheshire East Council Environmental Strategy (2019-24)
- Highway Asset Management Policy
- Highway Asset Management Strategy
- Green Assets Policy

The Strategy accords with the strategic outcomes of the Councils Corporate Plan (2021-2025) and the Council's Corporate objectives for effective risk management.

4. NATIONAL GUIDANCE ON TREE RISK

This Strategy is informed by guidance produced by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees* and current best practice within the arboriculture industry.

The NTSG position is underpinned by a set of five key principles:
1. Trees provide a wide variety of benefits.
2. Trees are living organisms that naturally lose branches or fall.
3. The overall risk to human safety is extremely low.
4. Tree owners have a legal duty of care.
5. Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety and management.

The HSE sector information minute '*Managing the risk from falling trees'* requires that a reasonably practicable approach be taken which is proportionate to the risk. It also highlights that the inspection of individual trees can be disproportionate to the risk they pose.

The HSE has set out a framework, known as the Tolerability of Risk (ToR) (HSE 2001); for reaching decisions about whether risks are unacceptable, tolerable or broadly acceptable. Where a risk is considered tolerable it is deemed to be '*as low as reasonably practicable* (ALARP). A risk is tolerable where the costs of reducing that risk further would be disproportionate to the benefits gained.

The HSE has developed a five-step approach to risk management (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm) which shall be applied when assessing the risk from trees (see Table 1 below)

Table 1: Five steps to risk assessment

Step	HSE Assessment	Action
1	Identify the Hazard	Trees on land owned by Cheshire East Council, Trees affecting land owned by Cheshire East Council
2	Decide who might be harmed and how	The general public, council employees, contractors and their property when: • Using the highway • When visiting parks, gardens, open spaces and other property owned by the council • On land adjoining council owned property
3	Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions	Where the public might be harmed, or property damaged by falling trees or branches. What constitutes an acceptable level of risk is determined by the Tolerability of Risk Framework (ToR) approach which defines broadly acceptable and unacceptable levels of risk. Within this range is where the risk is Tolerable if it is deemed to be '*low as reasonably practicable'* (ALARP). This means the risk is Tolerable if the costs of risk reduction are much greater than the value of the risk reduction.
4	Record findings	Tree Inspections /risk assessments and any remedial works will require to be recorded in an electronic database which shall be made available across Council Services.
5	Review your assessment and update where necessary	Reassessment will be based on the risk of significant harm for each area or site. This Risk Management Strategy will be formally reviewed every 3 years as part of the reporting and monitoring arrangements for key corporate risks.

5. THE COUNCIL'S LEGAL POSITION

The Council has a legal duty of care to ensure that it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This means that the Council must ensure that it avoids acts or omissions that could cause a foreseeable risk of harm to persons or property.

This Strategy has considered the current legal position (both statute and common law) and how these relate to the Duty of Care placed on landowners (a summary of legislation and relevant legal cases are attached at Appendices 1 and 2).

The Council's responsibility as a reasonable and prudent landowner, is to consider the risks posed by its trees. The level of knowledge and the standard of inspection that must be applied to the inspection of trees are of critical importance, but the courts have not defined the standard of inspection precisely. Generally, the courts appear to indicate

that the standard of inspection is proportional to the size of and resources available (in terms of expertise) to the landowner. It is of note that the HSE states that: "*for trees in a frequently visited zone, a system for periodic, proactive checks is appropriate*" (HSE 2007)

Where harm occurs, liability is a matter for the courts to determine. The question is whether or not the council has discharged its duty of care, which will be largely dependent upon whether or not the council has taken a reasonable and proportionate approach to the management of tree safety

A comprehensive summary of English Law as it relates to trees can be found in Chapter 3 of '*What the law says'* of the National Tree Safety Group publication *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011).*

PART 2 TREE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

6. PRIORITISING RISK REDUCTION

Proposed Policy
The Council will manage the risk from trees using the Tolerability of Risk (ToR)
principle taking into account the following factors: -

- *Trees provide a range of important environmental and social benefits*
- *The overall risk to the public from tree failure is extremely low*
- *The Council has a duty of care to manage the risk from trees*
- *The duty should balance the benefits from trees, risk and costs*
- *The Council will manage the risk from trees where there are obvious defects reduced to a Tolerable or Acceptable level*

The Council's duty of care to manage the risk from our trees shall be reasonable, proportionate and reasonably practicable. The Council must therefore balance this risk with the aesthetic, ecological, environmental and social benefits that trees bring with "reasonableness" and the benefits of risk reduction taking into consideration the financial cost of managing and controlling that risk.

The priority for implementing any remedial action will be dependent on the assessment of risk and hazard related to the zone of use. Those trees that have been identified as the highest risk will be dealt with first, with emergency work given the highest priority as set out in Table 1.

Severe Weather
When a severe weather warning is forecast the Council will secure the gates to any of the main parks that have them. Once the severe weather has passed, all high use zones in the parks and trees on the highway will be assessed by our staff for any obvious tree risk features.

Emergency Work
Where a tree has a very high likelihood of failure and it is in a high use zone, then the risk is '**Not Acceptable'** and will be deemed a priority**.** Operatives will attend to the tree as soon as possible (within 24 hours, with the site to be secured with warning signs and barriers or closed to the public in the event of a delay).

Cost Effectiveness Risk Reduction
Other than Emergencies, risk reduction work will not normally commence until all planned annual active risk assessments have been carried out. This will assist in prioritizing the work and coordinating with other tree maintenance so that it is planned in a cost-effective way.

Not Tolerable Risks
Not tolerable risks will be carried out in conjunction with other tree maintenance work. Where there is not the budget to do this, priority will be given to the risk reduction work.

Tolerable Risks
Tolerable Risks will not be reduced but may require recording and be recommended for increased frequency of inspection.

Review
A review will be undertaken with the Council's Contractors every 3 months to monitor how risk reduction priorities are being carried out and managed and whether any improvements to work priorities can be made.

Table 1 : Priority for work to trees

Work Priority	Risk Assessment	Action	Response Time
Category A Emergency (Council or privately owned trees)	Response to trees that are a significant risk and an imminent danger to public safety	**Not Acceptable** Risk will be reduced to an acceptable level	Within 24 hours (or site secured with warning signs and barriers until work is completed)
Category B Essential Works	Response to trees that are considered essential but not imminently dangerous but where remedial works are necessary	**Not Tolerable** Risk will be reduced to an Acceptable level but with a lower priority than Category A **Tolerable** Risk will not be reduced but may require increased assessment frequency than Category C	Works completed within 6 months or restrict public access by barriers and signs until work is completed
Category C Desirable – Pro active Management	Works to trees that are not considered to be high risk Works to abate a nuisance (other than subsidence) caused by Council owned trees	**Acceptable** Risks will not be reduced unless resources are available	No specific time scale (as resources allow)

7. SITE ZONING

> *Proposed Policy*
>
> *As part of a risk-based approach for the management of trees, the Council will identify and categorise all land within its ownership into zones on the basis of frequency of use.*

The inspection of Council owned trees will be informed by the use of Site Zones where the management of land is defined according to the levels of use (Table 2)

The Council will adopt a minimum of three zone categories, (High, Medium or Low) and will be defined by: -

- Frequency of use and/or function of use such as The Highway Authority Network Hierarchy, taking into account the risk-based approach in the Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' (WMHI).

- Frequency of use of all Public buildings, Parks and other Council owned land according to level of occupancy and public access (as assessed by site managers).

It may be appropriate for managers to incorporate additional zones depending upon their services management requirements and it will be a matter for each Service to determine which zone applies to a specific area based upon an informed assessment or their own data analysis.

The Council will carry out a review of all zones every three years or where there are clear identified changes in use.

Table 2 Zoning, Frequency of Inspection and Inspection Method

Zones of Use	Network Hierarchy (Highways)	Usage Criteria	Frequency of Inspection	Inspection Method(Level)	Examples
Zone 1 High Use	Strategic Routes/Main distributors/ Secondary distributors/Link Roads	High volumes of traffic and public access/ occupancy [3]	Every One or Two years [1]	Basic (Level 1)	Principal/Trunk Roads, Major Road junctions, Land adjacent to the rail network, Car Parks, Town Centres, Land adjacent to Schools, Employment areas, emergency facilities and access routes, Permanent Structures with a constant target, play areas, public areas/ Events [3]
				Risk not tolerable/acceptable Detailed (Level 2)	
Zone 2 Moderate Use	Strategic Routes/Main distributors/ Secondary distributors/Link Roads	Moderate volumes of traffic and public access [3]	Every Three or Four years [1,2]	Basic (Level 1)	Main Roads, junctions, car parks of moderate use, Footpaths/access ways (pedestrians 1-36/hour), Moderate use Parks/Public Areas, informal play areas, recreation areas [3]
				Risk not tolerable/acceptable Detailed (Level 2)	
Zone 3 Low Use	Local Access Roads unless volumes of traffic are subject to peak periods of traffic	Low volumes of traffic and public access [3]	Every Five or Six years[1, 2]	Basic (Level 1)	Secondary/unclassified road (unless used during peak periods to avoid congestion or regular events[2] Low use parks and recreation areas, woods with limited or restricted access Other public areas where recreation is dispersed. [3]
Zones 1 and 2		Reports of damage following severe weather events	Immediately following event	Detailed inspection of reported damage (Level 2)	

NOTES

1. *Frequency and timing of inspection may be subject to change when considering size, age., condition and species characteristics of the tree population and trees known to be inherently prone to failure.*
2. *In cases where moderate or low use zones are known to have increased volume of use for example in peak periods to avoid traffic congestion, outside or within the vicinity of schools, or where special events are anticipated, zones and frequency of inspections shall be re evaluated amended where appropriate.*
3. *Frequency (High: Vehicle 4700/480/hr; Peds 720-8/hr;* **Moderate**: *Vehicle 480-48, Peds 7-2/hr;* **Low** *Vehicle 47-6/hr, Peds 1/hr).* *Vehicle frequency based on 32mph Source Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (v.5) https://www.qtra.co.uk*

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8. INSPECTION PROCEDURE.

> **Proposed Policy**
>
> *A programme of tree inspections shall be implemented for all land under the Council's ownership using a risk-based approach and directed by dedicated arboricultural advice*

It will be the responsibility of the inspector to ensure the tree are assessed to the best of his/her ability and to ensure that the inspection is recorded accurately. The method of inspection is set out below and will be dependent on the Zones of Use. (Table 2)

Tree inspections will normally be carried out from ground level with the use of binoculars and hand tools (such as a nylon sounding hammer and metal probe). Cameras may also be used to record specific defects and in order to monitor defects over a period of time.

Basic Inspection (Level 1 Visual Survey)
The HSE Sector Information Minute (SIM) *Management of the risk from falling trees or branches* has identified a "quick visual check" as the starting point for duty holders under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Trees will be assessed on foot or in a vehicle as a drive- by inspection. The inspection will identify the target area (what the tree or parts of it will fall on) and the type of assessment recorded. For example, trees in a park will be recorded as having been assessed on foot. Trees beside a road will be recorded as being assessed on foot or drive- by.

A more detailed Level 2 Assessment will be carried out where there are trees with obvious features where the risk is considered not acceptable or tolerable.

Drive by Inspection
A drive by inspection is an assessment carried out at a Basic Level from a moving vehicle that is driven at a low speed observing only trees with obvious risk features which might not be acceptable or tolerable. The inspection shall be carried out in accordance with a Traffic Management Plan and incorporate the following: -

- the vehicle shall include one driver and one surveyor.
- The surveyor will be trained in basic tree risk assessment to recognize obvious tree risk defects.
- the surveyor must only assess trees and not assess other highway issues.
- Trees will be assessed from both directions even if trees are only on one side of the road to avoid missing any features that are only visible from one direction.
- where trees are present on both sides of the road, each side of the road shall be observed separately.
- the vehicle shall be driven at an appropriate speed and may be variable depending on the surveyor (less than 50kph/30mph).

- Flashing beacons and vehicle display signage may be appropriate at busy locations.
- Where it is safe to do so the vehicle shall slow down or stop when there are many trees or a tree is showing obvious defects (e.g. decay fungi, crown dieback, large wounds, splits, cracks or significant leaning towards the road).
- The surveyor will take photographs and record the tree and a decision made as to whether a detailed assessment shall be carried out.
- If the decision is to Carry out a detailed assessment, a full 360-degree assessment will be carried out on foot. If vegetation needs removing or access is difficult, arrangements shall be made to carry out the work necessary for a closer examination of the tree.

Walk-over Inspection
A visual examination carried out on foot to identify obvious and serious above ground defects of a tree. This will involve observing the tree in its entirety at a distance followed by a walk round each tree to gather information on the condition of roots, trunk, branch structure, crown, buds and leaves and may include the use of simple tools. Where there are limitations to the inspection due to obstructions or restrictions due to ownership this shall be noted in the survey.

Detailed Inspection (Level 2 Survey)
A detailed inspection is carried out on trees identified during a Basic Inspection that require closer examination because they have a feature where there is an obvious risk that is considered not acceptable or tolerable.

The assessment is carried out from ground level using a quantifiable tree risk management system.

A report will be produced which will include the risk assessment/rating and appropriate options (if necessary) for reducing the risk and any appropriate management advice. Any work carried out will be recorded when it has been completed.

Advanced Inspection
Where a risk assessment from a Level 2 survey is unclear or more information is required about the likelihood of failure, and resources are justified for further intervention (e.g. a tree of significant amenity, heritage or cultural value) a more detailed advanced inspection may be undertaken. This may include below ground and aerial investigation, including detailed information about specific parts of the tree, the significance structural defects and strength loss due to decay, the presence and significance of diseases, pests, assessment of targets and site conditions and the use of specialized equipment.

If the costs of an Advanced Inspection are substantial, a decision will be made whether the tree has sufficient value to justify the expense. This will be determined using a system for valuing amenity trees as public assets (e.g. CAVAT). A report will be produced that will include the detailed information obtained from the investigation and those covered in the Detailed (Level 2 Survey).

9. RECORDING AND PRIORITISING REMEDIAL ACTION

> **Proposed Policy**
>
> *A record of all tree inspections, including related maintenance and proposed actions shall be maintained on a retrievable database that is accessible and be corporately available.*

Accurate record keeping enables proactive and responsible risk management providing evidence in support of professional challenge. It also supports future decision making about the management of the Council's trees.

Whilst all trees within a survey area need to be checked, only those identified with specific defects requiring work need to be recorded, however the areas that have been inspected need to be recorded.

Each service with trees within its area of responsibility shall: -

- Undertake a survey to identify all land that falls within its management responsibilities that include trees.

- Ensure that safety inspections include both trees within the managed land and those outside but within falling distance of land.

- Implement a programme and record of tree inspections including related maintenance and action proposed. The record will be retained, maintained and updated in a retrievable database to support an asset management approach and inform allocation of resources and value for money.

- Ensure adequate budget provision based on evidence of need and service level for ongoing regular tree inspections and necessary safety related maintenance work for trees arising from inspections.

- Ensure that the data base is accessible to all officers with corporate responsibility for tree risk.

10. COMPETENCY AND TRAINING

> ***Proposed Policy***
>
> *Staff involved in the inspection of Council owned trees shall be competent for the task and have a basic level of arboriculture training.*

Competency of Personnel

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act and guidance contained in the HSE SIM a quick visual check should "be *carried out by a person with a working knowledge of trees and their defects, but who need not be an arboricultural specialist*".

Well-managed Highway Infrastructure (2016) also states that highway authorities: *"should include some basic arboricultural guidance in training for inspectors"*.

