

Corporate Policy Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday, 7th September, 2021
Time: 10.30 am
Venue: The Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall, High Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AX

PLEASE NOTE – This meeting is open to the public and anyone attending this meeting will need to wear a face covering upon entering and leaving the venue. This may only be removed when seated.

The importance of undertaking a lateral flow test in advance of attending any committee meeting. Lateral Flow Testing: Towards the end of May, test kits were sent to all Members; the purpose being to ensure that Members had a ready supply of kits to facilitate self-testing prior to formal face to face meetings. Anyone attending is asked to undertake a lateral flow test on the day of any meeting before embarking upon the journey to the venue. Please note that it can take up to 30 minutes for the true result to show on a lateral flow test. If your test shows a positive result, then you must not attend the meeting, and must follow the advice which can be found here:
https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/coronavirus/testing-for-covid-19.aspx

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

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. Declarations of Interest

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable

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pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th July 2021.

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, set out in the [Constitution](#), a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the Committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes to speak; the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

5. **Covid-19 Update** (Pages 11 - 28)

To receive a Covid-19 update report which summarises recent developments on an exception basis.

6. **Consultation on the Emergency Assistance Scheme** (Pages 29 - 34)

To consider a report which seeks approval of proposals to consult on the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23.

7. **Developing a Digital Strategy - Progress Report** (Pages 35 - 42)

To consider a report which sets out progress towards the development of the Digital Strategy, the proposed themes to be embedded within the Strategy, a timeline for delivery and approach to consultation.

8. **Workforce Efficiencies and Terms and Conditions Review** (Pages 43 - 50)

To consider a report on workforce efficiencies and a review of terms and conditions.

9. **Work Programme** (Pages 51 - 54)

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

10. **Minutes of Sub-Committees** (Pages 55 - 60)

To receive the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee.

11. **Reporting of Urgent Decisions** (Pages 61 - 62)

To note the urgent decisions taken on behalf of the Committee.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

Membership: Councillors C Browne, J Clowes, S Corcoran (Chair), J P Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher, S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, K Parkinson, J Rhodes, A Stott (Vice-Chair) and M Warren

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Tuesday, 6th July, 2021 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor A Stott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Browne, J Clowes, JP Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher,
S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, J Rhodes, M Warren and S Edgar (for Cllr
Parkinson)

Officers

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Sara Barker, Head of HR
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager
Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillor K Parkinson

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors S Gardiner and S Edgar declared non-pecuniary interests in relation to an item on the review of parliamentary constituency boundaries as they each worked for a Member of Parliament whose constituency boundary was affected by the review.

12 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Sue Helliwell asked if the Council could confirm that four members of the Corporate Leadership Team had left the Council as she had been informed at the previous meeting that three members of the Team had left.

The Chair responded that the report to the Corporate Policy Committee on 8 June (para 6.17) had included the following information: "It should be noted that the need to recruit to another senior management post is anticipated in the near future." The current Executive Director Place had tendered their resignation shortly thereafter but had not yet left the Council. Therefore, the answer given by the Chief Executive at the previous meeting had been correct.

Sue Helliwell also asked if the Chair could confirm that any complaints lodged at Cheshire East Council, made against councillors would not be

seen by the Leader or the Deputy Leader of the Council unless the complaint was made against them.

With regard to the Member Code of Conduct complaints process, the Chair responded that he hoped that the current process whereby all complaints were completely confidential would be reviewed as part of the new Code, when workloads allowed. The Monitoring Officer had advised that there was a clear expectation of privacy for untested complaints. If a complaint were found to be justified, the balance usually was for full disclosure (subject to complainant and other third party rights).

13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

14 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - CORPORATE SERVICES BUDGETS 2021/22

The Committee considered a report on the MTFS Corporate Services budgets for 2021/22.

The Vice-Chair as Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee reported that the Sub-Committee at its meeting on the 1st July 2021 had approved the allocation of the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to each of the service committees. The financial alignment of budgets to each Committee was set out in Table 1 of the report with further details on the Corporate Policy Committee budgets at Appendix A.

The Committee also considered an outline of the budget setting process, timeline and consultation arrangements, which would provide each service committee with a review of the mid-year position and the opportunity to comment on future proposals relating to their areas. In addition, sessions would be arranged for all members in advance of the wider consultation on the MTFS.

Appendix B to the report set out details of supplementary estimates and virements.

Members asked if they would receive full details of Covid-related expenditure at a future meeting. The Chair suggested that this was something that the Finance Sub-Committee might wish to consider.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. notes the decision of the Finance Sub-Committee to allocate the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the Corporate Policy Committee, as set out in Appendix A of the report;
2. notes the MTFS timelines, as set out in paragraphs 5.9 – 5.12 of the report; and
3. notes the supplementary estimates and virements as set out in Appendix B.

15 APPRENTICESHIP LEVY PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report on a proposed way forward for the procurement of apprenticeship training provision across the Council, ASDVs and maintained schools, utilising the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) framework.

Members asked if there were other frameworks available, what break clauses would be included in the contract and why the Council would be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Officers responded that the proposed framework was used nationally by local authorities; the alternative would be for the Council to use its own framework which would involve having to enter into individual contracts with each provider. The YPO framework was fully compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015, provided an extensive list of providers and would reduce the current administrative burden on the Council. It was necessary to enter into a non-disclosure agreement for commercial reasons; this was a standard requirement. The information on break clauses was not available at the meeting but would be provided to members.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. delegates authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to set the Council up to utilise the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Framework – Apprenticeships and Associated Training 883 to award contracts, where possible, to training providers using YPO's call off contract template, this requiring the Council to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement – Customer Access Agreement. Authority is further delegated to enable officers to utilise the replacement YPO framework scheduled for summer 2022 which will replace the existing version;
2. authorises the Executive Director of Corporate Services to take all necessary actions to implement the proposal; and

3. notes that it will receive a further update report on the strategic approach to apprenticeship delivery at the Council.

16 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the work undertaken on the Brighter Future Together (Culture) Programme, including key milestones, the pulse survey, benefits, and work planned for 2021 and beyond, with the aim of supporting and developing a workforce that was confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered.

With regard to the outcome of the pulse survey, members asked if staff would be expected to return to their offices on 19th July. Members also asked how new Directors would be inducted into the Council's culture.

The Chief Executive responded that with regard to the return to workplaces, members of staff would need assurance as to their health and safety. Further guidance was awaited but it was anticipated that any return to workplaces would be phased over the coming months. It would also be necessary to take advantage of the positives that had arisen from the pandemic as identified through the pulse survey. With regard to the induction of Directors, the Chief Executive commented that the Council's values would be emphasised in the recruitment process and that this would be reinforced subsequently through team development.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the report and will monitor progress with future actions.

17 CONSULTATION ON COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022/23

The Committee considered a report on proposals to consult on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23. The Scheme provided reductions in Council Tax to give financial assistance to people on low incomes. The Committee would receive feedback from the consultation process prior to making recommendations to Council on any potential amendments to the scheme.

In response to questions from members, the Chair commented that the results of the consultation would be reported back to the Committee. The Council Tax Support Scheme grant referred to in paragraph 7.2.4 of the report was a one-off grant and it would be necessary to ensure that the scheme remained financially sustainable in the future.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. approves a formal consultation on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23; and
2. delegates the final design of the consultation material to the Director of Finance and Customer Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

18 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report on progress with the agreed action plan in support of the Customer Experience Strategy. Significant progress had been made to raise awareness of the Customer Experience Strategy, and all actions were progressing to agreed delivery timescales.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the progress made to date on the agreed Customer Experience action plan.

At 11.45 am, the Committee adjourned until 12.05 pm.

19 SHARED SERVICES REVIEW UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report on progress with a joint review of shared services. The report set out the purpose of, and approach to, the review, progress to date and the next steps.

The report had been considered and noted by the Shared Services Joint Committee on 11th June 2021. It was noted that the business plans of the shared services had also been considered at that meeting and that there would be a further opportunity to ask questions at the Shared Services Committee's next meeting on 23rd July 2021.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

20 2023 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

The Committee considered a report which outlined the proposals recently published by the Boundary Commission for England for revised Parliamentary Constituency boundaries and which made provision for a sub-committee to be established, with powers to produce a Council submission to the Commission's current and future consultation exercise.

It was noted that town and parish councils, as well as members of the public, were able to submit representations on the review to the Boundary Commission. It was also noted that there would be a second round of consultation and that, in the event that Cheshire East Council did not

submit representations in the first round, it would still have the option to submit representations in the second.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and no further action be taken at the present time.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered an updated work programme for 2021/22.

With regard to a report on Terms and Conditions Review to be considered at the Committee's meeting on 7th September 2021, the Executive Director of Corporate Services undertook to provide a briefing to members of the Committee prior to the meeting.

