

# Corporate Policy Committee

## Agenda

---

**Date:** Thursday, 3rd March, 2022

**Time:** 10.30 am

**Venue:** Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

---

**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. It is advised that this only be removed when speaking at the meeting.

**The importance of undertaking a lateral flow test in advance of attending any committee meeting.** 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](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 at the top of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be 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 pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

---

**Contact:** Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

**Tel:** 01270 686472

**E-Mail:** paul.mountford@cheshireeast.gov.uk

### **3. 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.

### **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 14)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

### **5. ARAP/ACRS Bridging Hotel and Resettlement Scheme Report (Pages 15 - 26)**

To consider an update on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

### **6. Review of the Emergency Assistance Scheme (Pages 27 - 38)**

To consider proposed changes to the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23 following a review.

### **7. Cheshire East Digital Strategy (Pages 39 - 72)**

To consider a report on the outcome of consultation on the draft Digital Strategy and to seek approval of the final Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council.

### **8. Cyber Security Update (Pages 73 - 78)**

To receive an update on cyber security within the Council.

### **9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - Progress Review (Pages 79 - 100)**

To receive an update on progress against delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025.

### **10. Update on Workforce Efficiencies and Terms and Conditions Review (Pages 101 - 110)**

To receive an update on progress to review workforce efficiencies and terms and conditions.

### **11. Health and Safety Update Quarter 3 (Pages 111 - 126)**

To consider a report which provides a summary of data regarding accident and information data for the Council and maintained schools for Quarter 3 2021/22.

### **12. Work Programme (Pages 127 - 128)**

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

### **13. Reporting of Urgent Decisions**

To note any 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, A Stott (Vice-Chair), S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, K Parkinson, J Rhodes and M Warren

This page is intentionally left blank

## CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**  
held on Thursday, 10th February, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### PRESENT

Councillor A Stott (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors C Browne, J Clowes, J P Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher,  
S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, K Parkinson, J Rhodes, S Akers Smith (for  
Cllr Warren) and L Crane (for Cllr Corcoran)

### Other Members Present

Councillor D Brown

### Officers

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive

Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services

David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance

Hayley Kirkham, HS2 Project Director

Sara Barker, Head of HR (attended via Microsoft Teams)

Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance

Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

### Apologies

Councillors S Corcoran and M Warren

### 67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J Clowes, S Gardiner and K Parkinson indicated for transparency that a public speaker due to speak at the meeting, Mr Andrew Needham, was known to them and that they had each spoken to him recently.

Councillors J P Findlow and R Fletcher indicated for transparency that they had served with Mr Needham as members of the former Cheshire County Council.

### 68 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Andrew Needham spoke in connection with Item 7 - High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill Petition. He asked if the Council was aware that there was financial uncertainty about the Crewe North Connection, and for the proposed HS2 stations from Crewe to Manchester. He felt that the matter should be the subject of a joint response to Government from the Cheshire councils through the Local Enterprise Partnership and that the

matter should be considered at the next meeting of the local transport body.

Mr Needham also expressed his support for Crewe to be the home of Great British Railways.

With regard to the question about HS2, the Chair responded that the hybrid bill was seeking the necessary powers to build the HS2 Phase 2b scheme which included the infrastructure for the Crewe northern connection. The funding for the Crewe north connection was included in the £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan core programme. The petitioning process outlined in the report would provide the opportunity for the Council to seek a clear and concise statement from the Government, via an assurance, on the funding and delivery of the Crewe hub and Crewe north connection.

The Chair indicated that if Mr Needham required a more detailed written response, this could be arranged through the relevant department. The response as given at the meeting would in any event be provided in writing.

## **69 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## **70 COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Committee considered an update report on recent Covid developments.

England had moved to Plan B in response to the risk of the Omicron variant on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021, and the implications for Council activities were summarised in section 5 of the report.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that since the report had been published, England had moved back to Plan A. With regard to infection rates, case figures remained high at 836 per 100,000 population.

In response to questions from members, officers advised as follows:

- The business grants referred to in the report would all be distributed by the closing dates. It would be appropriate to consider how effective the grants had been once they had been distributed. A written response would be provided on the amounts of funding available for the Business Interruption Fund and the Recovery and Growth Grant.
- Details of the average length of stay in hospital would be provided in writing.
- Holiday activities were funded by government grant.

- Business continuity planning had included the possibility of other types of outbreak occurring at the same time as Covid.
- A written response would be provided on how the 'Say Hi to the High Street' scheme was funded.
- The Council had developed its own arrangements for awarding business grants in implementing the Government's grant funding schemes.
- The Council had developed recovery plans right from the start of the pandemic which addressed all aspects of the impact of the pandemic.
- The deep dive review of the current backlog of planning applications was well underway and was already reporting into the Environment and Communities Committee. The number of non-determination appeals would be confirmed in writing.

**RESOLVED**

That the ongoing implications of Covid-19 and Cheshire East Council's response be noted.

**71 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-26**

The Committee considered the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for Cheshire East Council for the four years 2022/23 to 2025/26, together with the feedback from the budget consultation. This was the first time that the MTFS had been reported through the new committee system. The Committee was asked to make recommendations to Council as set out in Appendix A to the report.

The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that the figures within the financial settlement announced by the Government in December for the 2022/23 financial year, which had at the time been provisional, had now been confirmed.

Councillor D Brown spoke as a visiting member and referred to the underfunding of roads, giving rise to excessive amounts of costly pothole repairs. Whilst recognising that his concerns on the matter, as expressed at meetings of other committees, had been addressed by increased capital expenditure on highways over the next four years, he felt that this was still insufficient. He asked the Committee to consider making two additional recommendations to Council as follows:

- (a) That the Committee request the Highways and Transport Committee to carry out an immediate and major review of the local and national funding of expenditure of Cheshire East Highways, and that this lead to decisions or recommendations to enhance services and value for money to local residents.
- (b) That the Capital Programme, on Page 218 of the MTFS agenda pack, be amended so that Managing and Maintaining Highways expenditure is increased to £6m in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25

instead of £4m in each year. To balance this amendment, the borrowing costs will be funded from correlated savings over the three-year period, achieved from the revenue budget allocated to pothole repairs.

Whilst concern was expressed about the increased borrowing that this would involve, the need to safeguard savings earmarked for public rights of way and active travel, and the absence of any capital allocation for highways in year four, there was broad support among members for Councillor Brown's proposal, which was moved and seconded by members of the Committee.

The Director of Finance and Customer Services had examined Councillor Brown's proposals and confirmed that the proposals were legal and were technically and financially valid .

In response to questions from members, officers advised as follows:

- The MTFS Reserve was in accord with the constitution.
- All Council money, including reserves, was allocated to committees.