All staff shall be aware of their limitations and should consider whether they have the necessary competence to carry out a specific task effectively. If in doubt, it is advisable to obtain appropriate specialist advice. In relation to a tree risk assessment, if an assessor is unable to confidently identify obvious external signs of defect and particularly their significance in respect of structural stability in the tree, s/he should consult a specialist.

All personnel carrying out inspections of trees on behalf of the Council shall have the following levels of competence and training: -

Level 1
Inspections shall be carried out by a member of staff or contractor with a basic understanding of trees. Because of their training, experience and site knowledge, they will be able to notice common defects and abnormal growth in trees and will understand how to pass on their concerns to a more experienced person.

Training
LANTRA Basic Tree Inspection Certificate, although LANTRA Intermediate Tree Inspection certificate is desirable.

Level 2
The inspector shall be a competent arboriculturist (as recommended in Circular 52/75 Inspection of Highway Trees) with training and experience of managing trees for safety, balanced with other site-specific requirements. Inspectors will be familiar with the use of probes, nylon faced mallets and binoculars.

Training
Minimum RCF Level 3 Arboriculture with modules covering tree inspection and the recognition and treatment of defects.
LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection.

Level 3 – Detailed Inspection
An inspection that provides a detailed assessment of any decay or tree stability with the use of specialized equipment e.g. Resistograph or Tomography. This level of inspection shall be usually reserved only for high value trees within high use areas.

Training
Minimum RCF Level 6 Arboriculture (e.g. BSc. RFS Professional Diploma, LANTRA, Professional Tree Inspection

11. SUBSIDENCE RISK

Proposed Policy
As part of a risk based approach, the Council will identify those areas within its ownership where soil conditions and incident trends indicate a potential subsidence risk.

Public liability claims that involve trees can arise where there is alleged damage by tree Roots which under certain conditions can give rise to subsidence damage to a property. Subsidence is normally a problem on shrinkable clay soils, with properties that have shallow foundations at the highest risk. Tree roots can cause desiccation of the ground near to a building causing the clay soil to shrink leading to subsidence. However, there are other determining factors which can lead to subsidence and these require thorough investigation and inspection by a qualified and competent tree specialist, structural engineer and soil analyst.

- The Council will as part of a risk-based approach identify those areas within its administrative boundary which are more prone to subsidence risk. Within these areas details of tree species, their location, soil type and records of incidents shall be maintained on a retrievable database.

- The Council will provide dedicated resources for dealing with subsidence related claims involving Council owned trees.

- Where tree removal is required to mitigate any damage arising from a subsidence claim, the Council shall plant a replacement tree of a more suitable species where site conditions allow.

- The Council's Arboriculture Officers in conjunction with Insurance Officers and Highways Officers shall ensure an effective risk-based approach on the basis of the Joint Mitigation Protocol method of subsidence claims management where trees are implicated as being the cause of building movement. The protocol recommends Councils undertake a cost benefit analysis, proportioning costs, and repudiating claims where appropriate and undertaking cyclical pruning, felling and replacement where appropriate.

- The Council will challenge unwarranted claims based upon insufficient or inaccurate evidence.

- The Council will challenge the claim where there are clear inadequacies or discrepancies in the evidence that has been submitted.

- The Council will adopt specific levels of evidence required for evaluating claims where there are trees of particular value.

- Where the evidence clearly indicates another cause of movement/subsidence then the claim should be dismissed, and the Insurer informed of the Council's decision.

The Council will require the following information in support of a claim for tree related subsidence damage: -

- An Arboricultural Report which should include an assessment of the vegetation within the site and adjacent with recommendations for future management together with assessment of any other evidence in connection with the alleged damage.
- The Circumstances and date that the damage was first discovered and any previous history of subsidence at the insured property.
- An Assessment of the alleged damage (description, classification and category of damage in accordance with Table 1 of BRE Digest 251).
- Full cyclical crack and/or level monitoring.
- Description and depth of property's foundation.
- Engineers assessment of mechanism of movement and damage progression.
- Soil Geology and Soil description from Trial Pit/Bore Hole investigation (min. 2 Trial Pits - 1 control).
- Soil Plasticity - Atteburg Liquid Limits (LL); Atteburg Plastic Limits (PL) and Plasticity Index (PI) to BS 1377: Part 2:1990 Clause 4.4
- Oedometer Test in accordance with BS1377-5 (moisture content dessication test).
- Assessment of Heave potential should trees be removed.
- Root analysis/Investigation Report.
- Drainage Investigation Report.
- Estimated Cost of Repair if tree retained.
- Estimated Cost of Repair if tree removed.
- Management Recommendations

Procedure for dealing with subsidence claims

On receipt of a claim the following procedure will be adopted: -

1. An initial investigation will be undertaken by the Council's Insurance Team to assess the merits of the claim and to determine if any further evidence is required.

2. Following a site investigation and assessment of the evidence provided a written report (in accordance with the LTOA Risk Limitation Strategy for Tree Root Claims) will be provided by the Council's Arboricultural Officers to the Council's Insurance Team. A Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) assessment and a history of any past management which will be assessed against the cost of the claim.
3. The report and evidence will be considered by the Council's Loss Adjuster to establish the contributory reasons for the damage which will be reflected in the Council's eventual offer of any settlement.
4. Where tree related subsidence damage has been determined, the removal of the tree will be considered, taking into account the supporting evidence and Capital Asset Value of the tree.

12. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The implementation of this Tree Risk Management Strategy will be the responsibility of the Manager of each individual service working in conjunction with the Environmental Planning Manager/Principal Arboriculture Officer who will report to The Director of Place on progress and compliance.

Overall responsibility for risk management is underpinned by the Council's Risk Management Policy Statement, Strategy and Framework and managed by the Corporate Risk Management Team.

This Strategy shall be reviewed as necessary (for example following new guidance, case law and statute law) and/or every three years.

REFERENCES

Cheshire East Council Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy 2015-2017

Cheshire East Council Highway Tree Risk Management Review (RMP/Gallagher Bassett July 2017)

Cheshire East Council Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections Part 1 – Strategy 2013

Cheshire East Council Strategic Asset Management Plan (Montagu Evans May 2015)

Highway Tree Risk Management Review Cheshire East Council (Risk Management Partners/Gallagher Bassett RMP/GB July 2017).

National Tree Safety Group - *Common sense risk management of trees*
http://ntsgroup.org.uk/guidance-publications/

Prevention of Future Deaths Report arising from the Inquest of Michael Arthur Warren(2014)
https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Warren-2014-0330.pdf

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Practice Note Version 5.2.4 (on line QTRA 2019)

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment User Manual (Version 3) (2010)

Reducing the Risks Protecting People HSE's decision-making process (HSE/HMSO 2001)

Technical Information Note 1 *Tree Risk management for duty holders* (BTC/134/2018). Barrell Tree Consultancy.

Tree Risk – Benefit Management / Government Agency Policy (v1.5).
VALID Tree Risk – Benefit Assessment and Management.
www.validtreerisk.com

UK Roads Liaison Group *Well-managed highway infrastructure* (2016)
http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
The Act places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that in the course of conducting their undertaking employees and members of the public are not put at risk.

Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984
The Council has a legal duty of care to ensure that they act as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This means that they must ensure that they avoid acts or omissions that could cause a foreseeable risk of harm to persons or property.

This is reinforced in criminal law under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 where the Council must also ensure that risks to its employees and contractors are reduced as far as is 'reasonably practicable' .

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007

The Act establishes that if a duty of care exists, senior managers are liable to prosecution if an employee or member of the public dies as a result of a failure to provide a demonstrable system or policy that deals with the risk in a proportionate manner.

The Highways Act 1980
The Highways Act 1980 sets out a general legal duty to maintain the public highway, which includes risks associated by street trees. Under Section 58 the Highway Authority would be required to provide evidence in defence of this duty that it operated a reasonable system for inspection and a reasonable system for repair and maintenance.

The Highways Authority is also responsible for ensuring that trees within falling distance of the highway boundary do not present a risk. Section 154 of the Act empowers the authority to serve notice on adjoining landowners whose trees are presenting an unacceptable risk and to recover costs.

The Well – Maintained Highways: Code of Practice (2005)

This Code of Practice published by the Roads Liaison Group in July 2005 identifies three issues of liability associated with highway trees:

• Damage to buildings arising from subsidence linked to trees and tree roots.
• Damage or injury caused by falling trees or branches.
• Damage or injury caused by tree root damage to highway surfaces.

The Code of Practice recommends that safety inspections undertaken by highways

inspectors should incorporate highway trees, including those outside the highway boundary and within falling distance of the highway. The Code advises a separate programme of tree inspections should be undertaken by specialist arboricultural advisors and recommends a policy to manage tree risk.

The Well- Managed Highways Infrastructure: Code of Practice (2016)

This Code replaces the 2005 Code and is designed to promote the adoption of an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on the establishment of local levels of service through risk-based assessment. The new code replicates the 2005 Code to highway tree management within the scope of a highway asset management scheme. This includes the need for safety inspections to incorporate highway trees including those within falling distance of the highway.

Common Law Duty of Care
A duty of care may exceptionally be established where a local authority has failed to exercise a statutory power.

APPENDIX 2

Legal Cases relevant to this Strategy

Edwards v National Coal Board [1949] All ER 743 (CA)
The case established the concept of "reasonable practicability" in relation to risk reduction. The Court of Appeal decided that reasonably practicable" was more narrowly defined than what was "physically possible" and gave rise to the measurement of risk present in a given situation against the reasonable practicability of mitigating that risk.

Chapman v Barking and Dagenham LBC [1997] 2 EGLR 141
It was held that a local authority was liable for serious injury to a member of the public due to the failure of a limb as the authority could not show that the tree in question had been subject to "systematic expert inspection".

Poll v Viscount Asquith of Morley (Bartholomew) [2006] All ER 158
The case established that tree inspections should be carried out by a suitably competent person.

Atkins v Scott 2008
It was held that in this case an informal system of tree inspection was adequate but that this had a disadvantage in that it would be more difficult to resist claims based on an inadequate system of inspection. The keeping of formal records would therefore assist in confirming the adequacy of a management regime.

Stagecoach South Western Trains Ltd v-Hind & Steel [2014] EWHC 1891 (TCC)

The land-owner's duty extended no further than the carrying out of periodic informal or preliminary observations/inspections of the tree. The principles suggested are that the owner of a tree owes a duty to act as a reasonable and prudent landowner, the duty must not amount to an unreasonable burden, a reasonable and prudent landowner should carry out preliminary/informal inspections or observations on a regular basis and in certain circumstances, the landowner should arrange for fuller inspections by an arboriculturalist where a preliminary inspection revealed a potential problem or there is a lack of knowledge by the landowner.

Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh 2018

This Court of Appeal ruling requires that any property owner responsible for trees on their land should not rely on a 'one size fits all' policy and examine the adequacy of their regime for tree inspection (in particular roadside trees) taking account site specific circumstances, species characteristics and the degree of risk to persons and property in the event of failure.

Damage to property by action of tree roots

Solloway v Hampshire CC CA [1981] 79 LGR 449).

Judgement was made that the encroachment of the tree roots constituted a nuisance and HCC were responsible for damage caused. However, geological maps showed that whilst the house was on plateau gravel sections of it rested on small pockets of clay which were not shown on geological maps.

The Court of Appeal ruled that the existence of small clay pockets beneath the house was not reasonably foreseeable and hence there was no breach of duty on the part of HCC. The appeal was allowed.

Peterson v Humberside County Council [1995]

A local authority was liable for nuisance for damage (cracks to house) caused by tree roots once it could be shown that it knew of the soil condition, by virtue of the council's own warnings to residents of the danger in the area meant that the damage was foreseeable.
.
The test of foreseeability was whether the risk was one which a reasonable person in the Defendant's position would have regarded as a real risk as distinct from a risk which he would have been justified in disregarding and taking no steps to eliminate

Delaware Mansions Ltd and others v Westminster City Council [2001] 44 EG 150
Where there is a continuing nuisance, which a defendant knows about or ought to know about, the claimant is entitled to the reasonable costs of eliminating the nuisance if he has given notice of the problem to the defendant and a reasonable opportunity to deal with it.

GA Berent v Family Mosaic Housing Islington BC [2011] EWHC 1353 (TCC)
The court held that a local authority, or other relevant party, would only be liable for property subsidence damage caused by their tree(s) if they were aware (or ought to have been aware) that there was a "real risk" that their tree(s) would cause damage to the specific property in question.
This case potentially makes it more difficult for claimants to establish that any damage was foreseeable, and therefore for claimants to establish their claim in either nuisance or negligence

Robins v London Borough of Bexley [2012] EWHC 2257 (TCC)
The court held that the risk of damage to the property was clearly foreseeable from 1998 onwards and gave rise to questions about what the council should have done and whether that would have prevented the damage that occurred. On the facts, it was clear that the council should have undertaken a regular programme of pruning and therefore it was liable for the damage caused to the property by the subsidence that occurred in both 2003 and 2006.
The court applied the "well settled principles relating to foreseeability and causation", an approach that was entirely consistent with the principles in Berent.

APPENDIX 3

DEFINITION OF TERMS

As Low as Reasonably Practicable (ALARP)
Where duty holders are required to exercise judgement on the tolerability of risk and consider the costs of the risk reduction where it is much greater than the value of the risk reduction.

Capital Asset Valuation of Trees (CAVAT)
CAVAT is a method for managing trees as public assets rather than liabilities. It is a strategic tool and aid for decision-making in relation to assessing trees stock as a whole, and where the value of a single tree needs to be expressed in monetary terms.

Drive by Check
A visual check from a moving vehicle driven at low speed by one driver and one surveyor

Defect
A structural, health or environmental condition that could predispose a tree to failure (NTSG).

Harm
An adverse impact on a person or object.

Hazard
A hazard is defined as anything with the potential to cause harm to people or property. A tree- failure hazard is present when a tree has potential to cause harm to people or property.

Highway Inspector
An engineering professional primarily trained in highway matters, but may also be trained to identify obvious tree hazard conditions.

Informal Observations
Reports from members of the public or employees that alert duty holders to tree problems which may support decisions on risk management

Risk
Risk is defined as "the likelihood of that particular hazard causing harm" and the measure of its effect and severity of the consequences. in terms of assessing a risk will depend on the likelihood of failure, occupation of the target and the magnitude of the consequence (QTRA 2010).

Risk Assessment
The process of risk identification, analysis, and evaluation within an organization.

Risk Management
Coordinated activities or operations that direct and control risk within an organization.
Risk (Tolerable)

A risk is tolerable if it is low as reasonably practicable (ALARP)

Risk (Not acceptable)
A risk that needs to be reduced to an acceptable level

Risk (Not Tolerable)
A risk that needs to be reduced to an acceptable level but has a lower priority than not acceptable

Risk (Tolerable)
A risk that will not be reduced but may require an increased frequency of assessment

Significant Risk
An estimated level of risk that requires proactive management usually within an organization.

Target
A person or an object that could be harmed by trees.

Tree Inspection
An informal or detailed tree investigation that includes a visual inspection of the whole of the tree from various vantage points and may include climbing and/or internal structural assessment using tools.