Members also asked if financial training could be provided to enable them to consider reports of a financial nature including those referred by the Finance Sub-Committee. The Chair noted the request.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted without change.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.25 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	7 September 2021
Report Title:	Covid-19 Update
Report of:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Report Reference No.	CP/51/21-22
Ward(s) Affected	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 COVID-19 is an enduring national and international public health emergency. Members have been kept informed through regular reports and briefings on how the Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for the recovery from it. This report summarises recent developments on an exception basis.
- 1.2 The Government published a document called "COVID-19 Response Spring 2021" which includes a "roadmap" for easing restrictions in England,
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf
- 1.3 At the time of writing step 4 has been instigated. At step 4, whilst many of the legal restrictions that the Government imposed through the pandemic have been lifted, the pandemic is not over. The Council and its partners have continued to encourage caution and restraint whilst managing the risk of Covid. The implications for council activities are summarised in section 5.
- 1.4 The National Audit Office (NAO) published a report on Initial Learning from the Government's response to COVID-19 [Initial learning from the](#)

[government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk/publications/2021/government_response_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic/). This report contains some useful insights for local authorities and which Members of the Committee may wish to consider. (section 7)

- 1.5** The response to and recovery from the pandemic contributes to the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** To note the report.

3.0 Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1** This report is part of the Council's commitment to being open and transparent.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1** Not appropriate.

5. Background

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 July is provided below.

- 5.3 COVID infection rates** – COVID Infection rates vary across the UK with some areas experiencing increasing numbers of new cases that appear to be related to a variant that was first identified in India (the Delta variant). Several areas in the Northwest region such as Blackburn and Bolton have seen significant increases in their rates. In such areas surge testing and targeted vaccination programmes have been introduced.

- 5.4** At present Cheshire East is seeing a reduction in new infection rates from a high of nearly 500 cases per 100,000 population over a seven day period down to 263 rate per 100,000 (1,017 cases) over the last seven days as of 17 August 2021. Whilst Cheshire East's rates have consistently been among the lowest in the Cheshire and Merseyside sub region there is still a need for the local population to continue to follow COVID safety guidance and to be fully vaccinated. COVID pressures on our local hospitals with regard to admissions is lower than in previous waves, however non-COVID

occupancy is higher and pressures on Emergency Departments remains very high.

- 5.5** As of 21 August 2021, there were 292,989 residents registered with Cheshire GP Practices who have received their first Dose (86.6% of the eligible population of Cheshire East residents) and 264,840 (78.3%) who have received their second Dose. The rates within Electoral Wards range from 61.0% - 91.0%. Some of this variation is due to some wards having a significantly younger age profile and therefore only became eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targetted efforts are in place to assist harder to reach sections of our communities to access vaccination.

5.6 Test Trace Contain Enable/Swab squad

As of 26 July 2021, Cheshire East is no longer classed as an Enhanced Response Area (ERA) as the Delta variant is now the prevalent variant across England. As such, Cheshire East no longer has access to the same level of national support for test and trace. The national rollout of step 4 of the lockdown roadmap has had a significant impact on the Test Trace Contain Enable Programme as a number of national testing initiatives and almost all Covid-19 measures are no longer mandatory. As such, there has been a significant rise, and subsequent fall, of Covid-19 cases locally. There have been a number of operational issues caused by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), in respect of both test and trace, and the lack of a national strategy is still a major cause for concern. The TTCE Programme is now in the process of planning for autumn/winter. This involves being as proactive as possible but with a significant caveat that the DHSC often change things with little or no notice. This is an issue that has been escalated by Directors of Public Health at a regional level. In autumn, testing will be more focused on under-served and under-represented groups and see a move from fixed onsite testing to a mobile testing operation. Autumn will also see the re-implementation of local contact tracing now that issues have been somewhat resolved with DHSC.

5.7 Roadmap out of lockdown step 4 from 19 July

- 5.7.1** Key protections have remained in place, including testing, self-isolation and the roll-out of vaccinations. Individuals and businesses and those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable have been encouraged to adopt risk-based approaches.
- 5.7.2** Cheshire East Council has continued to work to ensure that people can still feel safe, despite the easing of restrictions and greater freedoms that many will welcome. Council services directly affected by changes include:

- 5.7.3 Education** – Step 4 of the government’s roadmap brought in a number of changes for education settings, including changes to requirements around the use of face coverings for staff and pupils (Year 7 and above) in classrooms and communal areas, use of bubbles, educational visits, extra-curricular activity, transition days, school transport arrangements, testing and contact tracing. The Council worked closely with leaders from education settings through the Education Recovery Group, unions and the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) to provide clear guidance for schools, colleges and parent carers around these changes both during the summer term and in readiness for the autumn term.
- 5.7.4** From 19 July education settings were no longer required to carry out contact tracing or identify close contacts; this responsibility switched to NHS Test and Trace. The local authority still has a role to work closely with settings around local outbreaks and we have provided education settings with updated risk assessment checklists and guidance on developing their outbreak management plans to reduce the risks of COVID-19.
- 5.7.5** Asymptomatic testing continues to be important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. Over the summer, most staff and secondary pupils were not required to test regularly unless they were attending settings that remain open, such as summer schools and out of school activities based in school settings. However, as pupils potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school pupils were asked to receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. The local authority has supported schools in a number of ways including carrying out the testing of the new Year 7 pupils so that they can spend their first day in school on transition and settling in activities rather than testing, identification and training of volunteers to help with the school testing and telephone and in-person support and advice on running their test site and advising on actions to be taken as a consequence of any results.
- 5.7.6** Due to the changes in social distancing restrictions, the government funding for additional dedicated school transport was also removed from the start of the autumn term. Whilst wearing face coverings is no longer a legal requirement on public transport, the government expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces. This recommendation includes the use of face

coverings for children and young people aged 11 and over when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college.

- 5.7.7 Children's Social Care** – as a result of the pandemic there are significant pressures nationally on the number of placements available for cared for children and young people. This means we are experiencing significant challenges in finding the right homes for a small number of our cared for children and young people, and this is also impacting on the cost of placements. Demand to Children's Social Care overall has also increased.
- 5.7.8 Adult social care** – There are significant pressures on the Care at Home market caused by a combination of increased demand for domiciliary care, recruitment and retention challenges and staff having to self isolate. This is impacting on timely discharges from the hospitals and the ability to source care for people in short term care and in the community. The challenges are not confined to Cheshire East and many other local authorities in the region and nationally report similar issues. A working group has been set up to address the issues and support the market. This includes a task force to assess risk of staffing shortages for each provider to prevent handbacks, utilising the People Helping People service to provide low level support and reduce care packages and working with care homes to assess whether they are able to support the Care at Home market e.g. via provision of day services.
- 5.7.9** Covid 19 vaccinations will become mandatory for care home staff on 11 November 2021. Currently 92% of staff working in Cheshire East care homes have received the first dose of the vaccination and 85% have had the second vaccination. Several care providers have embarked on staff consultation exercises over mandatory vaccinations since the Government announcement and a clinically led staff webinar across Cheshire has been held, resulting in the proportion of staff receiving the first dose of the vaccination increasing.
- 5.7.10 Registration services and bereavement services (Orbitas)** – Legal restrictions on the number of people allowed to attend funerals, wakes and weddings have been lifted. Instead, it will be determined by how many people the COVID-secure venue can safely accommodate with social distancing.
- 5.7.11 Library and Leisure services**– The removal of limits on social contact and restrictions on how many people can meet indoors has enabled more activities within our libraries and leisure centres to

resume. The requirement to pre-book slots for gym workouts or swimming have been removed. The optional use of face coverings for staff and customers is encouraged.

5.7.12 Tatton Park – All facilities are now open. Visit the website for information.: www.tattonpark.org.uk/home.aspx

5.7.13 Support for businesses – The council's economic development and regulatory services teams are continuing to provide advice and guidance to hospitality, events and tourism businesses to support the many changes in those sectors following the release of restrictions on 19 July:

- The [‘Say Hi to the High Street’ campaign](#) continues to be positively received, and the Council will continue to work with Town & Parish Council's over the coming months to identify promotion and marketing opportunities to support Town Centres utilising the Government's 'Welcome Back Fund'.
- The Regulatory Services team continues to support and advise businesses to follow working safely during coronavirus guidance. Most of the Council's powers to ensure compliance with the Coronavirus Regulations have been revoked. However, the amended regulations grant Councils powers, until 27 September 2021, to make directions in response to a serious and imminent threat to public health that limit the spread of Covid-19 in an individual premise, event, or public outdoor place. This could, for example, include requirements to wear face masks and limit social contact in an individual premise. Any direction must be necessary and proportionate in order to manage the transmission of coronavirus in the local authority's area.

5.8 Business Grants Update

5.8.1 The Council successfully achieved full spend of its allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant (£11.1M) within the Government's deadline and a total of 5296 grants were paid out from this allocation.

5.8.2 On 30 July the Council received a further 'top-up' grant of £3.4M.

5.8.3 A revised policy has been taken forward for the administration of this further grant, and that will seek to:

- provide support for business impacted by the delayed release of restrictions from 21 June 2021 to 19 July 2021, most notably this would support those in the travel sector;
- assist businesses severely impacted by disruptions brought about through the need of staff to self-isolate; and
- establish grants to support and stimulate business growth and recovery.