Councillor Fletcher raised concerns about delays in capital expenditure to make improvements to Alsager Town Centre and sought assurances that the matter was progressing. The Chair suggested that he pursue the matter further with officers.

The Chair asked that an item on Movements within the MTFS Reserve be added to the work programme of the Finance Sub-Committee.

**RESOLVED**

That

- 1 the Committee notes:
  - (a) the year-end forecast outturn position for 2021/22 (Appendix C, Section 2);
  - (b) the summary results of the Budget Consultation and Engagement exercise undertaken by the Council, as set out in the attached (Appendix C, Annex 2a and 2b);
  - (c) the report of the Council's Section 151 Officer, contained within the MTFS Report, regarding the robustness of estimates and level of reserves held by the Council based on these budget proposals (Appendix C, Comment from the Section 151 Officer); and
  - (d) the Council's Finance Procedure Rules will always apply to ensure proper approval should any changes in spending requirements be identified (Appendix C, Annex 14); and

- 2 the Committee recommends to Council the items at Appendix A to the report, subject to the following additional recommendations:
- (a) the Highways and Transport Committee be asked to carry out an immediate and major review of the local and national funding of expenditure of Cheshire East Highways, and that this lead to decisions or recommendations to enhance services and value for money to local residents; and
  - (b) the Capital Programme, on Page 218 of the MTFS agenda pack, be amended to provide that Managing and Maintaining Highways expenditure is increased to £6m in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 instead of £4m in each year. To balance this amendment, the borrowing costs be funded from correlated savings over the three-year period, achieved from the revenue budget allocated to pothole repairs.

Note: Councillor R Fletcher asked that it be recorded in the minutes that he abstained from voting on this matter.

## 72 HIGH SPEED RAIL (CREWE - MANCHESTER) BILL PETITION

The Committee considered a report which outlined the process the Council needed to follow to petition against the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill to enable the Council to negotiate enhancements and mitigations for the benefit of Cheshire East residents and businesses. The report also outlined the proposed approach to member engagement in preparing and progressing a petition. The Committee was asked to make a recommendation to full Council.

Members asked that future reports contain clearer and more detailed maps and plans.

Members agreed on the importance of clear communications on this matter so as not to give an inadvertently misleading impression to the public regarding the Council's position on HS2. In this respect, it was suggested that the term 'petition against' should perhaps be reconsidered.

Councillor S Akers Smith referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report relating to HS2 Phase 2a and asked if the mitigation could be increased by £100,000 to fund a feasibility study for the Great North Way. The HS2 Project Director undertook to investigate and provide a written response to Councillor Akers Smith and the Committee.

Councillor C Browne reported that on Tuesday he had made a presentation to Ministers regarding the Crewe Hub Station and had also shared the presentation with local MPs.

On a related matter, Councillor J Clowes referred to the Government launch of the Great British Railways HQ Competition for Sites which commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> February. She asked for

1. an update on progress made by the Council since the Notice of Motion was raised at the October Council meeting.
2. a progress reporting strategy for members, to assure members that a robust and convincing Expression of Interest was ready for submission by the due date of 16th March.
3. a proposed strategy for raising public awareness of their role in supporting the bid in May (subject to Crewe being selected to the short-list).

The Chief Executive responded that the criteria for bidding for the Great British Railway had been announced last week. She outlined the six criteria. Part of the process would involve a non-binding online public vote. The Council had been working with the Local Enterprise Partnership and neighbouring authorities on a joint campaign to promote Crewe, and had taken the opportunity to raise the matter at a meeting with Ministers last week and with local MPs. The Council with its partners was in the process of finalising a PR campaign. Expressions of interest were due by 16<sup>th</sup> March and a shortlist would be announced in May. The decision would be made during the summer. Briefings on the campaign and bidding process would be arranged for members.

**RESOLVED**

That Council be recommended to

- 1 support the principles of the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill;
- 2 resolve that it is expedient to petition against the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill introduced in the 2021-22 session of Parliament;
- 3 delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee and the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, to take all necessary and expedient steps to give effect to the resolution above;
- 4 delegate to the Director of Governance and Compliance the authority to seal any necessary documents and confirm that Sharpe Pritchard LLP (Parliamentary Agents) be authorised to deposit and, if necessary, sign the Petition of the Council against the Bill;
- 5 delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee and the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, to withdraw any aspect of the Council's Petition against the Bill if this is no longer the

- appropriate course of action, and to settle or agree any basis for the withdrawal; and
- 6 note the member engagement in the preparation and progress of the Bill as outlined in Section 7 of the report.

### **73 UPDATE ON SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered a report on the recent work of the Shared Services Joint Committee with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Joint Committee was playing a key role in overseeing the implementation of the Best for Business Programme and the Shared Services Review of all eight shared services. The report summarised key updates from the most recent meeting, held on 21 January 2022.

In response to members' questions, the Executive Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the lessons learned review for Best for Business would cover the whole life of the project. She also clarified the roles of the Shared Services Joint Committee and the Economy and Growth Committee in relation to the Farms Estate with the former being responsible for policy and the latter for performance against the budget and performance indicators.

Councillor J Rhodes spoke on this matter as Chair of the Shared Services Joint Committee.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the progress in the delivery of shared services, the shared services review, and the Best for Business Programme be noted.

### **74 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23**

The Committee considered a report which outlined changes to the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23.

The Pay Policy Statement for 2022/2023, which reflected the expected position as at 1st April 2022, was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. Changes since last year's Statement were outlined in section 7 of the report.

Members asked how many settlement agreements had been entered into in the last two years. The Executive Director of Corporate Services undertook to provide a written response.

#### **RESOLVED**

That

- 1 the in-year changes since the 2021/22 Pay Policy Statement be noted as outlined in section 7.4 and 7.5 of the report;
- 2 the changes in the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 1) be noted in section 7.6 of the report;
- 3 the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 be recommended to Council for approval and published accordingly; and
- 4 the agreed Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 be reviewed in-year and any further changes be approved by the Monitoring Officer and published accordingly.

## 75 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2022-23

The Committee considered the draft Calendar of Meetings for Cheshire East Council for the 2022-23 Municipal Year for recommendation to full Council. The Calendar had been shared with the Group Leaders, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees.

The Committee also considered a provisional draft calendar of dates for the period May to October 2023 which was intended to assist members in planning their diaries further ahead. It was proposed that from 2023 onwards an 18-month calendar of meetings would be produced.

The Head of Democratic Services and Governance advised that since the report had been published, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee had asked that meetings of the Committee be moved from 2.00 pm to 10.30 am. This had been accommodated in some but not all cases, owing to clashes with other meetings.