Walk over check
 A visual examination carried out on foot to identify obvious and serious above ground defects and will involve observing the tree in its entirety from as many vantage points as possible from a distance and close by

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Cheshire East Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N **Date First Published: N/A**

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13th April 2021

Report Title: Cheshire Archives: A Story Shared

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

Senior Officer: Executive Director Place

1. Report Summary

1.1. This report provides an update to the 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project and provides the context for submission of a second stage application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

1.2. The service identifies, collects, and cares for archives on behalf of Cheshire's communities.

1.3. This project would deliver two new History Centres; one in Chester and one in Crewe. These will provide fit for purpose to enable the storage and interpretation collections

1.4. This project supports the Councils Corporate Plan in particular, the strand '*A Thriving and Sustainable Place'*. The project also supports the Crewe Cultural Strategy, the Council's Cultural Framework and the regeneration programme for Crewe Town Centre.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

2.1   Endorse the approach regarding the next steps in the development and delivery of this project.

2.2   Note that the Executive Director Place will take all necessary actions to develop the project and will submit a bid for Grant Funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable the delivery of the second stage of the

proposed 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project (in line with the constitution).

2.2 Note that any future acceptance of grants will be undertaken in accordance with the constitution and finance procedure rules.

2.3 Delegate authority to Executive Director- Place in consultation with Director of Governance and Compliance to agree terms in relation to the grant funding with Cheshire West and Chester Council who are acting as the accountable body for this project.

2.4 Note that a report to update on delivery of the project will be considered at a future meeting of the relevant committee.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. The recommendations in this report are to enable the development and delivery of the Archives Project. This includes development of a History Centre in Crewe to support the delivery and development of the Archives Service and the regeneration of Crewe.

3.2. The overall project is due for a mid-year review by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It will be important to demonstrate at this point the council's commitment for the second stage bid for the project to be submitted.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. The project is seen to be a key component of the future development of the archives service and for the Crewe town centre regeneration programme and as such no other options have been considered.

5. Background

5.1. The Archives and Local Studies Service is a shared service with Cheshire West and Chester, currently based at Duke Street in Chester. The current facility is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be replaced to maintain accreditation. The requirement to relocate the Archives and Local Studies Service has been recognised by both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. A new future service delivery model has been agreed. This model sees two new history centres being established – one in Chester and the other in Crewe.

5.2. This will be in addition to an improved service offer in libraries, extended online services and a more extensive activity and event programme.

5.3. The decision route to date is as follows:

5.2.1 In September 2016 the Joint Shared Services Committee recommended a two centre solution. This was the result of extensive discussions between members and officers in both authorities, taking account of previous consultations and options anaylsis work.

As a result it was agreed that Chester and Crewe should be the focus for the service.

5.2.2 In September 2016 The Cabinet at both Councils endorsed the proposal to develop two new history centres.

5.2.3 On 12th September 2017, Cabinet approved the following recommendations:

- Approve the proposed vision for a new History Centre in Crewe
- Approve the proposed application to Heritage Lottery Fund for Cheshire Archives and Local Studies.
- Approve the proposed terms of reference for governance of the project.
- Agree that the Old Library site in Crewe is selected for news History Centre.
- Note the proposed timescale for the project.
- Note the capital costs required to delivery this project including costs of demolition.

5.4. The current development phase of the project runs until Autumn 2021, at which point a delivery phase grant application of £4.5 million needs to be submitted to the NLHF in order to comply with NLHF directions. The delivery phase will see the construction of the centres and delivery of the activity programme.

5.5. The NLHF gave permission to start the project in March 2020. The project is a joint Project with Cheshire West and Chester Council, managed through an approved governance arrangement for the shared project. The current development phase of the project runs for 18 months and the current funding will deliver:

- piloting of activities to engage new audiences with archives across the county
- development of detailed plans (to Royal Institute of British Architects RIBA Stage 3) for the proposed new centres in Chester and Crewe
- development of a detailed business plan
- writing of a delivery phase funding application

5.6. Since June, work programmes have focussed on:

5.6.1. The recruitment of consultants to support the development of the activity plan for the delivery phase. The activity plan is central to the business case both to the two Councils and to the Heritage Fund.

5.6.2. The key themes within it are:

- More diverse range of people engaging in different ways with archives
- Transforming access to collections
- Developing learning opportunities
- Health and wellbeing
- Developing and exchanging skills

5.6.3. Piloting new digital activities and tools for engaging more people, and a more diverse range of people, with archives. The Archives team have, by example, developed:
- Online exhibitions for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) History Month and Black History Month
- Live, web-based, training for community history groups
- An online training programme for library staff in both Councils to help them develop their knowledge about the local history collections in their libraries and to support people who visit libraries to research family and local history
- A range of new resources such as quizzes and family history activities which are aimed at supporting interaction between different generations within families during the Covid-19 pandemic

5.6.4. Design team meetings to begin more detailed work on the proposed centres in Crewe and Chester. To date this work has focussed on the proposed history centre in Crewe which has reached RIBA 2 stage to achive a high quality concept design for what will be a prominent town centre buidling contribution to town centre regeneration. The design work required to submit an application to NLHF is currently expected to be completed in summer 2021.

5.6.5. Working with the project's appointed Interpretation Planning consultants on the Interpretation Plan which will:

- Provide a detailed plan for how the stories from the archives and local studies collections will be told in both history centres
- Detail how these stories will be told digitally and in local libraries to reach an audience across the county and further afield
- Propose a methodology for engaging residents to capture the 'community memory' to enhance the stories being told as a result of this project

5.6.6. Reviewing the impact of Covid-19 on the project programme. In discussion with the NLHF, it has been agreed that the completion deadline for the delivery phase has been extended up to March 2022 with a grant application being considered for Autumn 2021. Progress reviews are being held every 3 months; these will help to mitigate any risks to the delivery phase application.

5.7. Senior Members from both Councils continue to receive briefings on progress every two months as part of the project governance for a joint Cheshire East/Cheshire West and Chester project. In addition regular briefings are provided to Shared Services Joint Committee and to local ward members.

5.8. Should the funding application be successful, the delivery phase would begin in Spring 2022. The delivery phase of the project is programmed to last 3 years.

5.9. The Council's Capital Programme currently has match funding of £6.44million on the addendum to support this application. This is being matched by the same amount from Cheshire West and Chester Council. Prior to submission of the funding application, an updated, detailed business case will be submitted to seek approval for the Council's funding (indicated on the Capital addendum) to be included in the Capital Programme to cover the delivery phase. The delivery and cost plan for the project will be developed by the Project Board based on the approved Capital budget.

5.10. The designs for both History centres will be prepared up to RIBA stage 3 to enable submission to NLHF. Public consultation will be required on the final proposals for the centres as part of the submission to NLHF and is currently included in the project activity plan and in RIBA stage 3. Arrangements for consultation will be developed by the Project Board in accordance with Council guidelines and project Governance arrangements.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. Advice on compliance with grant terms and conditions, the Council's financial and contract procedure rules and on contracts will be sought for the development stage of the project including where necessary appointment of consultants to assist with development of detailed plans to RIBA Stage 3. Legal advice will also be sought on future funding bids to ensure appropriate governance approval

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. Permission to accept and spend the development phase grant from the Heritage Fund has been secured in both Councils. Match funding of £470,803 for the development stage is in place, made up of an equal contribution of from each Council.

6.2.2. Funding to support the current development stage is within both Councils' capital programmes. Funding for the delivery stage is referenced in both capital programmes with £6.44 million currently on the Council's capital programme addendum. A funding strategy will be developed and a

detailed business case will be submitted to the Capital Programme Board, prior to submission of the funding application. The final scheme and future revenue implications would also require approval if the delivery phase funding application was successful. This will be relfected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 22/23.

6.2.3.   If this funding bid was not approved there would remain a need to replace the current archives facility. In this case there would be a need to revisit the programme, strategy and funding and there would be no guarantee that the scheme would progress. Archives accreditation is dependent upon a replacement facility being provided. At this point the current scheme provides the optimum route to deliver the requirement and was previously approved on that basis.

6.3.   **Policy Implications**

6.3.1. There are no direct Policy implications

6.4.   **Equality Implications**

6.4.1. A central theme of the project is to diversify the audience for archives and ensure a new service is built around the needs of its target audiences. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in order to ensure that the project does not inadvertently have a negative impact on particular groups or communities.

6.5.   **Human Resources Implications**

6.5.1. There are no direct Human Resources implications at this stage

6.6.   **Risk Management Implications**

6.6.1. The project manager maintains a detailed risk register and risks and issues are reported to the Project Board and Portfolio Holders on a regular basis. Risks are managed by the Project Board in consultation with officers in both Councils.

6.7.   **Rural Communities Implications**

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

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

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people at this stage. Young people are a target audience for the project and will be consulted about potential activities as the project develops.

6.9.   **Public Health Implications**

6.9.1. Pilot activities are being developed with the aim of supporting the health and wellbeing of residents within both boroughs.

6.10. **Climate Change Implications**

6.10.1. The proposed new centres will be designed to a high sustainable building standard, to be as energy efficient as possible, in order to assist the Council in meeting its carbon neutral target.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, so all wards are affected in both Council areas.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Public consultation will take place to gather views on the final designs of the centres.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Background documents are available on request.

10. Contact Information

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

Name: Brendan Flanagan

Job Title: Head of Rural and Cultural Economy

Email: Brendan.flanagan@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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Cheshire East
Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N
Date First Published: N/A

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2021

Report Title: Cheshire East Council Corporate Peer Challenge Report – One Year On

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

Senior Officer: Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

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

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

- Spoke to over 180 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.

- Gathered information and views from more than 40 discussions, focus groups and observing regular meetings as well as additional research and reading.

- Visited key sites of the borough to look at practice in action and engaged with staff at other locations.

- Collectively spent c. 270 hours on-site to determine their findings, the equivalent of one person spending eight weeks in Cheshire East.

1.3   A final report of their findings was received and reported to Cabinet in June 2020.

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

2. Key recommendations:

2.1   Continue with the Council's commitment to staff culture and wider workplace wellbeing.

2.2   Develop and launch a new Corporate Plan.

2.3   Provide clarity regarding the process, decisions and timelines for the introduction of the Committee System.

2.4   Finalise technical and political decisions that will underpin the new Committee System.

2.5   Consider the strategic and operational context in which the Committee System will be operating.

2.6   Refine the council's approach to strategic finance and create dialogue regarding collective appetite to risk.

2.7   Communicate priorities for working in a partnership environment and learn the lessons of historic practice and approaches.

2.8   Refine the work programme and focus of Scrutiny Committees to support internal challenge and improvement.

2.9   Develop new approaches to engage councillors in neighbourhood working.

2.10   Review the findings of the 2019 Resident Survey to inform future relations with residents.

3. Recommendation

3.1   That Cabinet note the progress to date, and the delivery of key actions to respond to the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1   The recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Challenge Team reflect what the Council fed back at the time on the LGA's 'healthcheck' on our overall strategic direction and planning. They have been used to reflect on the future direction of the Council and to inform the refresh of the council's Corporate Plan for 2021-2025.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1 None. The Council welcomed the opportunity to host a Corporate Peer Challenge visit and would want to demonstrate positive action to respond to the recommendations.

6. Background

6.1 Since 2012 the Local Government Association (LGA) has provided, as part of its support to the sector, the facilitation of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) reviews whereby senior members and officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visit the Council with the objective to provide constructive feedback to inform improvement plans and support corporate learning.

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

- **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** Does the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?

- **Financial planning and viability:** Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?

- **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

- **Political and managerial leadership:** Does the Council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?

- **Governance and decision-making:** Is political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change to be implemented?

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

6.4   This has been subsequently followed by a formal report (Appendix A), summarising the peer team's feedback with their recommendations for improvement. There was a delay between the date of the visit and the receipt of the report because of the impact of COVID-19.

6.5   During the last 12 months, the Council has made considerable progress on all of the key recommendations, as follows;

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

The following extract from the report provides a helpful summary:

The Corporate Peer Challenge Team spent four days on site in Cheshire East. During this time the Team spoke to a broad range of stakeholders, including staff, councillors, and partner organisations. The team received a broad range of feedback and were struck by the positivity of the staff working for the organisation, and the remarkable progress that has been made in improving workforce culture in a relatively short space of time. The importance of this work was illustrated by clear leadership and commitment, including the determination of councillors to drive and prioritise improvement. These messages were received from multiple levels within the organisation and this improvement has been embedded across multiple teams and locations. These improvements in culture have also supported the council to advance their internal assurance, with officers stating their comfort to 'call out' and 'professionally challenge' practice when appropriate. Alongside this cultural shift, the Team recognised the practical actions that have been taken, including improved management oversight and the development of supporting assurance frameworks and action plans.

- All of the recommendations set out in the LGA culture review have now been addressed and work continues to embed the vision for workplace culture, values, behaviours and employee deal across the Council.

- The Council has done a considerable amount of work to support wellbeing and a large proportion of the workforce working remotely. A Pulse survey of staff carried out in July 2020 was positive for example 83% of staff agreed communications has been effective and 75% agreed the Council has provided effective wellbeing support.http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s79451/Covid%20Report%20-%20app%202.pdf A second Pulse survey is underway which will give further insight.

- The wellbeing of staff has been an essential part of the Council's Covid-19 response. This has included weekly Talk Listen and Chat (TLC) meetings and weekly Manager Support calls. These forums have fed into the workplace workstream to inform the planning towards new ways of working and has also resulted in the

development of a workplace wellbeing conversation toolkit for staff, additional e-learning and virtual training and the introduction of 'Golden Practices' 1 and 2, which focus on staff wellbeing.

- The Brighter Future Champions continue to support the other work streams within the Brighter Future Transformation Programme. Virtual meetings of the Champions have continued to be held on a monthly basis throughout the Covid pandemic with the Chief Executive, providing a valuable source of staff engagement.

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

- The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan for 2021-2025 has been developed following consultation and engagement between 1 October 2020 and 27 November 2020. The feedback was positive, with the clear support for the Council's proposed vision and the main priorities.

- In February 2021, both Cabinet and full Council approved the Corporate Plan for 2021-2025. By developing the Corporate Plan alongside the MTFS, we have ensured that the plan is resources. The full engagement reports on both documents were published. The new Corporate Plan promotes a vision of an Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East.

- The Corporate Plan will now provide the foundation and basis for all business planning and will inform the development of a new performance framework to measure the success of the plan and support the delivery of the new committee structure of governance.

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

- On 19th November, a special meeting of Council took place, specifically convened to consider recommendations from the Council's Constitution Committee, relating to a proposed change of governance arrangements, from the existing Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making, to a Committee System of decision-making.

- Council agreed the Constitution Committee's recommendations, and also agreed that the new

arrangements will be implemented with effect from the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2021.

- Preparations are happening at pace to secure implementation which will be considered by Council on 19 April. Members and officers will undertake training and further work will be undertaken to ensure that the Council's Constitution is suitably amended in line with the wishes of Council.

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

- 2020/21 has seen unprecedent financial challenges for all councils, including Cheshire East. The financial implications of COVID-19 started to emerge in March 2020 and have been regularly tracked and monitored since then. Regular reports have been brought to Cabinet, Corporate OSC and the Audit and Governance Committee.

- Within year budget forecasting and reporting demonstrates that the council has lived within its budget for the first time in many years.

- A new four-year balanced Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been developed and approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2021. This aligns to the new Corporate Plan and reflects investment in services to support those most in need, vital infrastructure and essential services. It has a focus on modern and efficient working practices.

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

- The local response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a partnership response which has strengthened working across Cheshire East and the wider sub-region. This has been vital to the delivery of the borough-wide response to protect our residents.

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- There continues to be regular communication and engagement with partners on their priorities and opportunities for support and joint working.

- The new Corporate Plan clearly articulates the ambition and the vital importance of for partnership working to deliver priorities as they are laid out.

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

- Overview and Scrutiny Committees have continued to set and drive their own agendas. A full report was presented to Council on 21 October 2020.