5.8.4 The grant must be fully spent by 31 March 2022.

5.9 Future Workplace and engagement

5.9.1 Throughout the pandemic, we have provided frequent briefings to staff through a variety of methods. This includes written briefings, Conversation With/Question and Answer sessions, team meetings, TLC calls and wellbeing support. As referenced in the report to the July meeting of the Corporate Policy Committee, the Pulse Survey of staff reported positive feedback on how informed staff have felt. We are continuing to prioritise communication and engagement over the coming months.

5.9.2 Members will be aware that the pandemic has had a significant impact on formal meetings. The Council moved quickly to enable remote meetings, rolling out lap-tops to all Members to allow the democratic processes to continue. The regulations allowing formal decision-making through remote meetings expired in early May. Members have been incredibly flexible and accommodating to adapt to the face to face meetings where they have been required.

5.9.3 Covid-19 has been a catalyst for an emerging Future Workplace Strategy. We are taking a phased and pragmatic approach, engaging with and listening to staff about new ways of working which meet customer, service and individual needs. The high rates of infection have meant we are proceeding at a slower pace than envisaged. Further information on Phase 2 is now being finalised.

5.10 Recovery planning

5.10.1 At the sub-regional level, the strategic command for the response to the pandemic has been transferred to a strategic recovery co-ordinating group. This is a multi-agency group that brings together key partners including local government, health, police, the local enterprise partnership and enables feedback to central government.

5.10.2 This group is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cheshire East Council and oversees a sub-regional approach to the ongoing management of the pandemic, managing the easing of restrictions and planning for longer term recovery.

5.10.3 The council has therefore developed a recovery plan to support this sub-regional approach as well as ensuring the Borough continues to manage the pandemic effectively as well as recovery arrangements.

5.10.4 In particular the recovery plan anticipates and is preparing the Council to manage the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Borough and on our council services. For example, it is anticipated that there will be significant long-term impacts on communities and business in Cheshire East.

5.10.5 The key issues, risks and plans that have been developed at this stage cover:

- The ongoing management of COVID-19 including test, trace, contain and enable
- Supporting children and young people including ensuring an effective education recovery, managing increased demand on social care and supporting mental health
- Meeting the increased demands on adult social care, health and community services
- Putting effective arrangements in place to provide guidance and support to local businesses to ensure they operate safely and in line with the regulations
- Leading an effective economic recovery

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 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.

7. National Audit Office report: lessons learned

7.1 To date, the National Audit Office (NAO) has published 17 reports focusing on key parts of the response where there is scope for government to learn lessons from Covid-19. Their latest report brings together their initial thoughts on this learning across six themes: risk management; transparency and public trust; data and evidence; coordination and

delivery models; supporting and protecting people; and financial and workforce pressures. These NAO themes are summarised below.

The Executive Summary states that “the COVID-19 pandemic has stress-tested the government’s ability to deal with unforeseen events and potential shocks. Government has often acted at unprecedented speed to respond to a virus which has caused dramatic disruption to people’s lives, public service provision and society as a whole. Government had to continue to deliver essential public services, while reprioritising resources to deliver its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting staff to work from home. In its response, government has had to streamline decision-making, work across departments and public bodies and use a range of delivery structures. Departments will need to reflect on the lessons learned to ensure that they capitalise on the benefits and opportunities these new ways of working have brought. While the response to the pandemic has provided new learning from both what has worked well and what has not worked well, it has also laid bare existing fault lines within society, such as the risk of widening inequalities, and within public service delivery and government itself. The relationship between adult social care and the NHS, workforce shortages, the challenges posed by legacy data and IT systems, and the financial pressure felt by parts of the system all require long-term solutions.”

“The challenges posed by the pandemic have highlighted the importance for government of adopting a systematic approach to preparing for high-impact events, evaluating its performance frequently, and acting quickly on learning points while adhering to required standards of transparency and accountability even in emergencies. This goes beyond meeting legal (or audit) requirements. It involves adhering to the standards that government has set for itself to maintain and strengthen public trust. Also, if government can build resilience into systems and delivery chains, and develop consistently robust horizon scanning, risk management and operational management capabilities across government, this will help it to cope better with future emergency responses while also improving business-as-usual activities. This report provides our initial thoughts on the learning government can draw from its response to date, based on fieldwork which was mostly carried out in 2020. We aim to refine this thinking as we continue our work. Government will recognise and has already acted on some of these learning points, but given their importance, we reiterate them in this report. These issues, as well as more recent developments in the government’s pandemic response, will be further explored in our future work. And we will continue to draw out lessons from the government’s response to the pandemic to support its own evaluation of its performance

and provide Parliament and the public with timely reporting for accountability and learning.”

Whilst this commentary relates to Government, there are reflection points for the council.

- 7.2 *Risk management:*** *Identifying the wide-ranging consequences of major emergencies and developing playbooks for the most significant impacts. Being clear about risk appetite and risk tolerance as the basis for choosing which trade-offs should be made in emergencies.* The pandemic has been unprecedented in terms of scale, impact and duration. Risk management continues to be an important part of Cheshire East’s response to the pandemic. Identified risks have been subject to regular review. Whilst Cheshire East’s arrangements have stood up well, there is benefit in undertaking structured lessons learned exercises.
- 7.3 *Transparency and public trust:*** *Being clear and transparent about what government is trying to achieve, so that it can assess whether it is making a difference. Meeting transparency requirements and providing clear documentation to support decision-making, with transparency being used as a control when other measures, such as competition, are not in place. Producing clear and timely communications.* The Council has worked hard to communicate to the public, Members, staff and partners on a very regular basis. It has been challenging to always have clear messages when the position has changed so rapidly. Our learning has been to provide a constant stream of information and advice, even if there is nothing new to say. In terms of procurement, the Audit and Governance Committee continues to review all WARNS and WAIVERS, including those related to Covid, which have been flagged specifically.
- 7.4 *Data and evidence:*** *Improving the accuracy, completeness and interoperability of key datasets and sharing them promptly across delivery chains. Monitoring how programmes are operating, forecasting changes in demand as far as possible, and tackling issues arising from rapid implementation or changes in demand. Gathering information from end-users and front-line staff more systematically to test the effectiveness of programmes and undertake corrective action when required.* The Cheshire SRCG moved quickly to establish a data cell and prioritise the sharing of rapidly changing data and evidence. This has continued to evolve along with the pandemic response. There has been some frustration about access to and availability of some national and regional data, for example contact information on Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people, but these have been worked through collectively.

- 7.5 Coordination and delivery models:** *Ensuring that there is effective coordination and communication between government departments, central and local government, and private and public sector bodies. Integrating health and social care and placing social care on an equal footing with the NHS. Clarifying responsibilities for decision-making, implementation and governance, especially where delivery chains are complex and involve multiple actors. Balancing the relative merits of central, universal offers of support against targeted local support.* The Local Government Association has done an excellent job of keeping councils informed of the rapidly changing and multi-dimensional response. There have also been good examples of direct contact with Ministers to senior civil servants, assisted by remote meeting technology. The SRCG has provided a good route to escalate issues and decisions.
- 7.6 Supporting and protecting people:** *Understanding to what extent the pandemic and government's response have widened inequalities, and taking action where they have. Providing appropriate support to front-line and other key workers to cope with the physical, mental and emotional demands of responding to the pandemic.* The Council has relied on the extraordinary efforts of staff, Members and partners. We are fortunate to be able to harness the enthusiasm and capacity of the voluntary, community and faith and business sectors and we are extremely grateful for all their support. Further work will be undertaken to understand any ongoing impact on inequalities.
- 7.7 Financial and workforce pressures:** *Placing the NHS and local government on a sustainable footing, to improve their ability to respond to future emergencies. Ensuring that existing systems can respond effectively and flexibly to emergencies, including provision for spare or additional capacity and redeploying staff where needed. Considering which COVID-19-related spending commitments are likely to be retained for the long term, and what these additional spending commitments mean for long-term financial sustainability.* Cheshire East Council has carefully tracked the financial implications of Covid-19, reporting to Members on a regular basis. The position has changed dramatically over the last 18 months and the implications are still be monitored so that appropriate actions can be taken through the MTFS and budget monitoring. The pandemic has exposed areas of under-funding, capacity pressures and skills shortages, for example, public health professionals, enforcement officers and school support staff. Further information on the financial implications is given in section 8.2 below and will be included in the outturn reports to be reported to the next round of committees.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

8.1.1 The UK has made hundreds of laws in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Restrictions were imposed relating to movements, gatherings and high street business operations. The Government revoked England's lockdown laws on 19 July 2021. This means there are no longer any lockdown laws in force in England, although other types of coronavirus restrictions are still in force (notably self-isolation and international quarantine restrictions).

8.1.2 The Health Protection (Coronavirus Regulations) (Steps) (England) Regulations ("the Roadmap Regulations") were initially published on 12 February 2021) as part of the Spring 2021 response to Covid-19. On 19 July, the Government moved to step 4 of the roadmap. Whilst many of the legal restrictions have been lifted, cautious guidance will remain, making clear that it is not yet a 'return to normal'. Such guidance includes the wearing of face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport, minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contact and encouraging businesses and large events to use the NHS Covid Pass in high risk settings so as to help limit the risk of infection. On 16 August the rules on self-isolating as a contact changed for people who are fully vaccinated and for under 18s. Those not fully vaccinated will still need to isolate if they are contacts, and everyone will still have to isolate if they test positive, to protect themselves and others.