In response to a question from members, the Head of Democratic Services and Governance confirmed that the draft calendar avoided any clashes with meetings of the Police and Crime Panel and the Cheshire Pension Fund Committee.

## RESOLVED

That

- 1 the draft Calendar of Meetings for Cheshire East Council 2022-23, be recommended to Council for approval subject to the following:
  - meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee commencing at 10.30am on the stated meeting dates, except for 29<sup>th</sup> September and 24<sup>th</sup> November, when the start-time will be 2.00pm;
  - subject to the agreement of external partner organisations where appropriate, the meeting of the Shared Services Joint

Committee and planning site-visits currently scheduled to take place on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023 being rescheduled to avoid Holocaust Memorial Day;

- the Constitution Working Group giving consideration, prior to the 2023 elections, to the question of whether some formal meetings should be “twilight” or evening meetings; and
  - the Constitution Working Group giving consideration, prior to the preparation of the Calendar of Meetings for 2023, to the question of whether it would be appropriate to introduce a standard commencement time of 10.00 am for all morning meetings of formal bodies; and
- 2 the draft Calendar of Meetings for the period of May to October 2023, be recommended to Council for noting.

## **76 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2021/22.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that an additional meeting of the Committee had been scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022 to consider the Community Governance Review and a review of the Codes and Protocols within the constitution. There was therefore an opportunity to review the distribution of business for the two remaining meetings in the current municipal year.

### **RESOLVED**

That the work programme be noted.

## **77 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

The minutes of the following sub-committee meeting were received:

Finance Sub-Committee – 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## **78 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS**

The Committee was informed of an urgent decision taken on behalf of the Committee in accordance with paragraph 2.11 of the committee procedure rules. The decision was to approve a supplementary revenue estimate for the 2021/22 financial year of £827,108.95 to be funded from the Additional Restrictions Grant, and to authorise the relevant officers to distribute funding from the Grant.

### **RESOLVED**

That the urgent decision be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.55 pm

Councillor A Stott (Chair)



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** ARAP/ACRS Bridging Hotel and Resettlement Scheme Report

**Report of:** Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director – Adults, Health and Integration

**Report Reference No:** N/A

**Ward(s) Affected:** All Wards

---

**Please note:** Documents referred to as appendices are background papers which are available for inspection on request.

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1.** To provide an update to members on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). To provide further detail on the wrap around support provided by Cheshire East Council and partner agencies for 263 individuals from 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021 to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 (at the time of writing this report). The report also provides information on the 5 families that have now been resettled into permanent accommodation in Cheshire East. Finally, the report seeks to inform members that the expected support offered by the Council within the bridging hotel is until at least 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1.** To acknowledge the high-quality wrap around support provided to date for the ARAP/ACRS cohort within the bridging hotel and to acknowledge this will be expected of the Council until at least 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- 2.2.** To acknowledge the integration support for the 5 families from the ARAP scheme to date, that have been already permanently settled in Cheshire East.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1.** To provide members with an update highlighting the good work and the resource required for the ARAP/ACRS scheme. The wrap around support within the bridging hotels is resource intensive requiring various public and third sector services providing daily onsite and off site support. Alongside this there are high housing pressures on registered social landlord for appropriately sized properties. It is felt necessary to acknowledge Cheshire East Councils offer of support to this scheme remains to continue to provide the high-quality work within the bridging hotel and to focus on fully integrating the 5 families as they to continue to settle in the borough.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1.** Not to provide members with an update around the work done to date.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1.** The Connected Communities Operating model presented to Environments and Communities Committee November 2021 on page 14 it describes how we can support diverse cohesive communities across services with Cheshire East. Supporting resettlement schemes and creating a welcoming, safe and cohesive place for our residents to live.
- 5.2.** Following NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan, a high risk to the local staff who have worked for the UK Government and associated Afghan nationals has been identified. As a result, the Government has placed approximately 15,000 locally employed staff (numbers including family members) under the ARAP (Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy) scheme into temporary accommodation which is referred to as "bridging hotels" across the UK.
- 5.3.** The ARAP scheme is aimed at LES (Locally Employed Staff) Afghanistan nationals who were made redundant following the UK's military withdrawal from the country. Typically, these LES acted as interpreters for the British army and now are viewed as traitors and are being persecuted. This is not a refugee resettlement program. The families coming through the scheme are not refugees and do not arrive with refugee status. They are granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. The majority of this cohort has now been permanently housed across the country.
- 5.4.** The successful evacuation of over 15,000 people under the ARAP scheme to safety is the largest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history.

#### **Bridging Hotel wrap around support**

- 5.5.** Cheshire East Council agreed (Appendix 2) to provided wrap around and use upfront costs to support on behalf of the Home Office the individuals

that have been brought to the UK under the ARAP and now the ACRS schemes that have been residing at the one bridging hotel within the borough since 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. The length of time of this support offer is expected to be in place is still to be confirmed as families are still being evacuated via various Countries. Alongside this due to the high-quality support offered in Cheshire East the bridging hotel is expected to be one of the last (from the 80 across the Country) to be stood down. The only indication we have to date is the Home Office have signed a contract with the bridging hotel until 31<sup>st</sup> of June 2022.

- 5.6. To date (time this report was written) 263 individuals of which 147 are children and 116 adults have been supported with the below wrap around offer:

Healthcare

- Ensured health support is provided in the hotel or through local healthcare provided to meet immediate needs including Covid Vaccination and regular testing.
- Ensured all residents are given access to NHS services including providing access to GPs and are provided with NHS numbers.
- Updated families with latest Covid advice and supporting compliance.
- Identified and escalated potential life threatening conditions

Welcome and ongoing support

- Provided meet and greet services as a new hotel is engaged and provide ongoing support within hotels through regular surgeries and advice sessions
- Identified essential and longer-term needs from the families in the hotels
- Engaged with voluntary sector to meet needs, arrange activities, provide local Integration support, and make connections with local groups
- Managed donations and offers of support from the local community and ensure fair and equitable distribution of goods
- Worked alongside other actors in the hotels (e.g. DWP) to act as a liaison point between local and central government to escalate issues Ensure the specific needs of women and girls are factored into the design and delivery of services to ensure participation/access.
- Considered the needs of other disadvantaged or marginalised groups (e.g., LGBTQI)
- Supported families to access local transport provisions e.g., understanding options for local transport and providing advice and guidance on travel around the region

- Issued documents and paperwork as required
- Provided clear, translated information to residents

#### Policing and Security

- Identified local policing or security requirements (including community cohesion) and work with local policing and community support officers to mitigate risk
- Provided information and support for families to report any incidents of Hate Crime

#### Education

- Continued support from Local Authority Officers to undertake pre-work with Afghan children ahead of moving into a school environment. This work is essential to ensure that basic literacy skills in particular are supported early to ensure a positive first experience in school.
- Supporting families with school admission arrangements where permanent placements are secured and in transition arrangements to ensure funding follows.
- Very regular liaison by Local Authority staff with schools to ensure placements are progressing to the benefit of the children.
- Increasing the reach of schools in the Crewe area to ensure that we are not overloading certain schools with large numbers.
- Daily monitoring of transport arrangements to ensure that children are safely and successfully getting to schools.
- Liaising with DfE officials to ensure appropriate levels of funding are secured to meet our local need.