- Scrutiny arrangements in the new Committee System will focus on a single scrutiny committee covering statutory scrutiny functions.

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

- This has been identified as a priority in the new Corporate Plan. Further work will be taken forward through the new committee system.

- Council on 17 February 2021 agreed to devolve Ward Member Budgets for highways-related activities in 2021/22.

6.5.8 **Recommendation 10: Review the findings of the 2019 Residents Survey to inform future relations with residents.**

- The Residents Survey concluded in November 2019 with a 46% response rate, (an improvement on the 2017 survey). The results of the survey have been shared with relevant service leads, including planning, customer services, highways and countryside rangers.

- The key findings have all been considered and have been included as areas for action in the refreshed **Corporate Plan 2021-25.**

- In addition to this, the Cabinet has recently approved a **Customer Experience Strategy.** The strategy shows a clear link to the Residents survey and how we can improve the customer journey and the overall experience and expectations of the council.

- We will continue to measure resident satisfaction and experience across our services to drive change and improvement.

6.6 The ten key recommendations from the CPC reflected back the issues of the day. Since then, the unprecedented circumstances of and response to Covid-19 has highlighted a need for further improvement which have informed the development of the Council's newly published Corporate Plan for 2021-2025.

6.7 Corporate Peer Challenges would ordinarily be followed up after 18-24 months. Again, Covid-19 has impacted on that expectation. Discussions are ongoing with our LGA Principal Adviser about appropriate arrangements in the circumstances.

7. Implications of the Recommendation

7.1. Legal Implications

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

7.1.2 As work continues and actions are identified, any direct legal implications which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required.

8.2 Finance Implications

8.2.1 The cost of the Corporate Peer Challenge was included within the authority's annual subscription to the LGA. Other costs are internal and related to officer time. The cost of implementing the actions resulting from the recommendations continue to be met from current budgets (unless separately identified and agreed as part of the budget setting and approval process).

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

8.3 Policy Implications

8.3.1 The findings from the Corporate Peer Challenge supports. continue to be used to drive improvement and are reflected in the new Corporate Plan.

8.4 Equality Implications

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

8.5 Human Resources Implications

8.5.1 Implementing the required actions has required the support and contribution of several officers and members, including the Brighter Future Champions, equality champions and named officers linked to ongoing programmes of work such as the implementation of the committee system and the culture programme. This has been achieved within existing resource with management arrangements in place to consider skills and capacity.

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

8.6. Risk Management Implications

8.6.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge report did not identify significant risks.

8.7 Rural Communities Implications

8.7.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for our rural communities, which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 includes priorities and commitments which will impact rural communities. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

8.8 **Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

    8.8.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for children and young people/cared for children, which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 includes priorities and commitments which will impact children and young people/cared for children. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

8.9 **Public Health Implications**

    8.9.1 Implementing any required actions will have indirect implications for public health which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. For example, the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 includes priorities and commitments which will impact the wider public health of the borough. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

8.10 **Climate Change Implications**

    8.10.1 Implementing any required actions will indirectly support the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability. For example, the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 includes priorities and commitments which will directly and specifically support environmental priorities and initiatives.

9.0 **Ward Members Affected**

9.1 Developing new approaches to engaging local members has been identified as a priority in the new Corporate Plan. Further work will be taken forward through the new committee system.

10.0 **Consultation & Engagement**

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

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

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

11.0   Access to Information

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

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

12.0   Contact Information

12.1   Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:
Name: Jane Burns
Job Title: Executive Director of Corporate Services

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Corporate Peer Challenge

Cheshire East Council

13-16 January 2020

Feedback Report

1. Executive Summary:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Key Recommendations:

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

1. **Continue with the council's commitment to staff culture and wider workplace wellbeing:** This includes making sure that the progress made to date extends to all teams and considering how shared practice within the organisation could support any outstanding pockets. There is also a need for the council to mitigate the risk of regression following the departure of the Acting Chief Executive who has been central to this work. Finally, the council implement plans for what the next wave of the "Brighter Futures" programme considering how this capacity and momentum could be used to address other issues.

2. **Develop and launch a new Council Plan:** The current corporate plan expires in 2020. This presents an opportunity to progress the work underway to set out the priorities of the new administration, including their commitment to addressing climate change, in a clear and consistent manner to residents, staff and partners. This corporate plan should be set within the context of the needs of the borough, the views of residents, the resources available, and the political priorities for the coming years.

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3. **Provide clarity regarding the process, decisions and timelines for the introduction of the Committee System:** The Peer Team recognise that the Joint Administration is committed to replacing the Cabinet and Leader model with the Committee System. The committee system has set out a clear timeline for any transition, however, ongoing work is required to provide clarity to staff regarding the date of implementation as well as training opportunities and requirements.

4. **Finalise technical and political decisions that will underpin the new Committee System:** There remain several key decisions that need to be made regarding the transition towards the Committee System. This includes technical decisions regarding the number and scope of committees, the role of Committee Chairs, and the size of each Committee. However, there also remain several important political decisions that need to be finalised regarding the structure and operation of the new system. Alongside these political decisions associated with the new approach to governance, the council needs to consider the levels of decisions and delegation which it is comfortable to be made by officers across the organisation, reflecting the recent staff survey finding to empower staff and distribute decision making across the organisation. This should include reflecting on current arrangements in-light of proposed reforms.

5. **Consider the strategic and operational context in which the Committee System will be operating:** It is important that the implementation of the Committee System is not viewed as a technical process in isolation alone. Therefore, the council will need to assure themselves of the following alongside the new model of Governance:

   – The timeliness of decision making.
   – Collective oversight for strategic issues that cut across multiple Committees.
   – The impact of the new model on partnership working.
   – The relationship of decision making with neighbourhood forums.
   – The training and development required for councillors and officers.
   – The communication and engagement required with staff throughout this process.

6. **Refine the council's approach to strategic finance and create dialogue regarding collective appetite to risk:** The council has taken a very prudent approach in addressing financial challenges to date. However, further improvements could be made including:

   – The relationship between transformation programmes and budgetary pressures.
   – The monitoring and tracking of benefits and savings across the organisation.
   – Review the council's appetite towards risk in core budget assumptions, and the relationship with reserves.
   – Simplifying the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure that it is more focused and succinct.
   – Review the medium-term financial strategy to ensure resources reflect the content of a newly developed corporate plan for a four-year period.

7. **Communicate priorities for working in a partnership environment and learn the lessons of historic practice and approaches:** The council works in a complex partnership context and should consider the areas of work that it wants to prioritise. This

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

8. **Refine the work programme and focus of Scrutiny Committees to support internal challenge and improvement:** The council may benefit from considering the relationship between breadth and depth within Scrutiny Committees, and the topics and issues that would most benefit from Scrutiny input or working groups. The council should also be proactive in identifying their approach to enabling effective challenge within any Committee System in the future.

9. **Develop new approaches to engage councillors in neighbourhood working:** The council should consider new ways of working that give more focus to the role of councillors as community leaders. This could potentially include the development of neighbourhood budgets, providing the opportunity for councillors to support local schemes, including the development of a new conversation with residents regarding expectations as the council moves forward.

10. **Review the findings of the 2019 Resident Survey to inform future relations with residents:** The council is currently processing the results from their most recent resident survey since 2017. This information should be used to identify areas of improvement in customer relations and support the council's next wave of cultural change.

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge Approach:

3.1 The Peer Team:

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

- **Tracey Lee** – Chief Executive of Plymouth City Council;

- **Cllr Hannah Dalton** – Epsom and Ewell Borough Council;

- **Sarah Messenger** – Workforce Consultant Local Government Association;

- **Cllr Chris Read** – Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council;

- **Neil Thornton** – Executive Director Corporate Services, Rochdale Borough Council;

- **Tim Watkinson** – Principal Advisor Local Government Association;

- **Matthew Dodd –** LGA Challenge Manager.

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3.2   Scope and focus

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

1. **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** Does the council understand its local context and place, and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?

2. **Leadership of Place:** Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?

3. **Organisational leadership and governance:** Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?

4. **Financial planning and viability:** Do the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?

5. **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

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

1. **Workforce and Culture:** What progress has been made following the 2017 Workforce Review into issues of bullying, harassment and working environment?

2. **Internal Assurance and Audit:** How effective are the systems and processes that the council has put in place following investigations into areas of historic practice?

3.3   The Peer Challenge Process:

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

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

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

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

- Spoke to **more than 180 people** including a range of council staff, elected Members, external partners and wider stakeholders.

- Gathered information and views from **more than 40 meetings, focus groups and discussions**. This including **attending and observing business meetings** of the Council, including Cabinet on Tuesday 7 January.

- **Visited key sites of the borough** including Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Jubilee House, and Nantwich Library to look at the practice of the council in action. Members of the team also visited other council locations and offices, including Westfields and Delamere House to engage with **staff at other locations.**

- Collectively spent **c. 270 hours on-site to determine our findings,** the equivalent of one person spending **eight weeks in Cheshire East.**

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

4.   Feedback:

4.1   Understanding of the local place and priority setting:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2   Leadership of Place:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3 Organisational leadership and governance:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 Financial planning and viability:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.5 Capacity to Deliver:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.6 Workforce Wellbeing and Culture:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.7 Internal Audit and Assurance:

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

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

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

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

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

5   Next steps

5.1   Immediate Next Steps:

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

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

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

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

5.2 Follow up visit:

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

5.3 Next Corporate Peer Challenge:

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

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

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Cheshire East
Council

Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision: N
Date First Published: N/A

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2021

Report Title: Refreshed Equality Objectives and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jill Rhodes, Public Health and Corporate

Senior Officer: Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

1.1 The Council recognises that promoting equality and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. We want Cheshire East to be an area of equitable opportunity, where everyone has a fair chance and people from all backgrounds take part in community life.

1.2 Over the lifetime of the previous equality objectives and its supporting strategy we have come a long way in embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). However, we recognise that there is more to do. We are committed to tackling inequalities, celebrating diversity and promoting equality – as an employer, in the services we provide, in partnerships, and in the decisions we make.

1.3 In accordance with Regulation 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 ("the Regulations"), the Council must prepare and publish at least one equality objective once every four years.

1.4 In 2017, the Council published a set of four equality objectives and a supporting Equality and Diversity Strategy. These have informed the work that has taken place over the last four years and it is now time for these to be refreshed.

1.5 An officer EDI Board is responsible for the delivery of the Council's equality objectives and its supporting strategy and has guided and supported this refresh exercise.

1.6 Initially, four equality objectives were proposed, and were presented for formal public and staff consultation which took place between the 6 June 2020 and August 31 2020.

1.7 Following the feedback on the consultation, a task and finish group was convened to review the findings of the consultation and consider how best to reflect them. As a direct result of the feedback, a fifth objective is now proposed for approval below. Appendix 1 gives the detail.

1.8 There have been two recent EDI developments. The first is a motion proposed by Cllr Stewart Gardiner and agreed by Council on 17 February 2021 to reaffirm support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as a key pillar of the Council's equality and diversity policies. The second is a request by the Member Equality and Diversity Champion, Cllr Marilyn Houston, that the APPG definition of Islamophobia is adopted by the Council. This is in the context of the Council's commitment to celebrate all faiths and a willingness to respond as appropriate.

1.9 A refreshed Equality and Diversity Strategy is included as Appendix 2, for approval.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is asked to:

2.1.1 Approve the following five equality objectives at Appendix 1:

- **Include -** Listen and involve all voices.

- **Inspire -** Celebrate and promote the diversity in our borough and surrounding areas and make the most of the positive opportunities this brings

- **Integrate -** Deliver and promote accessible and equitable services for all.

- **Inform -** Be a council which empowers and cares about people.

- **Impact -** Support and deliver meaningful change.

2.1.2 Adopt the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia.

OFFICIAL

2.1.3 Reaffirm support for the Innternational Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism.

2.1.4 Agree the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2021-2025 for Cheshire East (Appendix 2).

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Public bodies subject to the General Equality Duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

3.2 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to produce and review every 4 years, a set of equality objectives.

3.3 Each of the five equality objectives make a direct contribution to supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and its Vison for an Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East.

3.4 Council on 17 February 2021 reaffirmed support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as a key pillar of the Council's equality and diversity policies. This was originally adopted in 2018. It would be sensible to formally include it within the updated Equality Strategy, hence inclusion here.

3.5 Cllr Marilyn Houston EDI Member Champion has asked that the Council adopts the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia by Cheshire East Council.

"Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness."

If we are to achieve an open and fair society, we must tackle the issue of Islamophobia in our midst, and in wider society with serious commitment and action.

The adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia by all local councils would contribute to this.

The APPG opened its enquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia in   April 2018.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf

From hate crimes motivated by anti-Muslim feeling, buttressed by stereotypes and racist caricatures prevalent in social and media discourse, to policies which perpetuate discriminatory outcomes for Muslims, a definition of Islamophobia is vital if we are to take seriously an "explain or change" attitude in response to inequalities faced by our British Muslim Citizens. The APPG was clear that the inquiry would be a widely consultative exercise to ascertain a working definition of Islamophobia which could be broadly accepted by British Muslim communities and operate across governmental, public, community and private sector organisations, with the aim of ensuring that any impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life by British Muslims could be adequately addressed and dealt with by the relevant bodies appropriately. As was heard throughout the inquiry, how we define and understand an issue or problem informs how we then respond to it. The 'harm principle' guided the deliberations on the appropriate limits to free speech in arriving at the working definition of Islamophobia. The definition proposed has been developed through conscientious deliberation that has sought to negotiate the tensions arising between freedom of speech and freedom of religion in full recognition that in a democratic society these negotiations are not just possible, as evidenced by the adoption of definitions relating to other forms of group-based hostility such as anti-Semitism, but necessary at a time when Muslim communities in the UK are experiencing heightened levels of Islamophobia. The AAPG recommends the adoption of the following definition following widespread consultation with academics, lawyers, local and nationally elected officials, Muslim organisations, activists, campaigners, and local Muslim communities:

Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

Again, it would be sensible to formally include within the updated Equality and Diversity Strategy, hence inclusion here.

3.6   The updated Equality and Diversity Strategy 2021-25 is attached at Appendix 2. It reviews progress against the previous strategy, updates the demographic profile for our borough and identifies priority actions for the next 4 years. The actions will be supported by clear timelines and measures of success so that progress can be assessed.

4. Background

4.1   The Equality Act 2010 and the General Equality Duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, when making decisions and setting policy.

4.2   Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission suggests that equality objectives should be viewed as part of an organisation's business planning processes, to ensure they are aligned to business priorities, and are an integral part of business performance.

4.3   A draft set of Equality Objectives for the Council were developed and agreed by the officer EDI Board and put forward for public consultation during the summer of 2020. Due to impact of COVID-19 and the recognised challenges for robust consultation, it was agreed that the consultation would be extended to cover a 12-week period.

4.4   The consultation was promoted in many including;

- Feature articles in the Council's internal "Team Voice".
- Council website and internal staff Centranet.
- A Twitter, Instagram and social media "campaign".
- Direct email contact with various organisations to raise awareness of the consultation and for woder promotion with:
    - Town and Parish clerks
    - Leisure Centres
    - Communities and Partnerships newsletter and general email distribution list (over 300 individuals from strategic partnerships and the VCF sector)
    - South Cheshire Multi Cultural Forum
    - Services and teams within Cheshire East

4.5   There were 351 responses received to the online consultation survey. Based on the feedback received from both the survey and a task and finish group, five equality objectives for approval are proposed:

- **Include -** Listen and involve all voices.

- **Inspire -** Celebrate and promote the diversity in our borough and surrounding areas and make the most of the positive opportunities this brings.