8.1.3 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 have expired. The High Court determined that primary legislation would be necessary to allow remote meetings to continue. There was no reference to such legislation in the Queen's Speech on 12 May. Essential meetings including planning and licensing committees, are taking place in person with appropriate COVID-19 measures such as ensuring adequate ventilation, separation distances and the requirement for attendees to wear face masks unless sat during the meeting.

8.2 Financial Implications

8.2.1 The financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council relate to the need to incur additional expenditure to meet the needs of our community and to continue to provide services;

losses in income from sales, fees and charges; and reductions in council tax and business rates income. The effect on the Council's budget and its Medium Term Financial Strategy are influenced by the Government's approach to funding. Government policies and strategies in this regard have evolved over time, since March 2020; but essentially financial support to the Council and for our Borough has been provided in the following forms:

- Unringfenced grant
- Sales, fees and charges compensation scheme
- Tax income guarantee
- Specific grants
- Deferment of financial impacts on Capital Programme and Collection Fund

8.2.2 2020/21

The final position for the year ended 31 March 2021 will be reported in the statutory accounts for the year, and is summarised in the tables below. Throughout the latter part of the 2020/21 financial year the Council has been reporting a potential c.£13m impact from COVID on the Council's MTFS.

The tables below show that Capitalisation (£8.1m) and Collection Fund losses (£3.8m) are effectively still being absorbed by the MTFS, totalling £11.9m, and this was a feature of the budget approved by Council in February 2020. The losses in the Collection Fund have reduced due to the improved collection rates in the final quarter of the year and the clarification of the Income Guarantee Scheme.

There is ongoing work to minimise the losses on the collection fund and the impact of spending in Capital. Residual grant is being carried forward to fund the ongoing costs of the pandemic in 2021/22.

Service expenditure and income losses*

			£000
Service costs/ losses above Budget			31,788
Financed by:			
Unringfenced grant			(23,926)
Sales, fees & charges compensation			(4,930)
Capitalisation of expenditure			(8,085)
Total - Financing			(36,941)
Allocation to COVID Earmarked Reserve			(5,153)

*Figures reflect provisional outturn position

Council Tax and Business Rates*

	Losses in 2020/21 year	Met by Tax Income Guarantee Scheme	Deferred and managed over 3 years
	£000	£000	£000
Council Tax	1,800	(1,074)	726
Business Rates	5,300	(2,223)	3,077
Total - Collection Fund	7,100	(3,297)	3,803

*Figures reflect provisional outturn position

8.2.3 Specific Grants

The Council has received in excess of £250m in specific grants for the 2020/21 year. Analysis of spending of each grant will be provided as part of the outturn reporting for the financial year.

8.2.4 2021/22

The latest position for the current financial year will be formally reported in the Mid Year Review, but the Committee may wish to note the following with regard to latest estimates:

Service expenditure and income losses*

2021 / 22 Financial Year	Additional Expenditure	Income Losses	Net Cost
	£000	£000	£000
Service costs/ losses vs Budget	8,199	7,260	15,459
Financed by:			
Unringfenced grant - brought forward			(5,153)
Unringfenced grant			(8,500)
Sales, fees & charges compensation			(750)
Capitalisation of expenditure			(650)
Total – Financing			(15,003)
Potential Shortfall 2021/22			406

*Figures are illustrative, based on last estimates

8.2.5 Implications for council tax and business rates will continue to be managed within the Collection Fund, over the medium term, and is not expected to have an immediate effect on the Council's revenue budget in 2021/22. Latest estimates for this year show losses in receipts of £1.0m on council tax, and £1.1m on business rates.

8.2.6 The Council has also been allocated a further £37.3m for 2021/22 in specific grants. These grants continue to support outbreak management, infection control in care homes, and to provide businesses with support and restart grants, along with other grants to support residents. Further specific grants may become payable and require local administration in response to the emerging status of the pandemic response.

8.2.7 Reporting to Government

Reporting of the Council's position continues to be required by MHCLG on a monthly basis and those returns are published on the Cheshire East website:

[Open data and transparency \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk/open-data-and-transparency)

[Search for 'covid' | Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com/search/covid)

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.

8.3 Policy Implications

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

8.4 Equality Implications

- 8.4.1** Work has continued to improve accessibility of the vaccine, particularly for those who are vaccine hesitant or less able to travel to vaccination centres. The rates within Electoral Wards range from 61.0% - 91.0%. Some of this variation is due to some wards having a significantly younger age profile and therefore only became eligible for vaccination later in the schedule. Targetted efforts are in place to assist harder to reach sections of our communities to access vaccination.
- 8.4.2** We carried out individual risk assessments for staff with protected characteristics, particularly in relation to BAME colleagues and staff with a disability and have issued regular reminders to keep these under review as circumstances may change.

8.5 Human Resources Implications

- 8.5.1** The latest data on staff absences on 18 August 2021 are 17 (9 in June) staff self-isolating and working from home, 1 (1 in July) member of staff self-isolating and not working from home (role doesn't allow), 15 (2 in June) Covid-related absences, and 108 (94 in June) non-Covid-related absences. The increases in rates reflect the rise in infection rates across the region.
- 8.5.2** Staff vaccinations: as at 4 August 2021 1871 staff are eligible for vaccinations due to their role. Of these, 91.4% have had a first vaccination.
- 8.5.3** The pandemic has exposed capacity pressures and skills shortages, for example, public health professionals, enforcement officers, care workers and school support staff. In addition, the challenging financial context and re-prioritisation of work has meant that vacant posts in some service areas have not been automatically filled.
- 8.5.4** There continues to be regular communication with staff and good co-operation with the Trade Unions. The results of the latest Pulse Survey were brought to the July meeting.

8.6 Risk Management Implications

- 8.6.1** 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.

8.7 Rural Communities Implications

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

8.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1** 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.

8.9 Public Health Implications

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

8.10 Climate Change Implications

- 8.10.1** There have been positive benefits of fewer cars on the road during the first 12 months of the pandemic, although traffic levels are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Those staff who have been able to work from home have done so and business mileage has also reduced. There has also been lower demand for heating/lighting offices. The emerging Future Workplace Strategy will carefully consider how to embed carbon reduction.

9 Ward Members Affected

- 9.1** All members.

Access to Information

HM Government website contains comprehensive information.

Roadmap

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963491/COVID-19_Response_-_Spring_2021.pdf

Contact Officer:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services Jane.burns@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686013
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Government Guidance COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021(Roadmap) National Audit Office – Initial Learning from the Government’s Response to Covid-19



Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	07 September 2021
Report Title:	Consultation on the Emergency Assistance Scheme
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Report Reference No:	CP/18/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report is to seek approval from the Committee on proposals to consult on the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23. The Scheme provides a safety net for people in crisis. It is a non-cash scheme and provides help such as rent deposits, essential furniture and some white goods (recycled where possible), and emergency food for applicants on low incomes. The Committee will receive feedback from the consultation process prior to making any potential amendments to the scheme.
- 1.2. The consultation will seek views on the effectiveness of the scheme and any amendments required whilst remaining affordable and sustainable within the Council's financial strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To agree to a formal consultation on the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23
- 2.2. To delegate final design of the consultation material to the Director of Finance and Customer Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. It is over four years since the last review of the Emergency Assistance scheme was undertaken following a public consultation.

- 3.2.** In response to the COVID pandemic the Council has expanded the support provided to those in emergency situations. The Emergency Assistance Scheme needs to be reviewed in light of this package of support to ensure the Council provides a cohesive and consistent customer journey for those facing an emergency.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** The scheme could remain unchanged, without any requirement for consultation.
- 4.2.** The scheme is not a statutory service so could end. However, this would be detrimental to those residents most in need, failing to provide support as a safety net. By providing help and support early it reduces the risk of the need for more costlier support for those whose lives are broken by poverty.

5. Background

- 5.1.** Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012 discretionary Social Fund Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants administered by DWP were abolished and funding was transferred to local authorities to provide local support.
- 5.2.** Cheshire East established the Emergency Assistance scheme in April 2013 to support vulnerable people facing immediate hardship, following a crisis or disaster, to prevent homelessness, and to keep families together and safeguard vulnerable people.
- 5.3.** The scheme provides rent deposits, furniture and white goods (recycled where possible) and emergency food (through local food banks where possible). Unlike the former crisis loans and community care grants administered by the DWP, it does not provide cash.
- 5.4.** On 8 November 2016 the 'Local Welfare Safety Net' was approved following a review by the Welfare reform working group with two of the following key recommendations:
- Undertake a review of the Emergency Assistance scheme
 - Establish a small team of Key Workers within the Benefits service to take a more proactive approach to engage with people at risk of crisis when they apply for financial support, linking the retention of the financial support to continued engagement. The team would also undertake a review of the support available to ensure that commissioned and community-based support is comprehensive, relevant and providing value for money.
- 5.5.** The consultation was completed in 2017 and the criteria for the Emergency Assistance scheme was revised:
- Claims will be considered from those living in Cheshire East or moving to the borough as they have a connection to the area

- Applicants must be considered vulnerable but this will be determined on a case by case basis.
- They must be in receipt of state benefits or are eligible to receive them or on a low wage and unable to get help from friends or family
- Applicants are expected to work with the team to find ways to resolve the problems that have caused the need for Emergency Assistance help
- Support will help:
 - In emergencies with essential items or food
 - Keep or retain a home such as rent deposits, furniture and white goods
- Applicants can normally get Emergency Assistance support for a maximum of 1 emergency and 1 urgent housing situation in any 12-month period but may be more frequent in exceptional circumstances
- Further advice and signposting will be provided to all those applying regardless of whether the application is allowed.