#### Safeguarding

- Offered a full safeguarding support service, in line with statutory responsibilities, channelled via the adult and child LA safeguarding processes
- Provided Safeguarding Awareness Training

#### Financial and employment

- Supported the families to access appropriate financial support (through own services or engagement with DWP) including accessing Universal Credit and Child Benefit
- Supported individuals to gain a National Insurance Number

#### Other

- Supported access to dental care
- Worked with the CCG to identify pathways for further trauma informed healthcare provision (including mental health support)

- Worked alongside Prevent Police and Channel Panel Partners where potential issues were identified
  - Considered and facilitate access to local education services for children (and adults)
  - Ensured access to specialist youth services (including mentoring)
  - Supported the families to access employment, working with DWP and with the Refugee Employment Network (REN) who will identify local refugee employment support expertise
  - Signposted to and provided support to access bank accounts
  - Organised daily trips, sporting and cultural activities on and off the site.
  - Worked closely with CE Highways to improve road safety measures to improve access for pedestrians from the hotel to the local village.
- 5.7. The support provided by Cheshire East Council was nationally recognised. As such, the Council was asked by the Home Office to extend the support provision until 30th of June 2022. The below quote was provided by Colin Parker, Asylum Lead, NW RSMP:

*“Cheshire East was one of the first local authorities to agree to provide wrap-around support, the standard and quality of which is second to none. Of particular note I would include the following:*

*Your work in identifying and going above and beyond to respond to the individual needs of your clients*

*Identifying health needs, and making appropriate and timely referrals*

*Counselling clients when they have faced difficulties, or when the system has failed them*

*Advocating for your clients, and trying to get the best possible outcome for them*

*Providing wrap-around support to people in bridging hotels has been an up-hill struggle, and the lack of a formal framework, and properly set-out funding arrangements has been particularly challenging. However, Cheshire East has always risen to the occasion, and provided an unparalleled service, (until the publication of the Funding Instruction on Friday 12th November) at a financial risk. I often point to Cheshire East's work at the Bridging Hotel as a beacon of good practice, of which you deserve to be extremely proud.”*

#### **Permanently resettling 5 families into Cheshire East**

- 5.8. Cheshire East Council have agreed to provide long-term integration support for five families under the ARAP scheme through an urgent

decision (Appendix 2) which was retrospectively supported by Policy Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

- Between 30<sup>th</sup> of September and 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, in partnership with Local Registered Housing Providers and Refugees Welcome we have managed to permanently accommodate all the 5 families (10 Adults and 14 children) in various parts of the borough as follows: 3 families in Crewe, 1 family in Macclesfield, 1 family in Alsager.
- The families secured social rented housing via local Registered Housing Providers in order to ensure long term sustainability and affordability.
- A package of support in accordance with the guidance is in place with all the families with the aim to fully integrate them by the end of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year in UK. Please note that all the children are in schools and some of the adults have already started employment or are actively seeking employment.
- Places in schools for the 5 families has been effectively brokered and pupils have now commenced their learning with their new peers. Feedback has been very positive and school leaders have openly embraced this scheme in wanting to offer the best support both educationally and in relation to their personal development and wellbeing.
- All the families are grateful to be homed into Cheshire East and very eager to repay this by becoming contributing members of their communities. Feedback from one of the families was received through the council's customer service centre:

*"I would like to give some feedback on the outstanding help and support provided by the Cheshire East Council and their team members who are actively involved in working for tremendous hours at the hotel to look after the Afghan nationals relocated to the UK under the ARAP scheme.*

*I was brought to the hotel along with my wife and three children at the end of August 2021 and resided there for more than a month where I found these hard working and committed officers tirelessly serving the relocated Afghans and making sure that we are taken good care of in order to settle with ease in the UK. From the creation of bank accounts, ARAP fund support cards, BRP's, registrations with NHS and home office to other paperworks they have left no gap in our documentations to settle as the proper legal residence of the UK. I was totally new in the country far away from my home, family and so were the rest of the Afghans at the hotel where we all lost our beloved country to insurgents and became demoralised but Cheshire East Council*

*members stationed in the hotel made our life comfortable and wonderful once all over and again. Their dedication and commitments to their jobs are outstanding and highly appreciated by my own family including many other Afghans.*

*Our children were provided all the clothing, toys, and education with activities that a normal child in the UK would have access to and even gave them equal parental love and joy to forget about the hardship and struggles they went through during our relocation from traveling along the dangerous Kabul airport routes and flying in the back of frightening military airplane at night.*

*They formed a great diverse team to communicate, liaise, help and support us living a normal life in an environment which is totally different from where we have all come, regardless of the difference in our culture, religion and the way of life's these individuals integrated with us just like our own family members and even managed to find a place in our hearts to remember them forever.*

*After settling at my home in mid October, my children are still remembering the kindness and friendliness of these people during their stay in the hotel. They even ask me to take them for a visit back to the hotel due to the wonderful time they had there and making friends with the council representatives of Cheshire East.*

*We the would like to take this opportunity to thank Cheshire East Council representatives in the hotel from the deep sea of our hearts and will always keep them in our hearts for being the most wonderful people we ever met in our life's.*

*Sincerely," Family XXX*

- One of the family members that have resettled into the borough has been successful in obtaining Cheshire East Council employment.

### **Current Position**

- 5.9. On the 6<sup>th</sup> January the Minister for Afghan Resettlement formally opened the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)<sup>1</sup>. The ACRS scheme will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others most at risk with a safe and legal route to settle in the UK over the next 3 years. It will prioritise those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law; and vulnerable people such as women and girls at risk,

▪  
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

and members of minority groups (including ethnic / religious minorities and LGBT+).