- **Integrate -** Deliver and promote accessible and equitable services for all.

- **Inform -** Be a council which empowers and cares about people.

- **Impact -** Support and deliver meaningful change.

4.6 Appendix 1 includes a more detailed description of the objectives and what they mean in practice.

4.7 The EDI Board will be responsible for ensuring that the strategy is implemented, monitored, reviewed and updated, and will provide an annual report on progress.

5. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

5.1 Councillor Marilyn Houston is the Member Equality and Diversity Champion.

5.2 All wards and all members are affected by the refreshed equality objectives and the supporting EDI strategy.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1 Policy Implications

The implementation of the five equality objectives and the supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will provide a framework to ensure that the Council embeds the equality agenda and its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty throughout all of its policies and supporting procedures. There are close links to the "Tartan Rug" index of multiple deprivation.

6.2 Legal Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the Council is required to publish equality related information and its equality objectives.

6.3 The PSED requires the Council to evidence due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This involves:

  a) Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.

b) Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

c) Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This involves:

a) Tackling prejudice.

b) Promoting understanding.

6.4 Finance Implications

A revenue budget of £20,000 per annum has been allocated to support the delivery of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity across Cheshire East. All spend is reported to and monitored by the EDI Board.

6.5 Human Resources Implications

6.5.1 Promoting and celebrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is the responsibilty of all officers and members.

6.5.2 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the annual work programme will be delivered within existing resources. The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer will be responsible for co-ordinating key activity with the support of the Equality Champions network, directorate EDI groups and staff forums.

6.5.3 There will a requirement for staff and members to undergo training to support the delivery plan. This will include training on the legislative requirements, consultation and equality impact assessment.

6.6 Risk Management Implications

6.6.1 Non compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty and an inability to demonstrate 'due regard' to all nine protected characteristics yields a high risk to the Council re:

- Judicial review leading to key council decisions/policies/budget settings to be overturned.

- Significant financial penalties and legal costs.

- Reputational risk.

- Ineffectively targeted services (not knowing the protected characteristic needs of employees, customers and communities of Cheshire East). As a result, best value and cost-effectiveness is not achieved.The potential for the Council to be seen to endorse a discriminatory culture.

- A less diverse workforce could lead to a less creative workforce.

6.7 Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1 The Council is strongly committed to ensuring that our rural communities are not disadvantaged by any of our policies or changes in service delivery. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy builds on the work to date to "Rural Proof" our decision making and embed "Rural Proofing" within our equality impact assessments.

6.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1 The refreshed equality objectives and overarching strategy will drive further improvements in how we engage and consult with our children and young people, ensuring that they are not disadvantaged on the basis of any protected characteristic they may have.

6.9 Public Health Implications

6.9.1 Reducing inequalities is at the heart of what the refreshed equality objectives and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy aims to achieve. As reported in the Marmot review (2010), health inequalities are as a result of social and economic inequalities across the population. By ensuring that the Council proactively delivers on its Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council continues to support and address health inequalities in Cheshire East.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.10.1 The refreshed equality objectives whilst not directly having implications on climate change, will support the activity the Council wishes to take as it moves towards a carbon neutral Council by 2025. This includes the undertaking of robust consultation and engagement to ensure all voices are heard and that there are comprehensice equality impact assessments undertaken for all project and programme actiity associated with the environment strategy and carbon action plan.

7. Access to Information/Bibliography

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england

8. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:

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Revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives

Include
Listen and involve all voices

We will: ensure that all staff are treated equitably to allow them to undertake their roles to the best of their abilities.

- Develop our network of staff Equality Champions as advocates and promoters of equality and inclusion.
- Develop our staff peer networks to allow them to influence change for staff who identify with protected characteristics
- Ensure that all staff have the correct equipment they need to enable them to do their jobs.
- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure the work environment and culture meets the needs of all our staff.

We will: listen to, learn from and respond to our communities, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation.

- Each take responsibility for our own learning to ensure that we acknowledge and understand our communities lived experiences.
- Know our communities through robust and up to date stakeholder mapping and management.
- Expand our opportunities and methods of engaging with stakeholders to ensure we are proactive and inclusive.
- Consider and use data and intelligence to inform our thinking and actions.
- Develop a collaborative way of working with partners to support communities to achieve their full potential

Inspire
Celebrate and promote the diversity in our borough and surrounding areas and make the most of the positive opportunities this brings

We will: promote events and activities across the borough that seek to reduce isolation, raise awareness of diversity and encourage the participation of our local communities.

- Develop a communications and engagement plan, to identify key events and activities that the Council will promote and support each year.
- Empower our communities and signpost them to resources to promote and help themselves.
- Support the education of our staff through peer networks and awareness events.

We will: take positive action to ensure that our diverse communities see Cheshire East council as an attractive place to work where anyone can thrive.

- Ensure that applicants can see their lived experiences amongst others in the workforce
- Empower the staff network groups to monitor and review employment practices, and the policies and procedures that support them to ensure that they are equitable for all.
- Empower the staff networks to have continued dialogue with the Senior Leadership team to ensure continued engagement with staff with protected characteristics.

Integrate
Deliver and promote accessible and equitable services for all

We will: ensure that we consider, communicate and consult with all residents and stakeholders when developing or changing our services.

- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments across relevant development and change activities including services we buy and commission.
- Provide training and guidance to ensure equality impacts are fully understood.
- Publish equality impact assessments to provide transparency, assurance and information on our decision making.
- Keep the EIA process under review to make sure it remains relevant.

We will: ensure that the services we commission meet their obligations under the Equality Act.

- Engage and work with our local communities to co-produce and co-design our local service offer and the design and delivery of major projects such as town centre regeneration schemes and improvements to local neighbourhoods.
- Require our suppliers to provide appropriate and timely equality monitoring information.
- Ensure that any supplier does not discriminate based on individuals protected characteristics.
- Ensure that our staff receive the training needed for them to work collaboratively with the diverse communities in the borough.

Inform
Be a council which empowers and cares about people

We will: use education to positively tackle discrimination
- Continue to reinforce and promote the Council's values and behaviours to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.
- Provide access to diversity training across all protected characteristics for all staff.
- Ensure that all staff are empowered through their Personal Development Programmes to take control of their learning about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Discrimination.
- Provide access to clear and robust HR policies and procedures to support officers and managers when challenging poor or unacceptable behaviour.

We will: work in partnership to keep people safe and connected
- Contribute and collaborate with communities and public sector partners to tackle discrimination through education.
- Take targeted action to inform and educate about the stereotypes faced by our marginalised communities (e.g. migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers).
- Promote and signpost to networks that provide advice and support to anyone impacted or experiencing discriminatory behaviour or action.
- Encourage positive relationships between communities.

Impact
Support and deliver meaningful change

We will: be open and transparent in publishing the progress of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives
- Publish an annual report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East Council
- Publish the Gender Pay Gap report.
- Ensure that evaluations for each EDI event are available for publication.
- Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.
- Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision- making

February 2021

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Cheshire East Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025

Open   Fair   Green

Cheshire East Council

Contents

Foreword

As the Cabinet Member with responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion, along with my joint administration colleagues and Member EDI Champion Cllr Marilyn Houston, we are absolutely committed to driving this agenda forward and delighted to introduce our updated strategy document for 2021 to 2025.

This new strategy builds upon the significant progress we have made and outlines our ambitions and plans to continue to promote and advance equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Cheshire East.

Equality, diversity and inclusion really does matter as every single person that we all work with, whether a fellow councillor, member of staff, resident or one of our many customers deserves to be treated fairly and with respect.

We believe we have made significant progress over the past few years. However, we also recognise this is not a start and stop exercise. It is, and needs to be an integral part of our culture and values - the way in which the council operates, placing it at the heart of all that we do.

We have the ambition that Cheshire East is known as a borough as rich in its heritage, as it is in removing barriers so creating real, equitable and lasting opportunities for everyone to thrive.

We also want Cheshire East Council to be an employer of choice and representative of the communities we serve. We will continue to work in partnership and collaborate effectively with stakeholders, partners and local communities to take forward this strategy. We will demonstrate we are monitoring and measuring the improvements we are making, showing successes where they are achieved and also those areas which still require further development.

Cllr Jill Rhodes
Portfolio Holder, Public Health and Corporate

1 Introduction

Cheshire East Council is committed to being an **Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East**.

Alongside this commitment the Council recognises that promoting equality, diversity and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. We want Cheshire East to be an area of equal opportunity where everyone has a fair chance and people from all backgrounds take part in community life. Our aim therefore is to make equality, diversity and inclusion an integral part of the way the Council works by putting it at the centre of everything we do.

Cheshire East is becoming an increasingly diverse borough due to its proximity and continually improving transport links to Manchester, Birmingham and London. It is also the home of choice for many migrant communities, towns in Cheshire East are home to varied communities from Eastern Europe, East Timor, Syria, India, Bangladesh and the Caribbean to name but a few and there are currently 108 languages spoken across the borough.

It is vital that the residents of Cheshire East see themselves reflected in the staff that provide their day to day services and to ensure that this happens we are committed to equality of opportunity for our entire workforce regardless of their protected characteristic including those who have hidden disabilities such as Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, Autism, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia as we work towards becoming a Disability Confident employer.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to outline our plans for how we propose to deliver our refreshed equality objectives and build on the work of our previous Equality and Diversity strategy of 2017- 2020.

This strategy lays out a new set of commitments to guide us through 2021 to 2025 and is done so in the context of our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and our Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires us to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The recognised and legally protected characteristics

- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

Sex

Sexual Orientation

Age

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Pregnancy and Maternity

Race

Religion or Belief

2 Our Vision for Cheshire East

2.1 Our Vision for the Council

Open

We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East

Fair

We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents

Green

We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.

2.2 Our Vision for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our vision is to make Cheshire East a welcoming place, where equality, freedom, fairness and opportunity are open to all. We want everyone to feel valued, to celebrate diversity and to understand people's different needs and aspirations whether they are living, visiting or working here and we will celebrate backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and faiths, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities and ages.

- We will support the adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia - "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness." If we are to achieve an open and fair society, we must tackle the issue of Islamophobia in our midst, and in wider society with serious commitment and action.

- We will reaffirm our support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as a key pillar of the council's equality and diversity approach, which was originally adopted in 2018.

- We will celebrate the history, culture and language of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, as well as other Travelling communities including Showmen and Boaters. Through celebration, education and raising awareness we aim to tackle prejudices, challenge myths and to raise the voices of Gypsies and Travellers in wider society.

- We are committed to being a council that helps to provide equal life opportunities for all of our residents. We know that lots of things affect a person's ability to have a fulfilling and happy life. This includes well-paid sustainable employment, good physical and mental health and access to educational opportunities. Some people are able to access educational opportunities and well paid employment more easily than others whilst others face additional barriers and challenges. We will focus upon tackling these inequalities.

- We will work with our partners to reduce the gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities and improve educational outcomes and employment opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people in Cheshire East.

We will:

Include	Inspire	Integrate	Inform	Impact
Listen and involve all voices	Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings	Deliver and promote accessible services for all	Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour	Support and deliver meaningful change

2.3 Our Values

Providing a great public service in an ever-changing world is something that we are passionate about in Cheshire East. Our promise of being an Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East is at the centre of this and can only be delivered upon by us all consistently living our five core values which we believe underpin our success.

Our values are embedded across the council and influence the behaviours of our staff as we work together internally and for the wider benefit of our residents through our front-line services.

Our Values

We are **flexible**

We **innovate**

We take **responsibility**

We deliver the **service** that customers need

We use effective **teamwork**

3 Our People and Place

Our borough is home to **380,800** residents and more than **175,000** households. It contains the major towns of Crewe, Macclesfield, Congleton and Wilmslow (with populations above 20,000). There are also a number of other significant centres of population (over 10,000) in Sandbach, Poynton, Nantwich, Middlewich, Knutsford and Alsager.

While most residents enjoy a good standard of living, there are pockets of deprivation, which impact on the quality of life and opportunities for some residents. Average life expectancy varies by around 12 years between the most deprived and most affluent areas, for both men and women.

Understanding our residents and communities is at the centre of everything we do and ultimately our decision making. We use a range of information to guide support and inform our policies and initiatives but recognise there is always more to do. The 2021 Census will give us an opportunity to better understand our residents and help us plan our services.

As our borough grows and changes, we want to be at the forefront of working together with all of our communities, to do this we need to be bolder, have a meaningful two-way conversation, and continue to strive to understand what will make the difference.

3.1 Our Borough Profile

Our Borough Profile provides a high-level overview of Cheshire East. It brings together data from multiple council and third-party sources into a single document. It contains information on demographics, learning, health and wellbeing, caring for children & adults, employment, households and crime.

Cheshire East Borough Profile

To understand the diversity of our borough a series of profiles have been prepared against each protected characteristic. These profiles have been built from existing data and aim to present a simple and easier to understand overview.

Cheshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) or 'tartan rug' presents health and social care needs, ward-by-ward, across Cheshire East.

Cheshire East's Village of 100 people

The diagram on page 10 shows a pictorial representation of our Borough using a scenario of if there was a 100 people in a room what the breakdown would be by protected characteristic.

3 Our People and Place

Cheshire East's Village of 100 People
(EDI Edition)

Sex
51 Females
49 Males

Disability
8 Limited a lot
82 Not limited
10 Limited a little

Pregnancy and Maternity
8 Pregnant within a year

Sexual Orientation
2 Lesbian, Gay or Bi

Gender Reassignment
1 Trans

Race
1 Asian/ Asian British
2 Mixed Ethnicity
2 Other White Ethnicity
94 White
British/English/Welsh/
Scottish/Northern Irish/Irish

Age
18 aged 0-15
59 aged 16-64
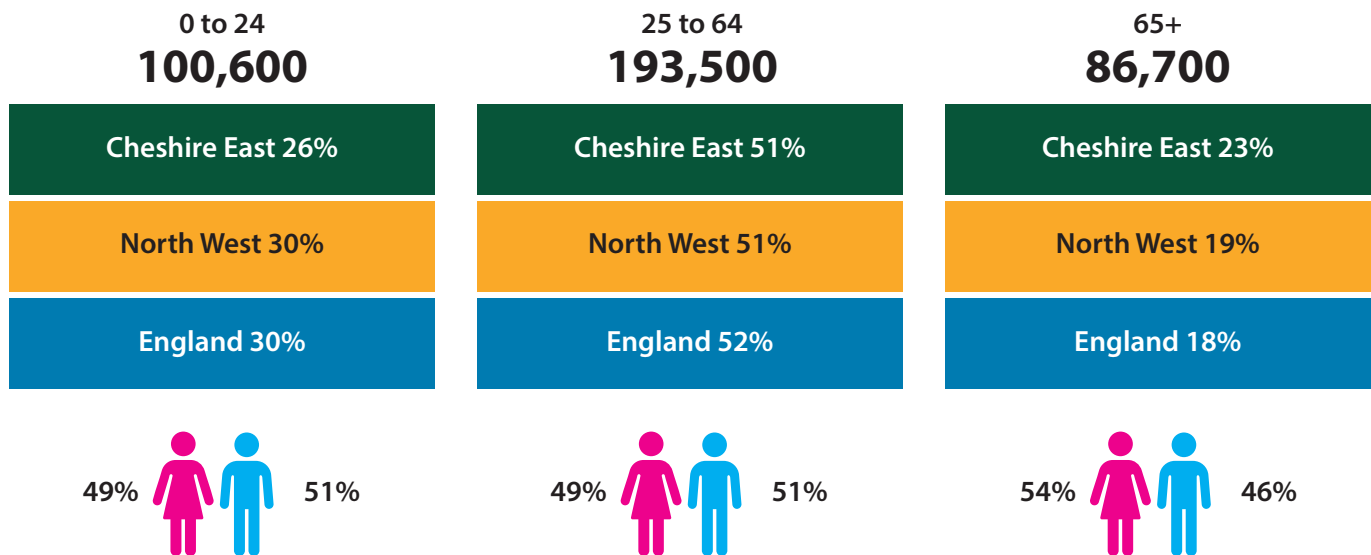23 aged 65+

Marriage and Civil Partnership
52 Married

Religion or Belief
69 Christian
23 No religion
7 Not stated
1 Muslim

Sex and Age

0 to 24	25 to 64	65+
100,600	**193,500**	**86,700**
Cheshire East 26%	Cheshire East 51%	Cheshire East 23%
North West 30%	North West 51%	North West 19%
England 30%	England 52%	England 18%
49% 51%	49% 51%	54% 46%

The total population of Cheshire East is 380,800. Residents aged under 25 represent 26% of this total population, which is significantly lower than figures for both the North West (30%) and England (30%). There are more residents over the age of 65 in Cheshire East (23%) compared to both the North West (19%) and England (18%). There is little difference in gender between the age groups shown, with the exception of residents aged over 65 where the female population (54%) is notably higher than the male population (46%) partly reflecting differences in life expectancy between females and males.

Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018, Office for National Statistics

3 Our People and Place

Age

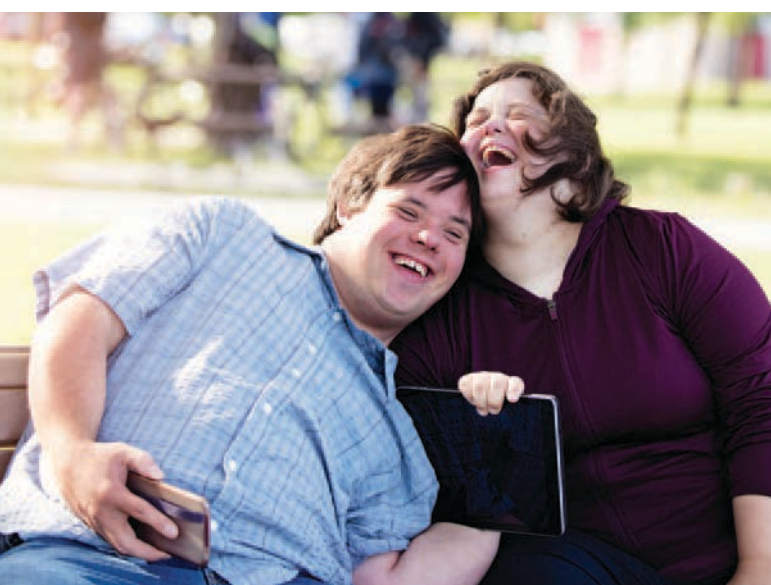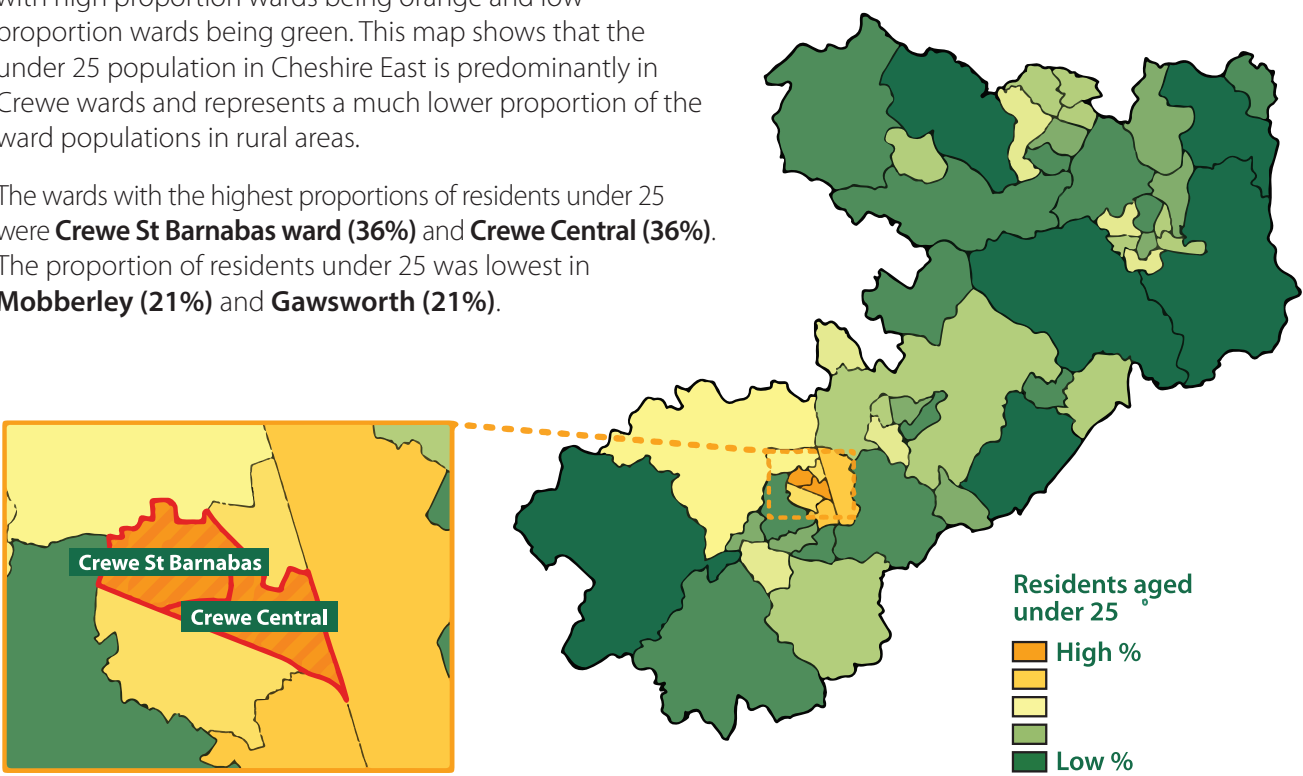### Proportion of residents under 25 years of age
Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018

The proportion of residents under 25 in Cheshire East (26%) is lower than the figures for both the North West (30%) and England (30%).

The map to the right shows the population under 25 by ward, with high proportion wards being orange and low proportion wards being green. This map shows that the under 25 population in Cheshire East is predominantly in Crewe wards and represents a much lower proportion of the ward populations in rural areas.

The wards with the highest proportions of residents under 25 were **Crewe St Barnabas ward (36%)** and **Crewe Central (36%)**. The proportion of residents under 25 was lowest in **Mobberley (21%)** and **Gawsworth (21%)**.
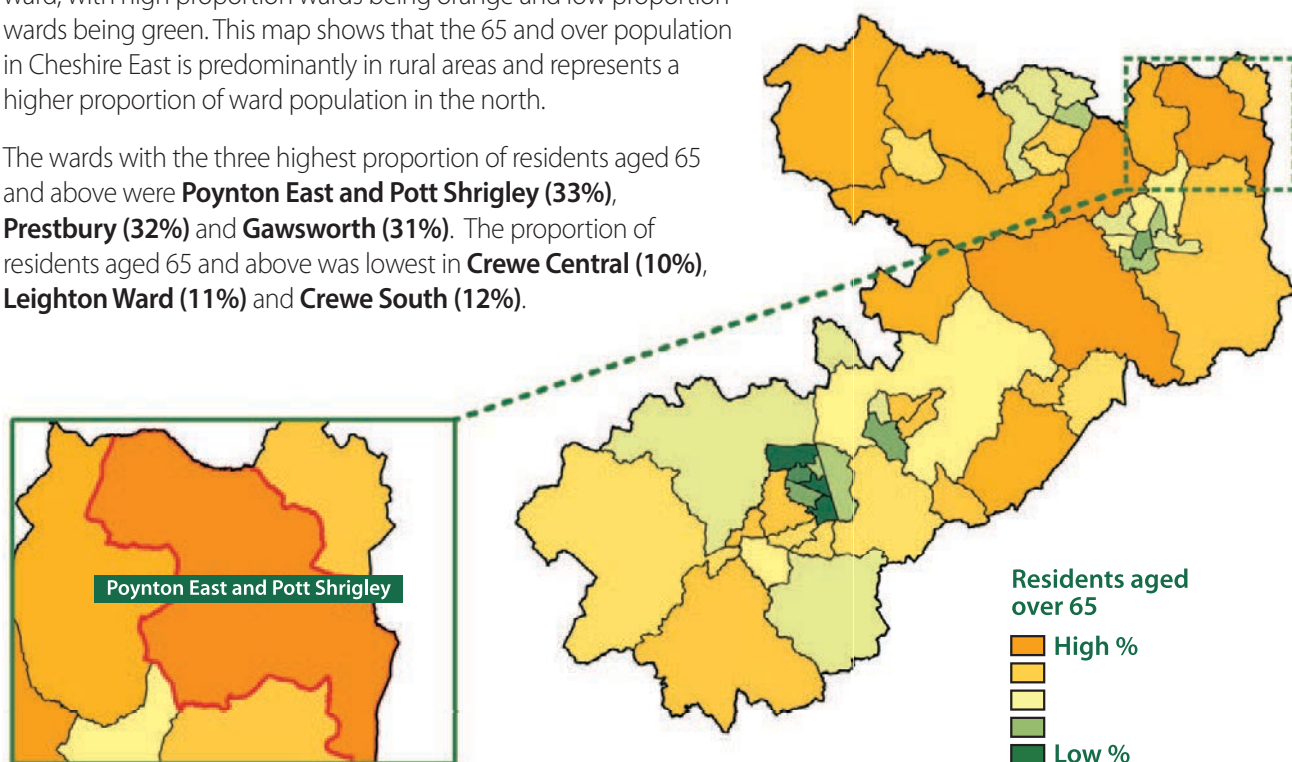
Region	Proportion under 25
Cheshire East	26%
North West	30%
England	30%

Crewe St Barnabas

Crewe Central

Residents aged under 25

High %

Low %

Age

Proportion of residents aged 65 and over
Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018

Region	Proportion aged 65+
Cheshire East	**23%**
North West	**19%**
England	**18%**

The proportion of residents aged 65 and over (23%) is significantly higher than the figures for both the North West (19%) and England (18%).

The map to the right shows the population aged 65 and over by ward, with high proportion wards being orange and low proportion wards being green. This map shows that the 65 and over population in Cheshire East is predominantly in rural areas and represents a higher proportion of ward population in the north.

The wards with the three highest proportion of residents aged 65 and above were **Poynton East and Pott Shrigley (33%)**, **Prestbury (32%)** and **Gawsworth (31%)**. The proportion of residents aged 65 and above was lowest in **Crewe Central (10%)**, **Leighton Ward (11%)** and **Crewe South (12%)**.

Poynton East and Pott Shrigley

Residents aged over 65

High %

Low %

3 Our People and Place

Race

In the Equality Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. Typically, Ethnicity is the most commonly used measure; however Ethnicity is not a single measure, but a composite measure of many different factors that make up an individual or community. Ethnicity is not fixed and is a transient state making it difficult to measure.

Region	Born outside UK
Cheshire East	5.5%
North West	8.2%
England	13.8%

Proportion of usual residents who are 'born outside the UK'
Source: 2011 Census

The proportion of the population in Cheshire East that were born outside the UK is 5.5%, significantly lower than the figure for both the North West (8.2%) and England overall (13.8%). The highest proportion of residents born outside the UK was in the Crewe Central ward (17%) followed by Crewe South (16%). Thirty two (62%) of Cheshire East's wards' proportion of residents born outside the UK less than five percent.

Region	Born in EU	Born outside EU
Cheshire East	2.8%	2.7%
North West	2.7%	5.5%
England	4.4%	9.4%