5.6. The following summarises the applications to the scheme in 2020/21:

Claims received	Claims allowed	Claims pending	Claims Refused	Appeals received	Appeals allowed
1284	686	7	591	62	21

1 Emergency Assistance claims - 2020/21

Breakdown on items	£
Furniture & white goods	£137,642
Emergency food	£5,855
Rent deposits	£27,105
Other (inc Removals)	£3,120
Total	£173,722

2 Breakdown on goods/services provided 2020/21

5.7. The following is a recent case study:

Single parent with 2 daughters aged 9 and 14, living in a 3 bedroomed property with social landlord. She has rent arrears and housing costs are reduced for under occupancy (only requires a 2-bedroomed). Her employment has ended due to Covid and is only in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) now. She is receiving support to manage debts and has applied for a Debt Relief order.

Requested: a cooker and washing machine as both have stopped working. The items were second hand when tenant first moved in 2 years ago.

During telephone conversation, customer was advised that the scheme normally only provides one white good and she chose a washing machine. She currently has a microwave so can make meals.

UC does not meet full rent charge as family are under occupying by 1 bedroom. We also arranged a Discretionary Housing Payment to meet the shortfall in her housing costs and rent and this allowed the customer to start making payments towards rent arrears, retaining her property.

- 5.8.** The next consultation will seek views on the eligibility criteria and the types of support allowed as detailed in 5.5.
- 5.9.** In addition, in line with the Customer Experience Strategy a wider review will be undertaken to consider the customer journey for those facing an emergency. The review will consider the range of Council services available to those in crisis and ensure that these provide a coherent package of advice and support.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** A formal public consultation is planned to run from late September 2021 to late December 2021 to seek views on the scheme and potential changes.
- 6.2.** This will be promoted on the Council's web site and with key stakeholders and during contact with Emergency Assistance customers (telephone, email and letter).

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** The scheme is discretionary and the Council determines its own policy.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1.** The recommendations in this report will have no impact on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, as the budget will remain at its current level of £220k per year.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1.** The review of the scheme supports the following strategic priority:
- An open and enabling organisation

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1.** The equality impact assessment on the Emergency Assistance Scheme will be updated following the results of the consultation and review of the scheme.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1.** There are no staffing implications; the scheme will continue to be managed by the existing officers in the Benefits Section.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1.** As the scheme is demand led, there is a risk that a large increase in demand will exceed the budget.
- 7.6.2.** To mitigate this, regular monitoring is undertaken and customers are requested to prioritise the support they need. Other funding schemes are explored as part of the support provided.
- 7.6.3.** 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.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1.** There are no direct implications for rural communities

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1.** There are no direct implications for children and young people

7.9. Public Health

- 7.9.1.** There are no direct implications for public health

7.10. Climate Change

The Emergency Assistance Scheme is fully digital; applications are made on-line and supporting evidence can be uploaded or submitted via email. Where possible reconditioned or refurbished furniture and white goods are provided.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Liz Rimmer, Benefits Manager Liz.rimmer@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 371448
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Information on the current Emergency Assistance Scheme: Emergency Assistance (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting: 7 September 2021

Report Title: Developing a Digital Strategy – Progress Report

Report of: Jane Burns: Executive Director Corporate Services

Report Reference No: CP/49/21-22

Ward(s) Affected: All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** Maximising the opportunities that the Digital Revolution provides is a priority for the Council as outlined within the Corporate Plan. The plan recognises that “new and emerging technologies are bringing opportunities to rethink how services can be provided. We want to improve connectivity for all our communities and help residents and business to benefit from the convenience and flexibility it can bring.”
- 1.2.** The ongoing pandemic has brought this into even greater focus. The digital connectivity, skills, activities, and services that were already a priority are now an everyday necessity for almost every aspect of most people’s daily lives.
- 1.3.** While this is undoubtedly creating opportunities, there are also concerns about negative impacts in terms of further widening the “digital divide”. Any strategic development will look to address inequalities for those in our most disadvantaged communities and those communities where individuals and businesses have poor connectivity.
- 1.4.** Cheshire East Council has already made strong progress towards its digital priority however this has developed as a series of individual Programmes. Some of our programmes also include collaboration with our partners. It is recognised that for us to deliver the scale, focus and impact required a cohesive overarching Strategy and action plan must be developed.

- 1.5.** This report sets out progress towards the development of the Digital Strategy, the proposed themes to be embedded within the Strategy, a timeline for delivery and approach to consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** It is recommended that Corporate Policy Committee: -
- Approve the development of a single Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council
 - Approve the principles on which the Cheshire East Council Digital Strategy will be built as outlined at paragraph 5.8
 - Approve the themes to be incorporated within the Cheshire East Council Digital Strategy as outlined at paragraph 5.9 and Table 1
 - Approve the timeline for development

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** To enable the development of a Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council and to support the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.
- 3.2.** A single strategy for the Council will enable better co-ordination of activity and standards, including with our partners. This approach will also increase efficiency and promote innovation by providing a focus for activity and appropriate support.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** The Council could continue with individual digital projects, without a single point of focus. This option is not recommended as there are significant risks of inefficiency through duplication as well as a limited ability to share expertise and best practice.

5. Background

- 5.1.** Cheshire east Council has already made significant progress in its digital journey and has accelerated this as a result of the COVID pandemic. Improvements have been made in our service delivery, in our daily working practices and in our communities.
- 5.2.** The Corporate Plan recognises this but also the need for more to be done to maximise these benefits and to minimise the negative impacts of digital.
- 5.3.** The development of a Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council aims to provide a clear vision for the Councils digital transformation, underpinned by a set of principle against which the existing wide range of activities can be co-ordinated and future initiatives can be assessed.

- 5.4. A Digital Board has been established to develop the Strategy and to co-ordinate digital activity in support of that Strategy. The Board is chaired by the Director for Finance and Customer Services with representation from Place, Children's, Adults, Customer Experience, and ICT.
- 5.5. Early work has focussed on the principles and themes to be incorporated within the Strategy and an initial intelligence gathering exercise to understand the range of strategies, action plans and ongoing work which supports those themes.
- 5.6. **Principles:** Whilst the digital revolution has brought about huge opportunities there are also potential negative impacts including concerns about the potential threat to security of information and to widening the digital divide felt by our most vulnerable or remote communities.
- 5.7. The principles which underpin the Digital Strategy need to strike a balance between these competing issues ensuring we develop an approach to digital which maximises benefits in a safe, sustainable, and inclusive manner.
- 5.8. Our proposed principles are:
 - **Digital for all** – we will ensure that everyone can benefit from the Councils digital transformation including customers, residents, businesses, rural communities and community sectors. We will support the development of skills, knowledge, and accessibility to allow this to happen.
 - **One Digital** – the Strategy and solutions will cut across services and communities, breaking down silo's, driving efficiencies and improving customer experience. This does not mean "one size fits all" but that our processes, services, and the technology underpinning them are simplified, standardised, and shared wherever possible.
 - **Digital by Design** – We will design services to be as efficient as possible to improve the customer experience. Services will be designed to encourage customers to choose the digital option first, but not to exclude those who do not.
 - **Green Digital** – Our digital transformation will support the Councils commitment to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough
 - **Safe Digital** - Security and resilience will be at the core of all our digital developments. The safety of customers personal information and data will be paramount.
 - **Transparent Digital** – we will use digital technology to make the Council, its decision making and the information it holds more accessible for all.