- 5.10.** Over 6,500 Afghan Nationals this year have already been placed under the ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme) into the temporary accommodation which is referred to as “bridging hotels” across the UK which further permanent accommodation will also be required.
- 5.11.** Whilst we are still understanding the needs around this population, the measured approach taken to delay and decision on permanently settling more families into the borough immediately is one that is taken based on the following rational:

Housing considerations: The Home Office are preferring four or five bedroom properties for larger families. An email received on 1st December 2021 from the Home Office stating, “We can also safely say that at the moment, we don’t need many more 2-bed or 3-bed properties (suitable for families of 4/5)”. The current Cheshire East Housing situation (Appendix 1) for the larger families is extremely competitive with high waiting lists.

Intensive but high-quality wrap around support: Staffing capacity around resettlement is fully allocated to the support provided at the bridging hotel and ensuring priority remains on sustainable integration for those that are currently being resettled into permanent accommodation in Cheshire East.

Education: capacity within the local schools to the hotel around available school places especially for primary is extremely challenging in managing those families in transition or moving to permanent homes. Careful consideration would be needed for any new permanent placements in terms of aligning housing availability with school places in the local area.

## **6. Consultation and Engagement**

- 6.1.** External consultation would not be appropriate for this decision.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Legal**

7.1.1. Legal considerations (dated 23.06.21) were set out in the previous report to Policy Committee dated 7th September 2021. There are no further immediate Legal implications for consideration.

7.1.2. Following approval of WARNs, Legal Services have supported the preparation and entering into of three separate Contracts for Services for the Support of the Afghanistan Families Provision, for various contract periods, as set out below:

- WARN 100027: Inspire Motivate Overcome (27.09.21 to 16.01.22);

- WARN 100028: LOL Foundation (08.10.21 to 08.02.21);
  - WARN 100029: Refugees Welcome (08.10.21 to 07.10.22).
- 7.1.3 The Contracts place obligations on the Providers that reflect and assist with the monitoring and reporting mechanisms which are required under the Home Office Funding Agreement (including Annex B Data Sharing Protocol). This supports the Council's ability to meet the conditions attached to those funding requirements.
- 7.1.4 In the event of the ARAP/ACRS Scheme and/or the Home Office Funding Agreement being extended/expanded, the contractual arrangements will need to be reviewed and any proposed consequent contract extensions/renewals need to be made in accordance with, and in consideration of, the Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

## **7.2. Finance**

These schemes are fully funded from specific ring-fenced home office grants.

Claims have been made in accordance with the funding instructions (included in the appendices) and we're currently anticipating the first instalment payments from the home office. Supplementary Revenue Estimates will be completed for the grant income to ensure that the appropriate governance is in place.

### **Wrap Around Support**

The tariff for wrap around support is £28 per day, per individual supported. CEC's responsibility and therefore funding eligibility ends once the individual leaves the bridging accommodation.

The grant claim submitted in November was for approximately £220k. Further grant claims will be submitted up until the wrap around support ceases.

### **Relocation Support**

There is a separate funding tariff to cover the costs of permanently resettled families:

<b>Funding Year</b>	<b>Tariff per individual (£)</b>
Year1	10,500
Year2	6,000
Year3	4,020

In addition to the tariff, for each adult resettled we receive a one-off £850 for English language learning support. The school aged children attract an educational tariff, in lieu of the AWPU which their school would have missed out on due them enrolling mid-academic year. This educational tariff will be transferred to the relevant school once received (and after enrolment).

Both grant funds and their associated expenditure are being monitored. We have separate cost codes set up in the accounts to capture the relevant expenditure and income. Current forecasts anticipate that the funding tariffs will be sufficient to meet our current commitments, so there are no financial implications or changes required to the MTFS as a result of the recommendations in this report.

Specific funding to support education has been made available which will come into the Local Authority on a quarterly basis. Our initial allocation was £63,700. A detailed breakdown of incurred costs has been returned to the DfE as required to the value of £80,000 and an exceptional case has been made for funding to cover the difference in these two amounts. The key reason for the higher costs is the need for dedicated transport to schools.

### **7.3. Policy**

No policy implications have been identified at this stage

### **7.4. Equality**

Equality impact assessment is not required.

### **7.5. Human Resources**

Two additional Community Liaison Officers have been recruited to support the additional demand on the Communities service. A number of staff have also had to be re-assigned from traditional duties to support the bridging hotel demands

### **7.6. Risk Management**

Financial risks – no funds received from the Home Office to date, although initial claim has been committed and we are funded per person per day at the bridging hotel, if capacity reduces as will the funding

Housing risks – The need for larger family accommodation is growing in Cheshire East and availability is limited, as outlined in Appendix one, to prioritise housing for this scheme will mean that current Cheshire East residents will have to wait longer for available properties, including those families who are threatened with homelessness.

Affordability is an issue within the private rented sector, especially for larger families who are reliant on benefits and are restricted on the level of rent they can pay under the Local Housing Allowance. Whilst the Government will pay over the Local Housing Allowance levels, this is only for a period of 3 years. Our experience with other schemes is that families then have to apply for social rented housing.

Adult Safeguarding concerns/incidents can occur in any setting and the potential for such issues to be raised within the Hotel setting remains. Some issues may be raised due to historical trauma, some due to incidents of power, coercion and control, or some due to Hate Crime, Exploitation or Radicalisation. The Wrap Around Support has enabled such incidents to be escalated quickly and appropriate advice and support has been provided. Bespoke Safeguarding Training has been provided on site to enable individuals to understand what is abuse and how to report it.

#### **7.7. Rural Communities**

This does not have rural implications

#### **7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

Early Help and Prevention Services have supported the families at the hotel since they arrived in August 2021. Initially daily support was offered from a number of Early Help Staff, this reduced at the start of November as the children were identified school and Nursery places. We currently offer Early Help Support every day however, 2 days on site, 3 days virtually.

Demand on the Early Help and Prevention services to help provide the ongoing wrap around support and coordination that is required both onsite and offsite with only temporary arrangements in place and no capacity for cover

On-going support has been offered to the 5 families who have settled in Cheshire East – each having their own Family Support Worker to ensure wrap around support is continuing while they settle into their community.

#### **7.9. Public Health**

COVID-19 outbreak was reported within the bridging hotel on 03/01/2022. Infection rates are high across the Country and the outbreak management plan has been implemented. This did cause staffing capacity issues and required additional security.