Crewe Central

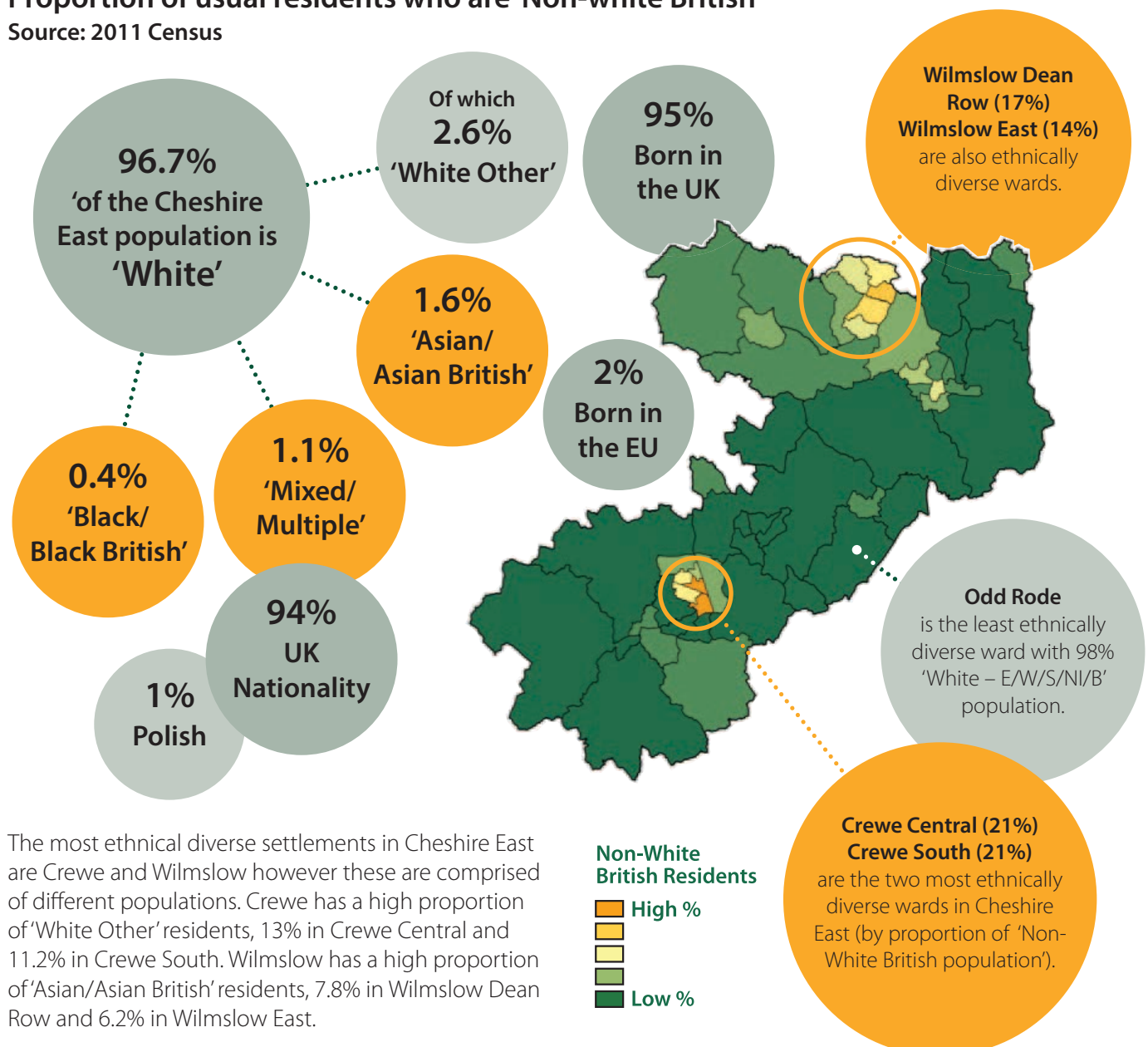Residents born outside the UK

High %

Low %
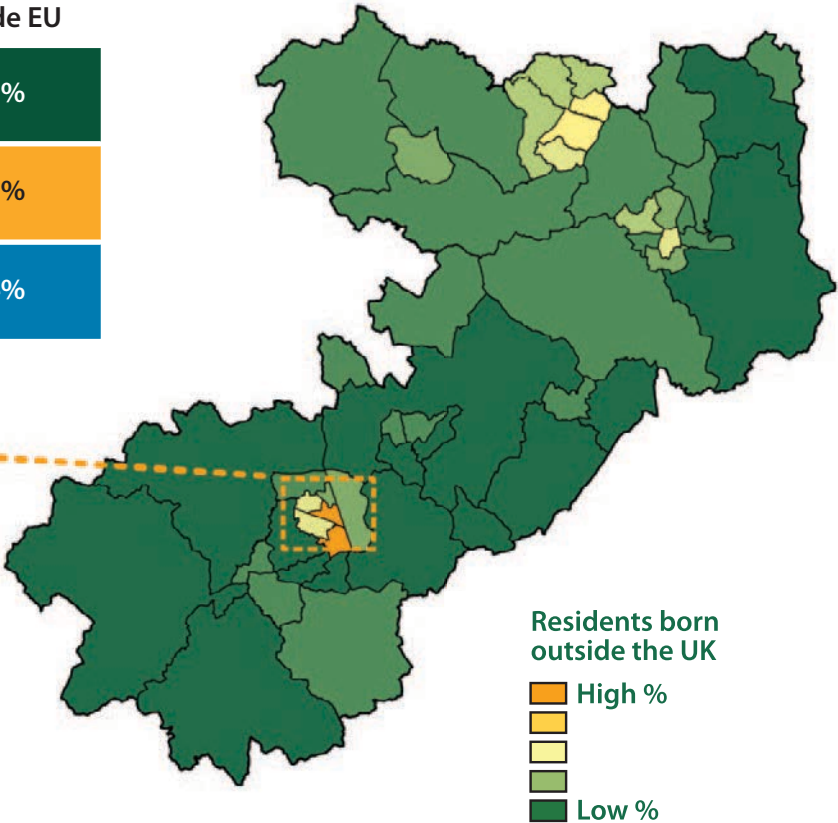
Race

Ethnicity refers to a category of people who identify with each other based on a shared commonality. These can include such factors as cultural heritage, language or ancestry for a few examples. Ethnicity is therefore not a single measure at its core but a composite measure of many different factors that make up an individual.

The most reliable source for data on ethnicity remains the 2011 Census. This is an 18 category self report measure with an 'any other' write in option. Cheshire East has a high proportion of 'White' residents at 96% of the population, higher than the national (86%) and regional average (90%). The figure for 'White: other' population is included above as this represents the largest minority group population in Cheshire East (2.6%) but is hidden due to the way 'White' is considered a single homogenous group when reported.

Proportion of usual residents who are 'Non-white British'
Source: 2011 Census

96.7% 'of the Cheshire East population is **'White'**

Of which **2.6%** 'White Other'

95% Born in the UK

Wilmslow Dean Row (17%) Wilmslow East (14%) are also ethnically diverse wards.

1.6% 'Asian/ Asian British'

2% Born in the EU

0.4% 'Black/ Black British'

1.1% 'Mixed/ Multiple'

94% UK Nationality

1% Polish

Odd Rode is the least ethnically diverse ward with 98% 'White – E/W/S/NI/B' population.

Crewe Central (21%) Crewe South (21%) are the two most ethnically diverse wards in Cheshire East (by proportion of 'Non-White British population').

The most ethnical diverse settlements in Cheshire East are Crewe and Wilmslow however these are comprised of different populations. Crewe has a high proportion of 'White Other' residents, 13% in Crewe Central and 11.2% in Crewe South. Wilmslow has a high proportion of 'Asian/Asian British' residents, 7.8% in Wilmslow Dean Row and 6.2% in Wilmslow East.

Non-White British Residents

High %

Low %

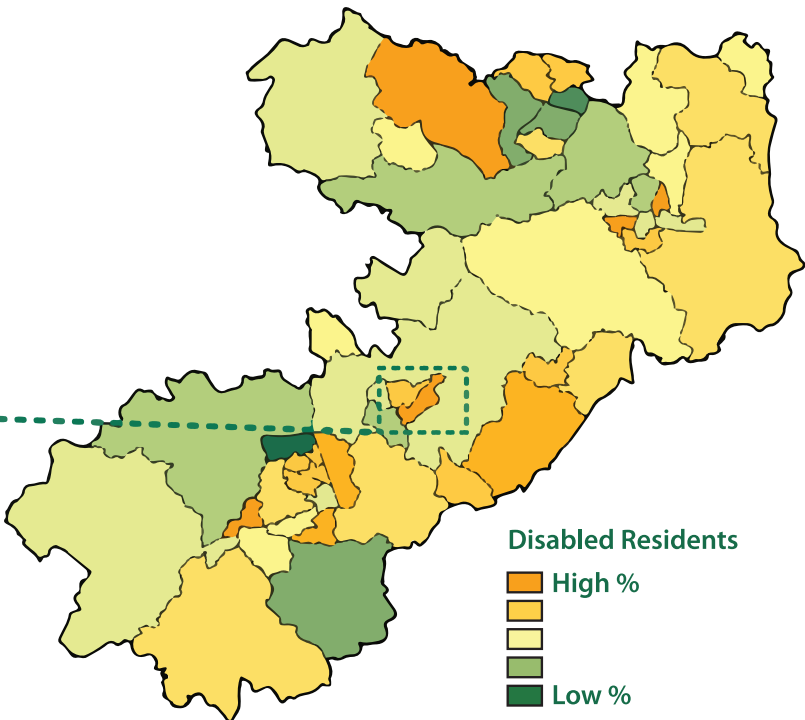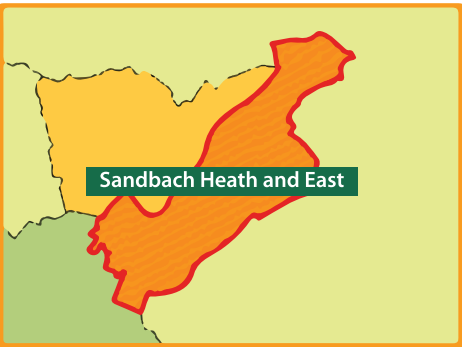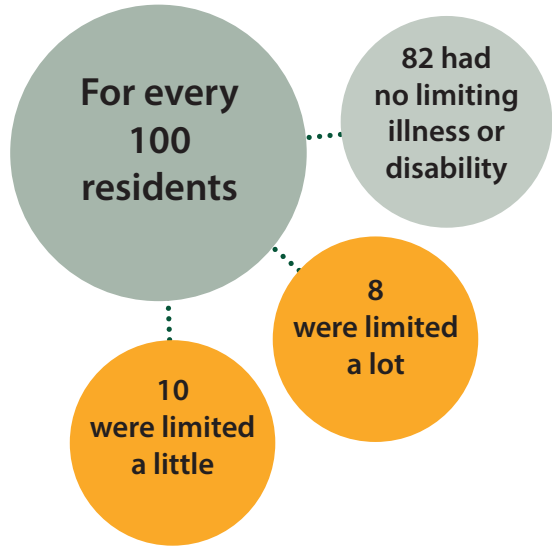# 3 Our People and Place

Disability

The term 'disability' is used to refer to a limiting long term illness, health problem or disability (LLTI) which limits a person's day-to-day activities. This is usually captured using the decennial Census.

The proportion of LLTI residents was 18%, equal to the national figure (18%) but slightly lower than the North West average (20%). Ten percent of residents stated their activities were limited a little and eight percent stated their activities were limited a lot.

The wards with the three highest proportion of LLTI residents were **Sandbach Heath & East (22.4%)**, **Macclesfield Hurdsfield (21.7%)** and **Macclesfield West & Ivy (21.6%)**. The proportion of residents with LLTI was lowest in **Leighton Ward (9.9%)** and **Wilmslow Dean Row (11.6%)**. As might be expected, the prevalence of LLTI broadly increases with an areas' average (median) age.

Proportion of usual residents with a 'limiting long term illness or disability'
Source: 2011 Census

Region	Residents with a limiting long term illness or disability
Cheshire East	18%
North West	20%
England	18%

For every 100 residents

82 had no limiting illness or disability

8 were limited a lot

10 were limited a little

Sandbach Heath and East

Disabled Residents

High %

Low %

Religion

Region	Religious	Religion not stated	No Religion
Cheshire East	70.7%	6.7%	22.7%
North West	74.0%	6.2%	19.8%
England	68.1%	7.2%	24.7%

The majority of the Cheshire East population is religious (71%). Whilst this figure is lower than the figure for the North West (74%), it is higher than England overall (68%). Additionally, the proportion of the population that is not religious is lower in Cheshire East (23%) and the North West (20%) than in England overall (25%). These figures come from the 2011 Census and are the most reliable and accepted figures on religion.

Region	Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Jewish	Sikh	Other
Cheshire East	68.9%	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
North West	67.3%	5.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%
England	59.4%	5.0%	1.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.4%

Considering the total population, the majority of Cheshire East residents are Christian (68.9%), which is marginally higher than the figure for the North West and significantly higher than the figure for England overall (59.4%). The second most practiced religion in Cheshire East is Islam (0.7%). However, while Islam is also the second most practiced religion in both the North West and England, the percentage of the population it represents is much higher in the North West (5%) and England overall (5.1%). These figures also come from the 2011 Census.

3 Our People and Place

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella concept, which includes sexual identity, behaviour and attraction. There are no reliable local, Cheshire East estimates for the proportion of residents identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB). However, over the last five years national estimates of LGB have increased from 1.5% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2017 for the population aged 16 years and over.

Using these prevalence rates, **more than 6,000 Cheshire East residents aged 16 and over may be estimated as identifying as LGB**.

Nationally, Males (2.3%) were more likely to identify as LGB than females (1.8%) in 2017. Also people aged 16 to 24 years were most likely to identify as LGB in 2017 (4.2%).

Gender Reassignment

There is no accurate figure for how big the transgender community is. Research funded by National Government, carried out by Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) **estimated the trans population as approximately 0.6%-1% of the UK adult population, this would equate to 1,900 to more than 3,000 of Cheshire East adult residents**.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported that 100 people out of 10,000 (1%) answered yes   to undergoing part of the process of changing from the sex you were described as at birth to the gender you identify with, or do you intend to.

Gender variant people present for treatment at any age. Nationally the median age is 42.

Pregnancy and Maternity

In 2017 there were 4,607 conceptions to women in Cheshire East.

This equates to conception rate of 75.5 per 1,000 or approximately 8% of women aged 15 to 44.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

At the time of the 2011 Census, **52% of adult residents were married and a further 0.2% were registered in a same-sex civil partnership**.

Since 2009, there have been a total of 167 civil partnerships. Most of these partnerships were formed before 2014 when same-sex marriages were introduced.

Sources:

Race: Ethnic Group Census 2011 (QS201EW)

Religion: Religion Census 2011 (KS209EW)

Age: Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018)

Day to Day Activities: Long-term health problem or disability Census 2011 (QS303EW)

Pregnancy: Based on female population of child bearing age (15 - 44). Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018). Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2017

Marriage: Marital and civil partnership status Census 2011 (KS103EW)

Sex: Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018)

Sexual Orientation: UK Prevalence Rate, no data for Cheshire East level only (2017) **(https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2017)**

Gender Reassignment: No data for Cheshire East, UK prevalence rate from Stonewall: **https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain**

3.2 Hate Crime

Hate crime is any criminal offence committed against a person or property that is motivated, or perceived to be motivated, by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's:

- Race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality or national origins
- Religion or belief
- Gender or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Age

Everyone has a right to live without fear and harassment and if an offender targets a victim because of how they look their gender identity, sexuality or because of their beliefs, the law provides additional penalties.

Hate crimes are one of the highest priorities for Cheshire Constabulary. In partnership with external agencies, they support the needs of victims, their families and their communities to make them safer and prevent re-victimisation.

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- physical attacks - such as physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, neighbour disputes and arson

- threat of attack - including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate and unfounded, malicious complaints

- verbal abuse or insults - offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace

Hate crime can be reported Online, by ringing 101, by visiting a police station or by visiting a hate crime reporting centre.

In Cheshire East, there are 17 hate crime reporting centres, these are places that are open for advice from trained people if a person doesn't want to go to the police.

https://www.cheshire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/hco/hate-crime/how-to-report-hate-crime/

2018/2019 Data

The total number of recorded hate crimes for the 12-month period ending March 2020 for Crewe and Macclesfield (Cheshire East Local Policing Units) was 636. In terms of specific 'offence' types the most frequent hate offence related to causing 'public fear alarm or distress'.

Hate crime reporting specific to a protected characteristic for Crewe and Macclesfield for the 12-month period ending March 2020 is as follows:

Year	Month	Racial	Religion or Belief	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
2019	Apr	32	4	6	8	2
2019	May	41	3	6	6	1
2019	Jun	38	1	4	10	4
2019	Jul	32	1	3	19	7
2019	Aug	23	1	5	9	1
2019	Sep	28	1	8	10	2
2019	Oct	46	2	7	8	4
2019	Nov	28	3	10	6	4
2019	Dec	36	1	5	5	1
2020	Jan	36	4	8	9	1
2020	Feb	28	1	9	10	2
2020	Mar	28	4	4	10	0
Total		396	26	75	110	29

Hate Crime: Cheshire Constabulary

3 Our People and Place

3.3 Our Workforce Profile

At Cheshire East Council we employ around 3,500 staff; who are our most important asset in delivering the outcomes we want to achieve for the people of Cheshire East.

The Council is committed to fairness and equality and in particular, promoting equality of opportunity for all and a culture that values differences. As an employer, we want to ensure our workforce is representative of the community it serves and that we attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds and with diverse skills and experience. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is an important part of achieving this.

We are aware that our workforce profile data needs improving. We need to build confidence and trust with our staff so that they feel comfortable to share this information with us. In line with a lot of large organisations we continue to see a large number of records where data is not reported or disclosed (indicating that they 'prefer not to say') especially in relation to sexual orientation, gender reassignment and disability.

This needs to be taken into account when considering the following information. All data presented is correct as of September 2019.

3.3.1 Age

The age profile of the Council shows that nearly 74% of our workforce is over the age of 40, with only a small cohort of staff under the age of 20.

Age Group	Workforce %
Under 20	0.6%
20 – 29	9%
30 – 39	17.6%
40 – 49	25.7%
50 – 59	33.5%
60 – 69	13.5%
Over 70	1.1%

3.3.2. Sex

Around 75% of our staff are female and 25% are male. The majority of our part time staff are female meaning that the average gender pay gap for the council for 2019/20 is 14.5%, which means that female employees receive 14.5% less average pay than male employees.

3.3.3 Race

In terms of ethnicity, 86% of staff have reported as White British, with Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff accounting for just 3% of our workforce. The remaining 11% of staff have not reported their ethnicity.

3.3.4 Disability

We have limited information on the disability status of our workforce, with only 1% of staff reported as having a disability, and the remaining 99% either not reported or not disclosed.

3.3.5 Religion or belief

Of the staff that has reported their religious belief, 24% of staff reported that they are Christian, 8% state that they don't have a religion, and only 1% of our staff report as either Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist and other. 61% of our staff have not reported their religion and 6% did not want to disclose this information.