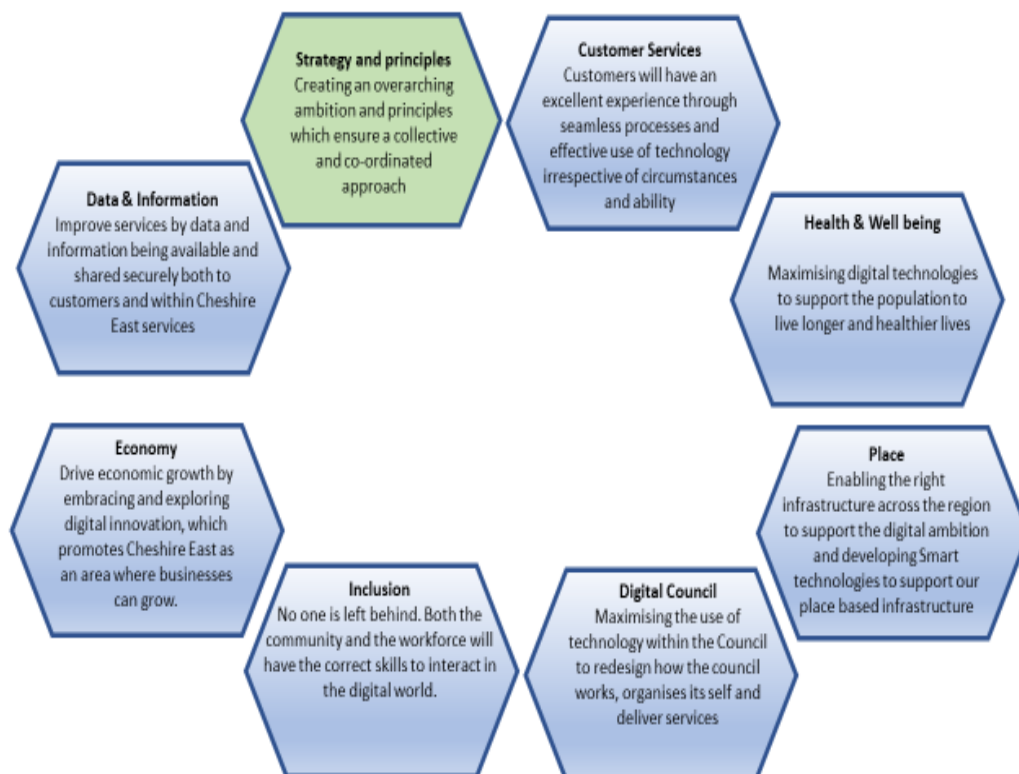
- **Innovative Digital** – we will embrace new technologies, testing our ideas and adopting an agile approach to service delivery. Innovation will be continuously informed by customer feedback.
- **Digital foundations** – we will ensure that we have the technology, governance, delivery mechanism, leadership, skills, and culture to deliver against the strategy.

5.9. Digital Themes: To deliver comprehensive digital transformation with benefits for all, the Digital Strategy needs to encompass a range of themes.

5.10. From an internal perspective it needs to ensure Council and partner service are integrated, responsive, accessible and efficient; For our communities, businesses and workforce it needs to develop the tools, knowledge and skills to take advantage of digital solutions and from a broader perspective it needs to drive the economic, health and well-being benefits of digital.

The proposed themes around which the Strategy will be developed are outlined in **table 1 below**

Cheshire East – Digital Strategy - Draft

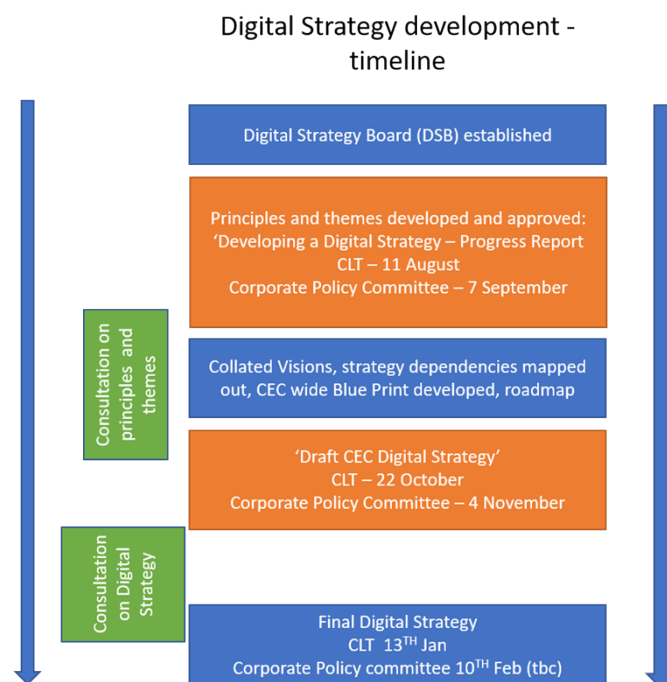


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5.11. Next steps: If approved these digital themes will be expanded to articulate a clear vision for each theme, the deliverables which will support the achievement of that vision and the expected outcomes. This work will be supported by the intelligence gathering exercise underway and by a subsequent analysis of any gaps or overlaps.

5.12. Timeline for delivery- Table 2:



6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1. Many of the individual proposed themes within the Strategy will already have been subject to consultation (for example the Customer Experience Strategy). The Digital Strategy will however require further consultation to ensure it represents a cohesive approach to transformation. The timeline above sets out the anticipated timescales for this.

7. Implications

7.1. Equality Act 2010 – when considering the approach to be taken in the Digital Strategy consideration must be given to the Public Sector Equality Duty provided for under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010. Public authorities must remove or minimise disadvantage and take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing protected characteristics such as a disability or age. The duty also provides that public authorities must

encourage persons with a protected characteristic to participate where participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- 7.2. **UK GDPR** – Article 5(1)(b) data shall be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible for those purposes. While enabling customers to experience a seamless process the Council does need to ensure compliance with Article 5(1)(b) if personal data is to be used for a new purpose other than a legal obligation or function set out in law, the Council will need to ensure that this is compatible with the original purpose the data was collected for or obtain consent. Obtaining consent for use for a different purpose can be problematic for a public authority as there is a presumption that consent is not freely given if provision of a service is dependent on the consent, as is the case with service provided by public bodies.
- 7.3. **Finance** – a digital approach already exists in multiple service areas and the development of a single strategy will ensure these approaches are co-ordinated. At development stage there is no requirement to amend the existing MTFS. If current projects are amended, or new proposals come forward, then the financial benefits will be assessed and any amendment to the MTFS will be appropriately authorised.
- 7.4. **Policy** – The proposed principle and themes are aligned with the Councils vision, priorities and values as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025
- 7.5. **Equality** – The fundamental principles proposed for the Strategy will ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all digital proposals. A full EIA will be conducted once the Strategy is drafted.
- 7.6. **Human Resources** – The Strategy does recognise the need for the continued upskilling of the workforce and a shift in culture towards digital first. There are no wider HR implications.
- 7.7. **Risk Management** – The ongoing Digital transformation will be co-ordinated through the corporate Programme Management Office and a full risk assessment will be developed and managed.
- 7.8. **Rural Communities** – The fundamental principles proposed for the Strategy will ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all digital proposals including our rural communities.
- 7.9. **Children and Young People/Cared for Children** – Children and young people are those most digitally included and are most likely to benefit from the digital transformation proposed.
- 7.10. **Public Health** – The Digital Strategy theme of Health & Well-being will specifically consider digital opportunities to improve public health.

- 7.11. Climate Change** – One of the principles of the Strategy is proposed to be “Green Digital” – Our digital transformation will support the Councils commitment to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None

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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting: 7th September 2021

Report Title: Workforce Efficiencies and Terms and Conditions Review

Report of: Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Reference No: CP/15/21-22

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** In recognition of the challenges faced by our workforce who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, our priority continues to be supporting and developing them to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered.
- 1.2.** This builds upon the positive attitudes, delivery, and successes of all of our staff during the unique challenges presented by the pandemic.
- 1.3.** The pandemic has altered how our staff are working. In line with the Covid restrictions and requirements from March 2020, those staff who are able to work from home have been encouraged to do so. Whilst these arrangements are not permanent, they have provided an opportunity to review ways of working and have dramatically reduced the need to travel and therefore costs.
- 1.4.** We are working on a Future Workplace strategy, informed by the lessons learned from Covid, feedback from both Pulse Surveys of staff, in-depth engagement with service areas and discussions with the Trade Unions. This will set out our approach to more permanent agile and flexible ways of working.
- 1.5.** The Medium-Term Financial Strategy agreed by Council in February 2021 recognised the unprecedented financial challenges facing the Council. One of the approved proposals is a review of ways of working, looking at opportunities for efficiencies and, potentially, changes to terms and conditions of employment where benchmarking shows Cheshire East

Council has more favourable terms when compared to other councils. The intention is that identified savings will reduce costs over the longer term and protect jobs.

- 1.6. This report outlines a programme of work to achieve these savings whilst supporting and developing our current employee offer. In addition, it seeks agreement to commence consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions and staff on potential changes to staff terms and conditions of service across all service areas to ensure that the Council is aligned with legislative changes, best practice and other councils, including those in the North West.
- 1.7. Most local authorities' employee pay and conditions are negotiated nationally. Some terms and conditions are set locally and can therefore vary. We know that some Cheshire East Council terms and conditions are not consistent with those of other local authorities. Benchmarking will be undertaken to determine this and support our wider employment offer prior to any formal engagement with the trade unions.
- 1.8. The review will contribute to the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, supporting a sustainable financial future for the council. Through service development, improvement and transformation and support, our workforce will be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered. The changes will be aligned closely to new ways of working which have already delivered significant savings.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Support the ongoing engagement with trade unions and staff on new ways of working and other workforce initiatives.
- 2.2. Approve the commencement of formal consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions on changes to a range of terms and conditions of employment at an appropriate time following a review of how the Council's terms and conditions compare to other authorities, including those in the North West.
- 2.3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to implement any changes following consultation/negotiation.
- 2.4. Note that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings of £50k in 2021/22 will be achieved through reduced travel costs.
- 2.5. Request a further update on the options to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings of £350k in 2022/23 and £100k in 2023/24 at a future meeting.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Our workforce is our major asset who deliver our Corporate Plan. It is essential to ensure our resources are sufficient to deliver our outcomes

through increased productivity and effective workforce planning whilst meeting our statutory obligations.