#### **7.10. Climate Change**

No climate change implications are expected.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Position: Community Development Manager Contact Name: Dan Coyne Telephone: 07816144062 Email: Daniel.Coyne@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	The following appendices are not attached to this report but are available for inspection as background papers:

	<p>Appendix 1 - Housing Demands across Cheshire East Appendix 2 - ODR for bridging hotel wrap around support and upfront costs Appendix 3 - 2021 22 - ARAP-ACRS HOTEL WRAPAROUND SUPPORT Funding Instruction.V1.0.docx Appendix 4 - 2021 11 18 Final ACRS-ARAP LA Funding Instruction v1.0</p>
Background Papers:	<p>Policy Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021 acknowledge and supported the urgent decision made to provide permanent accommodation for up to 5 families. Item 31 “<i>Reporting of Urgent Decisions</i>” <a href="http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=959&amp;MId=8660&amp;Ver=4">http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=959&amp;MId=8660&amp;Ver=4</a></p> <p>Connected Communities Operating Model <a href="https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s90008/Communities%20Team%20Update.pdf">https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s90008/Communities%20Team%20Update.pdf</a></p>



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** Review of the Emergency Assistance Scheme

**Report of:** Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services

**Report Reference No:** CP/34/21-22

**Ward(s) Affected:** All

---

<b>Corporate Plan Priorities</b>	<b>Open</b>	An open and enabling organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Fair</b>	A council which empowers and cares about people	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Green</b>	A thriving and sustainable place	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report is to seek approval from the Committee on recommendations for changes to the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23, following a review. The recommendations focus on retaining key elements of the scheme, whilst offering several improvements.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. The Emergency Assistance 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 scheme forms part of the Council's overall approach to support people in crisis.
- 2.2. The Committee approved the review of the scheme on 7 September 2021. Consultation followed this decision, which prompted responses from members of the public and stakeholder organisations.

- 2.3.** The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed changes to the scheme. Subject to approval of the recommendations the scheme will continue, with amendments being implemented from 1 April 2022.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **3.1. To approve the Emergency Assistance Scheme with the following changes from 1 April 2022:-**

- To allow for discretion in applying the current limit of only one Emergency Assistance award per 12 month period; enabling further support to be provided in exceptional cases.
- To provide supermarket vouchers in addition to the existing process of referrals to food banks for those in food crisis.
- To extend the Scheme to provide utility vouchers to those in fuel crisis.

And:

- To confirm that the scheme will remain non-cash based to reduce the risk of abuse.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** It is over four years since the last review of the Emergency Assistance scheme and the scheme needs to respond to changing demand and priorities, particularly in relation to food and fuel poverty, and to ensure it is meeting the needs of those seeking assistance, as well as the wishes of the Council taxpayers.
- 4.2.** Following the feedback received (see section 6) the scheme is generally meeting needs and delivering essential support to those most vulnerable and in need so only minor changes are required.
- 4.3.** As individuals can face many varied and multiple challenges, it is important that the scheme continues to be flexible and responsive, signposting to other services applicants may require, whether they receive support under the scheme or not.

### **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** The scheme could remain unchanged however it would be unable to meet changing demands particularly in relation to food and fuel poverty.
- 5.2.** 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 costly support for those whose lives are broken by poverty.
- 5.3.** The scheme could be merged with other crisis support services and the budget transferred. This option is not preferred as, although there is

commonality across schemes, it was felt this scheme works very well as a stand-alone option.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	Some customers will struggle to meet food and utility costs	Increase in number of vulnerable customers struggling to meet food and / or utility costs and turning to the Council for more costly support
Scheme could end	Increase in poverty	Larger number of vulnerable customers will struggle to meet food and / or utility costs and turning to the Council for more costly support without a local welfare safety net
Merge the scheme with other crisis support services	The current scheme works well and supports those at risk of crisis as a local welfare safety net to try and prevent customers presenting in crisis	The current scheme supports those at risk of crisis, if merged with Crisis schemes customers may not apply believing they must be in crisis which could result in the need for more costly support

## 6. Background

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. The scheme provides rent deposits, furniture, and white goods (recycled where possible) and emergency food (through local food banks where possible). However, other support considered necessary may be provided, such as help with removals. Unlike the former crisis loans and community care grants administered by the DWP, it does not provide cash.
- 6.4. A summary of the qualifying criteria for the current scheme is as follows:-

- 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.

- 6.5.** A review of the current scheme was approved by Corporate Policy Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The review was undertaken, informed by a public consultation, (see section 6) to seek views on the eligibility criteria and the types of support allowed and to establish if the Scheme continued to meet the need of our most vulnerable customers.
- 6.6.** In addition, in line with the Customer Experience Strategy a wider review is underway to consider the customer journey for those facing an emergency. The review is considering the range of Council and partner services available to those in crisis, the ease with which that support can be accessed, any duplication of effort or gaps in provision, ensuring that these provide a coherent package of advice and support.