3.3.6 Sexual Orientation

Similar to religious belief, 62% of staff have not recorded their sexual orientation with 4% preferring not to disclose. 33% of staff reported that they are heterosexual and 0.75% of staff reported that they identify as gay, lesbian or bi.

3.3.7 Gender Reassignment

Reported and recorded responses to this protected characteristic are not sufficient or reliable for consideration. Further work is needed to understand how we can encourage our workforce to feel that they would like to respond and to therefore improve our response rates.

3.3.8 Marriage & Civil Partnership

Just over half of our workforce are married or in a civil partnership (51%), with 15% of staff reporting that they are single, and 18% of staff not disclosing their status. The remaining 16% report a variety of relationship status such as; divorced, widowed, separated, partner or not married.

3.3.9 Pregnancy & Maternity

Our current HR workforce data system does not collect council wide pregnancy and maternity data; this is collected and understood at a service level, with team managers being responsible for ensuring that we meet our equality obligations under this protected characteristic. Our maternity policy (2019), outlines our commitment to ensuring that our staff are fully aware of their rights and our responsibilities for staff that are pregnant or have recently given birth. This is complemented by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3.4 Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the **average** (mean) earnings of men and women. This is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings e.g. women earn 15% less than men. Used to its full potential, gender pay gap reporting is a valuable tool for assessing levels of equality in the workplace, female and male participation, and how effectively talent is being maximised.

Gender pay gap reporting legislation requires employers with 250 or more workers to publish specific data in relation their workforce.

These requirements include how large the pay gap is between male and female staff along with the distribution of male and female workers in the organisation.

It is important to note that the gender pay gap is different to equal pay. Equal pay relates to men and women receiving equal pay for work of equal value where a direct comparator must exist.

3.4.1 Gender pay gap in Cheshire East Council

For 2019/20 the average gender pay gap for the Council is 14.5% which means that female employees receive 14.5% less average pay than male employees.

The average pay gap increased by 0.8% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, producing similar figures to those reported for 2016/17. The average pay gap remained at 12.7% in 2018-19; this is the same as 2017/18, during which period it had reduced by 0.7% since 2016/17

These pay gaps do not indicate that male and female employees are being paid differently for equal work. The Council operates a robust grading structure based on a non-discriminatory job evaluation scheme to ensure that it complies with equality legislation and provides equal pay for work of equal value.

Reporting for the 2020/21 gender pay gap is not due to be published until October 2021 in line with reporting requirements.

4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

In February 2017 our first Equality and Diversity strategy was launched to deliver the following Equality Objectives.

1. **Strengthen our knowledge and understanding of our communities**

2. **Listen, involve and respond to our communities effectively**

3. **Improve the diversity and skills of our workforce to ensure equality of representation at all levels across the organisation.**

4. **Demonstrate a positive culture with strong leadership and organisational commitment to excellence in improving equality outcomes, both within the council and amongst partners.**

5. **Ensure that the Council's services are responsive to different needs and treat service users with dignity and respect.**

To deliver the strategy an **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board** was established which is chaired by the Executive Director of People and has senior representation from across the Council. We appointed our first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer who, alongside 40 staff Equality Champions, has raised the profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion amongst our residents and staff.

4.1 Our Achievements 2017-2020

As part of the **Armed Forces Covenant**, a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives, we achieved the MoD Employers Recognition Scheme.

Recruited and trained 50 Mental Health First Aiders to support our staff.

In 2018 we signed the Time To Change pledge
to commit to changing the way mental health is perceived and talked about within the council and wider borough. In 2020 we held a 'no email' day to encourage staff to talk to each other.

In 2018 we held our first International Women's Day event in Macclesfield. A successful event which is now an annual fixture on our EDI calendar. The events have included presentations from influential and motivational women from within the council, ward members and within the community to talk about their experiences of gender balance in the workplace. Each year this event is oversubscribed with 100+ delegates.

Each year Cheshire East Council holds an event to remember the Holocaust of World War II
and various other mass genocides that have happened since. Hosted by the Cheshire East mayor, we are proud to welcome Holocaust survivors to the event to share their experience.

Every two years we hold a multi-faith conference organised by our Communities team.
This brings together our faith organisations from across the borough, working together to identify and agree the opportunities to help our more vulnerable residents. The 2019 event focussed on tackling social isolation with over 140 people attending.

In July 2019 we worked with the charity Mandela8 to provide primary and secondary schools in the borough with lesson resources and copies of Nelson Mandela's 'Long Walk to Freedom'.
A total of 15 schools and 6,679 pupils were involved. This supported work that the schools were already undertaking about respect and inclusivity. We also celebrated Nelson Mandela day within the council, encouraging staff to give 67 minutes of their time to do something good for someone.

In 2019 we held our first International Men's Day event at Nantwich Football Club. Guest speakers included senior officers from Cheshire East Fire and Rescue, Cheshire Constabulary, Body Positive and Cheshire East Council Public Health. The session was focussed on male role models and men's health. The event was attended by 50 staff (90% male) and is now an annual event in our EDI calendar.

Over the last three years we have flown the rainbow flag   at our corporate buildings to celebrate and acknowledge LGBT+ history month. This is in addition to wider social media campaigns and internal staff events.

Each October we celebrate Black History Month with a social media campaign and internal learning and awareness raising.

A Council led borough wide, community LGBT+ Pride event is held each year.
This has grown in momentum since our first event in 2018 and our ambition is that it will continue to grow and eventually achieve its own charitable status. We have also supported the independent local Pride organisations in Congleton, Macclesfield and Nantwich.

4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

4.1.1 Staff Network Groups

As part of our commitment to a positive workplace culture, we actively encourage our staff to connect with each other through peer networks and staff events. There are many now active and well attended across the council.

We are looking to expand the range of groups that take place with a specific focus on equality and inclusion and for 2021/22 we will be supporting the launch of a new Men's staff network group to compliment our existing groups.

- **Equality Champions Forum** – The Equality Champion role is voluntary for staff and supports the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer. We have 40 active Equality Champions and the forum provides a chance for them to meet and discuss what is happening in EDI within the council and the wider community. During each forum we take the opportunity to refresh skills and understanding across all protected characteristics.

Training has been delivered on the following subjects:

- – Hate crime
- – Gypsy, Roma and Travellers
- – History of Pride and LGBT+ issues
- – Being a Cancer Champion
- – Mental Health Awareness

- **Mental Health First Aiders Forum** – This forum allows our Mental Health First Aiders protected time to network and support each other whilst discussing any emerging themes or concerns that they are aware of across the council.

- **LGBT+ & Allies Group** – The LGBT+ group, VibranCE, meets at all our corporate buildings across the council. This is an open network group for our LGBT+ staff and their Allies, and provides peer support to each other and anybody else within the council who needs a friendly ear, help or advice on LGBT+ issues.

- **Menopause Network Group** – After a successful Menopause Awareness Day event in 2019 we now run a Menopause Group where staff can meet up informally to support each other and share their own experiences.

- **Disability Network Group** – Our Differently Abled group was set up in October 2020 to provide peer support for Disabled and Neurodivergent people and carers working across the authority

- **BAME Network Group** – The BAME network group meets informally to provide peer support and regularly meets with senior leaders to share their experiences of living and working in Cheshire East.

Holocaust Memorial Day	International Women's Day	International Men's Day
January	March	November
▼	▼	▼

Holocaust Memorial Day 2021
Be the light in the darkness

4.2 Equality and Diversity Events

Each month we celebrate and promote a range of awareness days and events, and host four larger annual borough wide events for our staff and residents.

A full month in November celebrating children's rights and participation, including takeover of key roles in the Council.

4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

4.3 Working with and for our communities

The Council delivers and commissions a wide range of support services for our communities. The People Directorate lead on commissioning, community cohesion and integration, and are committed to:

- Providing organisations, public services, voluntary and faith sector an opportunity to have a voice to help shape service delivery.

- Working together to identify gaps in knowledge on the diverse communities in Cheshire East.

- Enhancing partnerships to create strong, integrated communities, as well as calling out practices and behaviours which impede integration.

In the last 18 months, there have been many achievements, a few examples being:

- **38 Connected Communities Centres**, which provide a single point of contact in a community, enabling people to access local services and connect with local people.

- Successful in a bid to support community cohesion in Crewe and were **granted £122,961 via the Government Controlling Migration Fund (CMF).** These funds have been used to support improved health and wellbeing for migrant families. There are three Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who speak a total of seven languages, who work with schools and migrant families to improve wellbeing.

- **My Life, My Choice** a Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities in Cheshire East has been produced which sets out the vision, ambitions, and commissioning intentions for people with learning disabilities of all ages living in Cheshire East. The strategy was co-produced with individuals who have a learning disability and their parents and carers, and organisations that support people with a learning disability.

- A **Mental Health Floating Support Service** has been established in Cheshire East. The service has a preventative focus and works to empower people to remain independent, improve health and wellbeing and use strength-based approaches to build resilience and reduce the requirements for long term intensive support services. The service also helps people to improve their own social relationships and connections and prevent social isolation and loneliness

- We continue to support our **Gypsy and Traveller community** through our contribution to the Cheshire and Warrington Traveller Team (CWTT). The team are hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council but work across the Cheshire sub-region in partnership with the four local authorities and Cheshire police.

Community support

The aims of the CWTT are to:

a. Deal speedily and effectively with unauthorised encampments in line with agreed protocols;

b. Improve services to travelling communities, the settled communities and other public bodies, by acting as a single point of contact with a consistent approach, balancing the rights and responsibilities of all;

c. Manage local authority owned sites, both permanent and transit, applying a consistent approach to all;

d. Facilitate Travellers' to access appropriate services; health, education, social care and accommodation, ensuring appropriate support, if necessary, is in place;

e. Make savings through economies of scale with better outcomes for all in a more effective and efficient manner;

f. Reduce friction between Travellers and the settled communities in order to bring forward new sites and increase community cohesion;

g. Offer training to all agencies in particular around new policy development and legal implications;

h. Access funding to support new developments;

i. Support the strategic work of the Parties around Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and local plan agendas.

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

An equality impact assessment (EqIA) is an analysis of a proposed organisational policy, or a change to an existing one, which assesses whether the policy has a disparate impact on persons with a protected characteristic.

Assessing the impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not just something the law requires, it is a positive opportunity to help us make good decisions and evidence how we have reached these decisions, saving money and time.

We use EqIAs to identify and remove barriers in services which might stop people knowing about the service, using it and getting the best from it. This is part of our legal duty under the Equality Act.

In 2021 we will be refreshing our EqIA process and will be providing guidance and training for all staff that are required to undertake an assessment.

We are committed to publishing all EqIA's on our council website, providing transparency for residents and interested parties to access and gain a wider understanding of what we have and have not considered as part of our decision-making journey.

Pictured from left to right:
*   Gypsy and Traveller community support
*   My Life, My Choice Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities

5 Our Equality Objectives 2021-2025

1 Include
Listen and involve all voices.

2 Inspire
Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings.

3 Integrate
Deliver and promote accessible services for all.

4 Inform
Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour.

5 Impact
Support and deliver meaningful change

In delivering our Equality Objectives we have identified a number of aims and supporting actions for delivery. These will be continually reviewed and supported by an annual work programme, and are not in any way the only things we will be doing but serve as worked examples in the short term. We will continue to engage over the lifetime of the strategy to ensure we are focussing on the right things.

Our equality objectives were developed in collaboration with our equality champions, council staff and members and a public consultation exercise. They have been developed to be clear and simple to understand.

5.1 Include

Listen and involve all voices

We will:
Promote inclusive opportunities for two-way conversations.

- Develop our network of equality champions both internal and external to the council, as advocates and promoters of equality and inclusion.

- Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.

- Work collaboratively with voluntary, community and faith organisations to share key messages and opportunities for engagement.

We will:
Seek to listen in order to understand.

- Expand our opportunities and methods of engaging with residents, partners and stakeholders to ensure we are proactive and inclusive.

- Know our audience and communities through robust and up to date stakeholder mapping and management.

- Use and consider information including data and intelligence to inform our thinking and action.

5.2 Inspire

Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings

We will:

Promote local events and activities that seek to reduce isolation, raise awareness and encourage participation.

- Develop a communications and engagement plan, to identify key events and activities that the Council will promote and support each year.

- Support and promote community action and cooperation across our partnerships to improve cohesion.

- Support our staff through peer networks and events.

We will:

Proactively take action to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of the communities we serve.

- Apply fair recruitment and selection procedures.

- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure the work environment and culture meets the needs of all our staff.

- Monitor and review employment practice and our policies and procedures that support them.

5.3 Integrate

Deliver and promote accessible services for all

We will:

Ensure that we consider, communicate and consult with all people regardless of their protected characteristics when developing or changing our services.

- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments across all development and change activities including services we buy and commission.

- Provide training and guidance to ensure equality impacts are fully understood.

- Publish all equality impact assessments to provide transparency, assurance and information on our decision making.

We will:

Ensure that all services we commission meet their obligations under the Equality Act.

- Engage and work with our local communities to co-produce and co-design our local service offer and the design and delivery of major projects such as town centre regeneration schemes and improvements to local neighbourhoods.

- Require our suppliers to provide appropriate and timely equality monitoring information.

- Ensure that any venue we use or event we promote does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's protected characteristic.

5 Our Equality Objectives 2021-2025

5.4 Inform

Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour

We will:

Take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, taking positive and immediate action where possible.

- Continue to reinforce and promote the Council's values and behaviours to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.

- Provide access to clear and robust HR policies and procedures to support officers and managers when challenging poor or unacceptable behaviour.

We will:

Work in partnership to keep people safe and connected

- Contribute and collaborate with partners and stakeholders to tackle hate crime and promote hate crime reporting.

- Take targeted action to educate, inform and challenge the stereotypes faced by our marginalised communities (e.g. migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers).

- Promote and signpost to networks that provide advice and support to anyone impacted or experiencing discriminatory behaviour or action.

5.5 Impact

Support and deliver meaningful change

We will:

Be open and transparent in publishing the progress of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives

- Publish an annual report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East in the public domain.

- Publish the Gender Pay Gap report in the public domain.

- Ensure that evaluations for each event are available for publication.

- Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.

6 Next steps and Conclusion

Next steps

Our refreshed equality objectives are at the starting point of our next chapter. They will be supported by an annual work programme which is monitored by the EDI Board.

An annual report of progress will be prepared and published on the Council's website.

Delivery of the activities within the work programme aspires and aims to bring people along on the journey that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East is taking.

It is also the role and responsibility of everyone at the Council to deliver our vision for equality and inclusion.

Conclusion

We recognise that the diversity of Cheshire East's communities is expanding and that this should be welcomed and valued. There will be many opportunities and challenges over the next four years as we work with residents to improve their lives and reduce the incidences of discrimination and harassment.

Our refreshed equality objectives will allow us to build on the achievements of the previous three years and continually improve.

Our five keywords, **include**, **inspire**, **integrate**, **inform** and **impact** will underpin everything that we do, allowing us to achieve the highest standards in service delivery, decision making and employment practice.

This will make Cheshire East a great place to work, live and visit where people feel safe, valued and supported, wherever they go and whoever they come into contact with.

If you would like to contact us about any of the information contained in this strategy please email: **EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk**

Feedback

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Be involved in decision making in Cheshire East…

If you would like to be involved in consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, you can do so by registering for updates on the Consultation pages or joining the Digital Influence Panel. Please visit **cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations**

If you would like to view the results of previous consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, please visit **cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations**

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