- 3.2.** The Corporate Plan includes targets which are linked to our workforce transition to working more remotely and flexibly. This will have an impact on the costs associated with business travel. In addition, new ways of working and potential reduction to business mileage and commuting will also contribute to the Council's Carbon Neutral ambitions. Work will continue with staff and trade unions to redesign and modernise services and structures to drive efficiency and value for money and fully utilising the latest technology. This also aligns to the Future Workplace programme, post Covid restrictions lifting.
- 3.3.** As the Council transitions to a more permanent flexible working model alongside recent investment in new technology, it is likely that further savings can be realised. In addition, it is timely to revisit terms and conditions to consider changes which better reflect more modern working practices. Further savings may be achieved through additional efficiencies in workforce planning and resourcing. As part of this programme of work, a review of terms and conditions is being proposed to ensure that the Council is aligned with other Local Authorities. Making changes, where appropriate, may enable savings to be made by reducing costs and thereby protecting jobs.
- 3.4.** The trade unions have been consulted previously on some proposed changes to terms and conditions but have been unable to agree contractual changes. However, the opportunities presented by Covid and the ongoing budget pressures across the Council means that this will be revisited, based on evidence of how Cheshire East compares to its neighbours.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** At this stage, a broad range of potential changes to terms and conditions could be considered which would generate more savings. However, there are already savings associated with restructures and service re-design, so double counting must be avoided. The Council will engage constructively with the trade unions, aspiring to reach a collective agreement on any changes to terms and conditions. It is important to recognise the challenging working environment for our staff over the past year and it is vital to minimise disruption for the workforce where possible. The payment of regular car user allowance to some staff is subject to a re-assessment process in early 2022, which is expected to realise savings. However, further proposals may be developed in relation to this which results in regular car user allowance being included in the terms and conditions review.
- 4.2.** In addition to the reductions in mileage there is likely to be savings from workforce planning changes which are already included in the MTFS.

5. Background

- 5.1.** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the Council has changed its working practices and adopted different working arrangements, embracing new technology and mobile working. It is vital that the good practice and more efficient ways of working continue to be embraced to deliver effective and efficient services.
- 5.2.** Terms and conditions have not been refreshed and modernised for 10 years since 2011 when the Council introduced the Harmonisation Agreement following Local Government Reorganisation. It is opportune to review and ensure that the Council is paying its staff appropriately and delivering value for money to our residents. Benchmarking will be undertaken to identify areas where the Council has variances with other authorities in the North West. This work will be completed prior to the commencement of consultation with the trade unions.
- 5.3** Initial engagement and dialogue with the trade unions and staff, alongside benchmarking and financial analysis, will provide a range of potential savings options, including terms and conditions that can be considered for discussion with the trade unions. Trade unions and staff will be asked for suggestions that could realise savings. All potential changes will need to be assessed to determine business and equality impacts alongside financial benefit.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** Early engagement and a series of conversations with staff have begun, including a Pulse Survey which was reported to this Committee in July. These will inform future ways of working and potential efficiencies savings. This work will be aligned to our Future Workplace Strategy as this evolves in the forthcoming months.
- 6.2.** Formal consultation, engagement and negotiation will be undertaken with the trade unions and staff as required with a view to reaching a collective agreement on any proposed changes to terms and conditions. Other potential savings will be identified from workforce planning and other efficiencies.
- 6.3.** Benchmarking with other authorities will be carried out over the summer with consultation beginning in October with the aim to reach a conclusion by June/July 2022.
- 6.4.** Further update reports will be provided to the Corporate Policy Committee.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** The clear intention is to negotiate any changes to terms and conditions following the appropriate legal processes. Any contractual changes need to be agreed by both parties. Changes implemented without

agreement may amount to a breach of contract and give rise to legal claims against the Council.

- 7.1.2.** There is a legal risk that breaches of contract may give rise to claims of Unfair (Constructive) Dismissal and/or discrimination claims, amongst others. Depending on the outcome of those, this may offset the cost saving benefits of the changes to terms and conditions.
- 7.1.3.** Consultation and reaching agreement with the recognised Trade Unions is a key strategy in having the necessary changes agreed by all parties and minimising the risk of such claims arising.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1.** Savings relating to workforce efficiencies and terms and conditions totalling £500k are included in the MTFS to be achieved as follows: £50k in 2021/22, £350k in 2022/23, and £100k in 2023/24. In addition, three further saving proposals for 2021/22 within the People Directorate totalling £182k were identified as referring to changes to the ways of working which included reduced mileage. To avoid duplication, officers have reviewed all of the proposals, resulting in total savings of £682k to be identified.
- 7.2.2.** In line with the COVID-19 restrictions and requirements from March 2020, those staff who are able to work from home have been encouraged to do so. Analysis of mileage travelled and claimed by staff in 2020 calendar year was 41% down on 2019, with over 1.2m fewer miles being claimed, and actual mileage payments to both regular and casual users across the council were 53% down in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20, this equated to approximately £927k less being paid for mileage claims in the last financial year. Whilst these arrangements are not permanent, they have provided an opportunity to review ways of working and have dramatically reduced the need to travel. Senior officers have committed to permanently reduce business mileage across the council by 30% which could result in a staff travel budget saving of £428k from 2021/22.
- 7.2.3.** All council staff classified as Regular Car Users are being reviewed, in line with the existing policy. Work already undertaken by HR indicates that this could reduce the number of staff who are eligible for the allowance by 80%, reducing the staff travel budget by a further £193k from 2022/23.
- 7.2.4.** Subject to consultation and agreement with the Trade Unions, further savings could be achieved in relation to travel and mileage. Accounting for the above changes, and a further saving of over £130k on staff travel budgets from 2022/23, all three changes could save a total of over £750k which is over £70k more than the combined savings in the MTFS.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1. Any changes to terms and conditions will require the appropriate policy to be updated.

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1. Any changes to terms and conditions will require the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1. Trade union and staff engagement conversations will take place to ensure that all views and ideas are considered prior to the development of formal consultation proposals. The work involved in undertaking the benchmarking analysis and engagement/consultation with the trade unions and staff will require appropriate resources to be dedicated from Human Resources, Finance, Legal and appropriate project support.
- 7.5.2. Negotiations and reaching agreement on changes to staff terms and conditions can take a considerable length of time therefore, it is vital that consultation starts as soon as possible to enable these savings to be achieved in the years they have been included in the budget. Failure to start negotiations in a timely manner could result in delays to achieving the required savings placing further pressure on the council's budget.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1. There is a risk savings are not realised from future ways of working or efficiencies in working practices. In addition, if changes to terms and conditions cannot be agreed with the trade unions, there is a risk that savings identified in the MTFS will not be delivered and alternatives would need to be put forward.
- 7.6.2. Some potential changes such as overtime rates may have a detrimental impact on a particular staff group where overtime working is used to ensure effective front line service delivery and staff volunteer for the overtime due to the enhanced rates that are paid.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1. No implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1. No implications for Children and Young People/Cared for Children.

7.9. Public Health

- 7.9.1. No implications for Public Health.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. Some changes to staff travel will have a positive impact on the climate change, where for example staff business mileage is reduced.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Sara Barker, Head of HR Sara.barker@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686328 Mobile Number 07867 983033
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Medium Term Financial Strategy

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Work Programme – Corporate Policy Committee – 2021/22