## 7. Consultation and Engagement

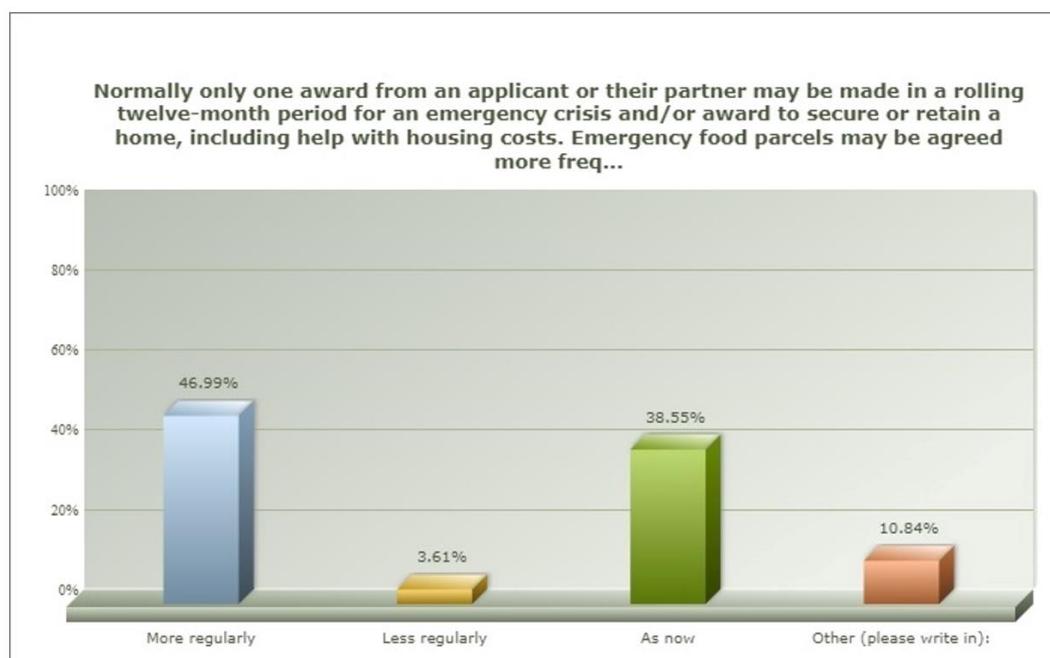
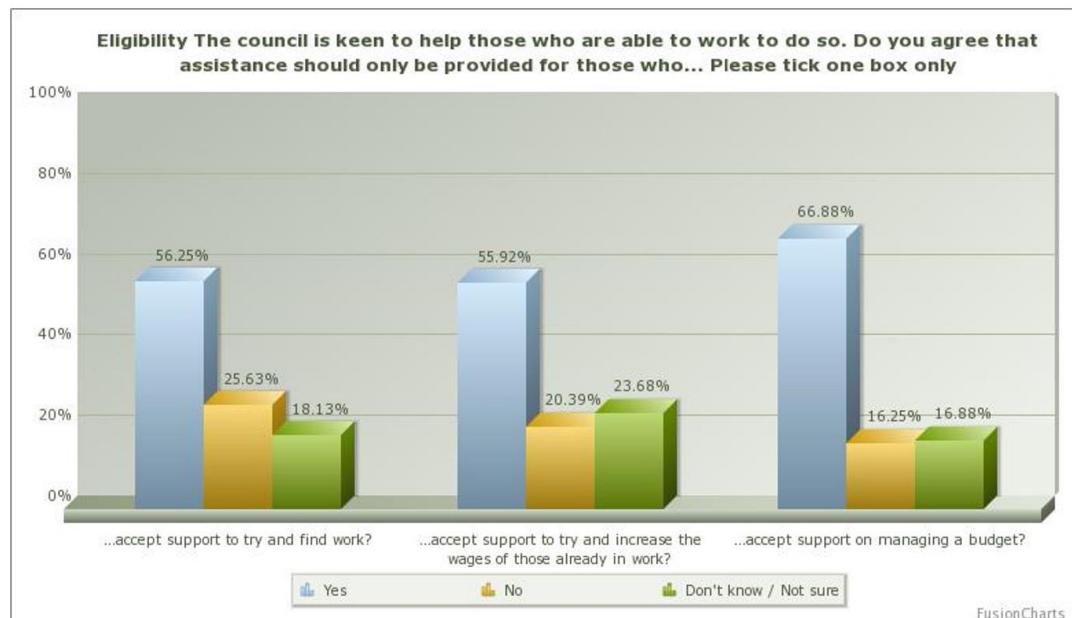
- 7.1.** A formal review was undertaken between 26 October 2021 and 3 January 2022 seeking views from the public on the scheme and potential changes.
- 7.2.** This was promoted on the Council's web site, social media channels and with key stakeholders. Details were provided for customers during contact about Emergency Assistance during this period and emails sent to previous applicants inviting them to express their views.
- 7.3.** A total of 171 completed response were received. The respondents covered a range of:
- Ages
  - Gender
  - Ethnic origins

- Those with day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability
- 6 responses on behalf of organisations

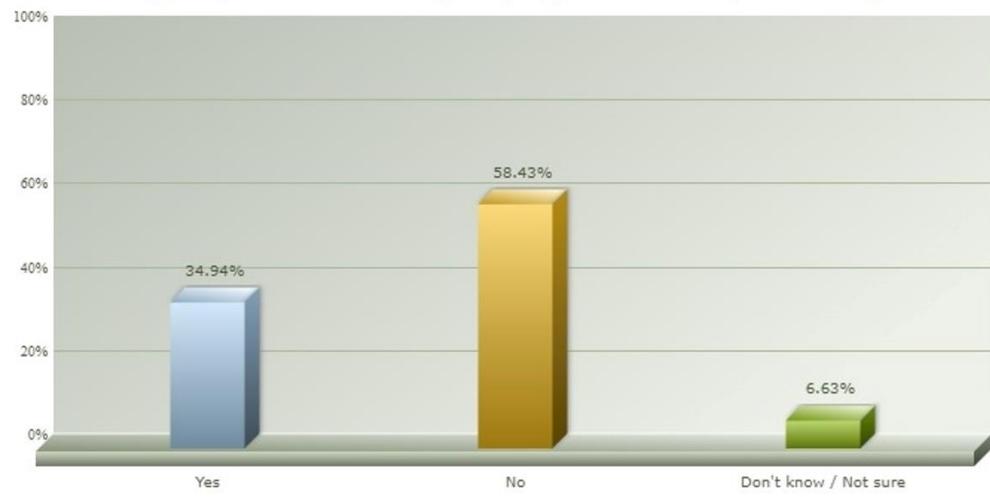
**7.4.** Most respondents were supportive of the key elements of the current scheme as follows:

Feedback	Responses		
	Agree	Disagree	
Agree that assistance should only be provided for those who accept support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to try and find work where able</li> <li>• to try and increase the wages of those already in work</li> <li>• on managing a budget</li> </ul>	56.3% 55.9% 66.9%	25.6% 20.4% 16.3%	
Normally only one award may be made in a rolling 12-month period. Emergency food parcels may be agreed more frequently	More regularly 47%	As now 38.6%	Less regularly 3.6%
Scheme is currently non-cash based, should cash awards be made available	Yes 34.9%	No 58.4%	
Should supermarket vouchers be issued as well as referrals to food banks	Yes 76.8%	No 17.07%	
White goods are usually limited to one of the following: Fridge Cooker Washing machine (where medical needs or dependent children) Do you feel this list should remain the same?	Yes 64.4%	No 30.1%	
Should the existing furniture classed as essential remain the same?	Yes 75.2%	No 19.4%	

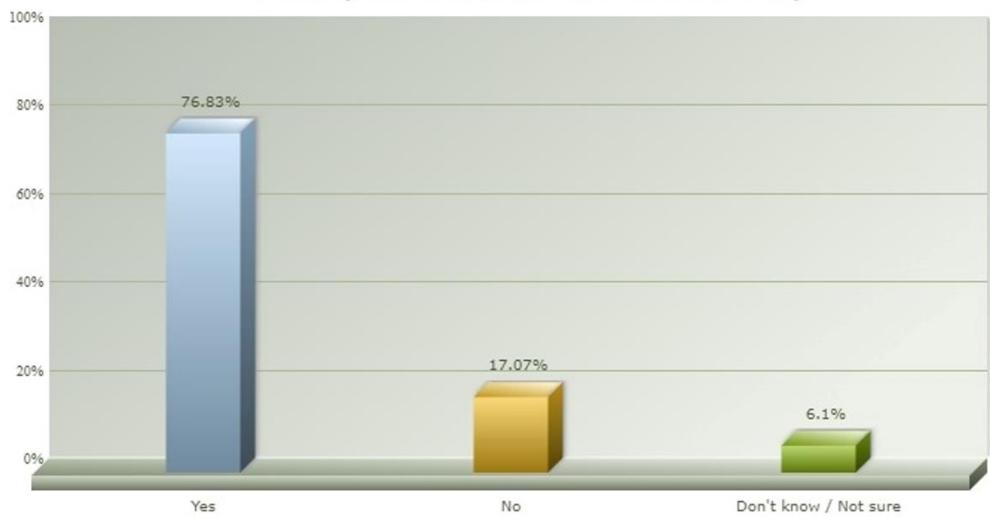
7.5. The following graphs show the responses to the key questions:



**Provision of support** Support provided by the scheme is currently non-cash based, with support only provided through goods, supplies or services. This is to ensure that the support provided is used on goods, supplies or services, and is not spent o...