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
CP/16/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Update on Performance Scorecard	To receive an update on the performance scorecard.	Executive Director Corporate Services		No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/17/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Refreshed Workforce Strategy - Covid Workforce and Mobile Workforce	To approve the updated Workforce Strategy.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Ongoing engagement with staff and Trade Unions.	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/19/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Digital Strategy	To approve the Digital Strategy.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/20/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Mid-Year Review 2021/22	To consider a review of finance and performance at the mid-point of 2021/22, as part of the council's performance management accountability framework.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	All of the six service committees will receive and consider this report during the same meeting cycle in November.	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people; A thriving and sustainable place; An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/21/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Corporate Plan Review	To oversee and update the Corporate Plan for approval by Council for 2022/23.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/22/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Committee System Review	To consider a report in review of the committee system, in advance of Council on 18 November 2021.	Director of Governance and Compliance (Monitoring Officer)	Constitution Working Group lead role.	TBC	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/23/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Terms and Conditions Review	To consider a progress report on the Terms and Conditions Review.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Formal consultation process	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
CP/50/21-22	4 Nov 2021	Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement	Approval by Corporate Policy Committee to approve the 2021/22 Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement and Adopt The Cooperatives Party Charter against Modern Day Slavery Charter.	Director of Adult Social Services	TBC	No	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/24/21-22	2 Dec 2021	Communications Plan for Residents	To develop and approve a new approach for communications with residents.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Yes	Yes	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/25/21-22	2 Dec 2021	Local Council Tax Support Scheme	To consult on and recommend the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for approval by Council on 15 December 2021.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	No	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/26/21-22	2 Dec 2021	Council Tax Base 2022/23	To approve the Council Tax Base for 2022/23.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	No	yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/27/21-22	2 Dec 2021	Best4Business Programme Post-Implementation Review with Cheshire West and Chester Council	To undertake a post-implementation review of the project and review lessons learned.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Shared Services Joint Committee	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/28/21-22	2 Dec 2021	Approach to Consultation and Engagement	To develop a new approach to consultation and engagement methods/processes.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/29/21-22	12 Jan 2022	2021/22 Third Quarter Finance and Performance Review	To consider a review of finance and performance and the Medium Term Financial Strategy at the third quarter point of 2021/22, as part of the council's performance management accountability framework.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	No	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	No
CP/30/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Medium Term Financial Strategy	To respond to budget consultation.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/31/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Strategic Performance and Risk Reporting - Quarter 2	To review a report on strategic performance and risk from Quarter 2, 2021/22.	Executive Director Corporate Services	No	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/32/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Health and Safety and Workforce Reporting - Quarter 2	To consider a quarterly report on health and safety and workforce for Quarter 2, 2021/22.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Corporate Health and Safety Forum	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
CP/33/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Terms and Conditions Review	To consider a progress update on the Terms and Conditions Review.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Formal consultation process	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	TBC
CP/34/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Emergency Assistance Scheme	To approve the final scheme for 2022/23.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/37/21-22	12 Jan 2022	Shared Services Review	To update on the key milestones and benefits.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Ongoing engagement with staff and Trade Unions	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/35/21-22	10 Feb 2022	Medium Term Financial Strategy	To recommend the MTFS and budget for approval at Council.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/36/21-22	10 Feb 2022	Corporate Plan	To agree the Corporate Plan for approval at Council.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/38/21-22	3 Mar 2022	Health and Safety and Workforce Reporting - Quarter 3	To consider a quarterly report on health and safety and workforce for Quarter 3.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Corporate Health and Safety Forum	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/39/21-22	3 Mar 2022	Open Data - Annual Report	For implementation in March 2022.	Executive Director Corporate Services	TBC	TBC	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/40/21-22	3 Mar 2022	Strategic Performance and Risk Reporting - Quarter 3	To review a report on strategic performance and risk for Quarter 3.	Executive Director Corporate Services	No	No	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/41/21-22	3 Mar 2022	Terms and Conditions Review	To consider a progress update on the Terms and Conditions Review.	Executive Director Corporate Services	TBC	TBC	No	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/42/21-22		Commercial/Enterprise Strategy	To approve a new strategy as part of the BTFP.	Executive Director Corporate Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/43/21-22		Ways of Working with Town and Parish Councils	TBC	Executive Director Place	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/44/21-22		Local Members' Say in Local Decisions	TBC	Director of Governance and Compliance (Monitoring Officer)	TBC	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
CP/45/21-22		MoD Employer Recognition Award - Gold and Silver Schemes	TBC	Director of Commissioning	TBC	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/46/21-22		ICT Procurements	TBC	Executive Director Corporate Services	TBC	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/47/21-22		EDI Strategy and Objectives	To develop and agree an action plan with at least six-monthly updates.	Executive Director Corporate Services	EDI Board	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/48/21-22		Corporate Peer Challenge Annual Update	TBC	Executive Director Corporate Services	TBC	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance Sub-Committee**
held on Thursday, 1st July, 2021 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor A Stott (Chair)
Councillor S Carter (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Brown, J Clowes, S Hogben, B Puddicombe, P Groves (for Cllr Gardiner) and D Edwardes (for Cllr Abel)

Other Members present

Councillor B Evans

Officers

Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Julie Gregory, Acting Legal Team Manager
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillors Q Abel and S Gardiner

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee under the Council's new committee system.

At the Chair's invitation, members of the Sub-Committee and officers introduced themselves.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

3 ALIGNING THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) TO THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the allocation of the approved capital and revenue budgets to each of the service committees. The report also set out details of the general and earmarked reserves, assumptions underpinning the MTFS, supplementary estimates requiring approval by the Sub-Committee or Council, and an outline of the new budgetary process, timeline and consultation arrangements.

Members welcomed the fact that sessions would be arranged for all members in advance of the wider consultation on the MTFS.

It was proposed that a task group be appointed to work with the finance team in reviewing the MTFS assumptions with a view to reporting back to the Sub-Committee in September. The task group would comprise up to three members, with the Chair or Vice-Chair taking the responsibility to report back to the Sub-Committee. A provisional date of 27th August at 11.00 am had been set for the task group's meeting.

Officers were asked to clarify the position as regards asset transfers. Officers advised that the Economy and Growth Committee on 15th July 2021 would be considering a revised asset transfer policy and framework for the Council. Specific asset transfer proposals may need to be considered by the Finance Sub-Committee in due course.

The Sub-Committee was asked to approve an amendment to the recommendations in the report to provide that the earmarked reserve for PFI Equalisation Reserve – Extra Care Housing should remain the responsibility of the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Sub-Committee

1. approves the allocation of the capital and revenue budgets, policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the following Committees in accordance with the MTFS approved in February 2021, as set out in Appendix A to the report:

- Adults & Health
- Highways & Transport
- Children & Families
- Economy & Growth
- Environment & Communities
- Corporate Policy
- Finance Sub-Committee

subject to the following earmarked reserve remaining the responsibility of the Finance Sub-Committee:

PFI Equalisation Reserve – Extra Care Housing (£2.62m)

2. notes MTFS assumptions, set out in paragraph 5.10 and Appendix C;
3. notes the MTFS timelines, as set out in paragraphs 5.11 – 5.14;
4. approves the formation of a task group, to work with the finance team in reviewing the assumptions and to report on the outcomes to the

Finance Sub-Committee, the members of the task group to be as follows:

Councillor D Brown
Councillor S Carter
Councillor J Clowes

5. approves the supplementary estimates as set out in Appendix D and to notify the relevant committees; and
6. recommends to Council to approve:
 - fully funded supplementary estimates above £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix D - Table B.

4 COMMITTEE TRAINING

The Sub-Committee considered a proposed training programme which aimed at providing members of the Sub-Committee with an appropriate level of understanding of Local Government financing as it related to Cheshire East Council. A description of each subject area was set out in the report.

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor B Evans, a visiting member, asked if such training could be provided to all members of the Council. The Director of Finance and Customer Services undertook to take the matter away for consideration.

Members suggested that the training, if provided virtually, could be recorded and perhaps made available to other members.

The question was asked whether there should be named reserve members for the Sub-Committee who had received the required training. It appeared, however, that some groups had made their own informal arrangements whereby a member with relevant experience would substitute when required.

RESOLVED

That the proposed training programme for members of the Finance Sub-Committee be approved as follows:

- The Financial Management Code
- The Financial Cycle
- Revenue and Capital Financing
- Management of Reserves
- Treasury Management

5 WORK PROGRAMME

The Sub-Committee considered its work programme for 2021/22.

It was noted that at its next scheduled meeting on 2nd September 2021, the Sub-Committee would be asked to appoint a Shareholder Working Group. It was suggested that there would be merit in appointing the members of the former ASDV Shareholder Committee to the Working Group in view of their knowledge and experience. This would be considered further at the meeting in September.

With regard to a proposed report to the September meeting on Procurement Pipeline, the Director of Finance and Customer Services undertook to give members of the Sub-Committee early sight of the report. This could then be used to identify any further training needs.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.05 pm

Councillor A Stott (Chair)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance Sub-Committee**
held on Tuesday, 27th July, 2021 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillors A Stott (Chair), J Clowes, B Puddicombe and J Rhodes (for Cllr Hogben)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Frank Jordan - Executive Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
Alex Thompson - Director of Finance and Customer Services
David Brown - Director of Governance and Compliance
Julie Gregory - Acting Legal Team Manager
Nichola Thompson - Director of Commissioning
Helen Davies - Democratic Services

APOLOGIES

Councillors Q Abel, D Brown, S Carter, S Gardiner and S Hogben

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st July 2021 be accepted as a correct record.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

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

9 EXTRA CARE PFI SCHEME UPDATE

The Executive Director Place introduced the item to the Sub-Committee. He covered the key points as part of the update and included that there were five facilities across Cheshire: three within Cheshire East and two within Cheshire West and Chester. However, Cheshire East Council

managed the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract on behalf of both local authorities.

The Sub-Committee was updated on the proposals to enable the facilities within the PFI scheme to be reinstated and for defects to be rectified, noting the parameters that the Council had to operate within.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations in the report be accepted.

10 PROPOSED SHAREHOLDER RESOLUTION

The Executive Director Place introduced the Proposed Shareholder Resolution report. The Sub-Committee was advised of the current issues and potential impacts on the Council, and noted the steps being undertaken to resolve any extant issues.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations in the report be accepted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.36 am

Councillor A Stott (Chair)

Schedule of Urgent Decisions

Urgent decisions made following Member consultation

Date	Summary of decision	Decision on behalf of	Members, MO/S151 consulted	Status
20.08.21	To approve Cheshire East Council's participation in the Afghan LES Resettlement scheme by resettling five families into the Borough.	Corporate Policy Committee	Yes	Completed

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