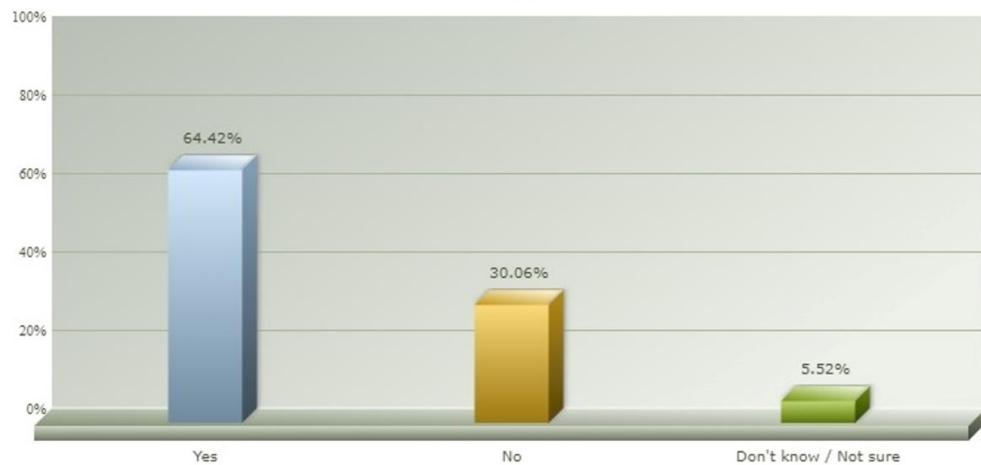


**Currently food referrals are made to food banks. Do you think supermarket vouchers should be provided as well? Please tick one box only**

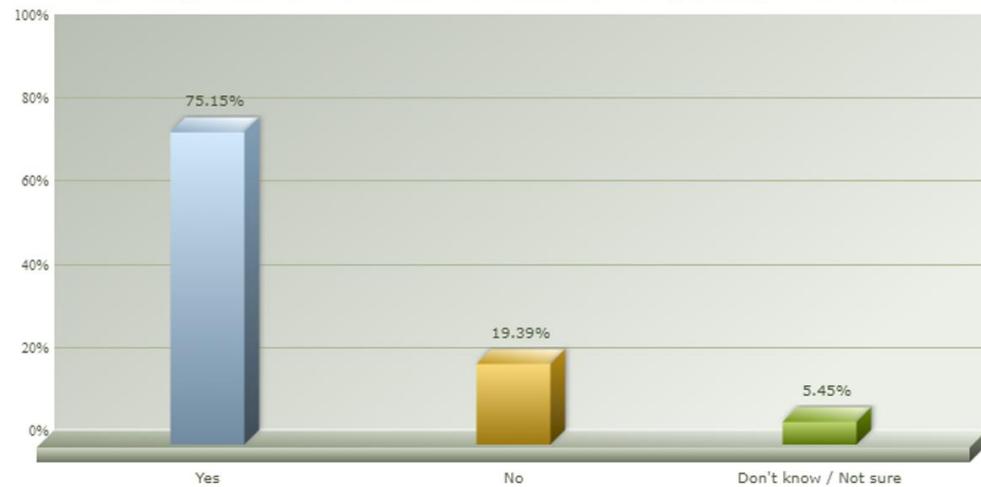


We normally limit the white goods we provide to one of the following, which are usually reconditioned or recycled items: Fridge Cooker Washing machine (where medical needs or dependent children) Do you feel this list should remain the same?

P...



Currently the following items of furniture are provided for vulnerable applicants: Bed (single bed if a single person or lone parent) Settee Bedding A starter pack per person (1 dinner plate, 1 dessert/cereal bowl, 1 fork, 1 knife, 1 dessert spo...



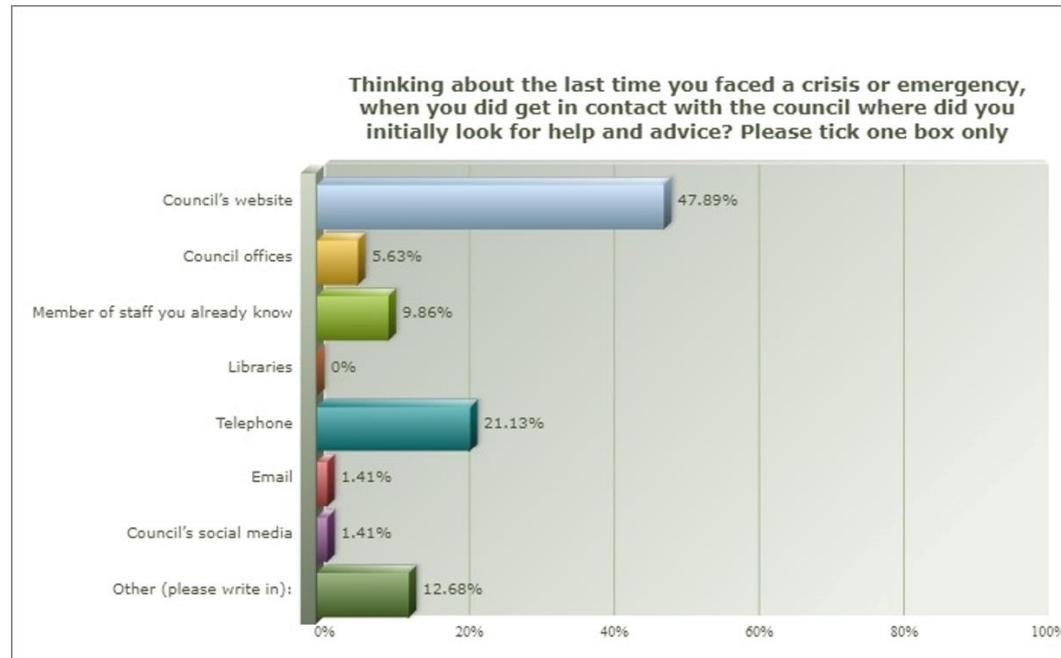
**7.6.** Respondents were invited to comment further, and the following summarises the responses:

#### Criteria

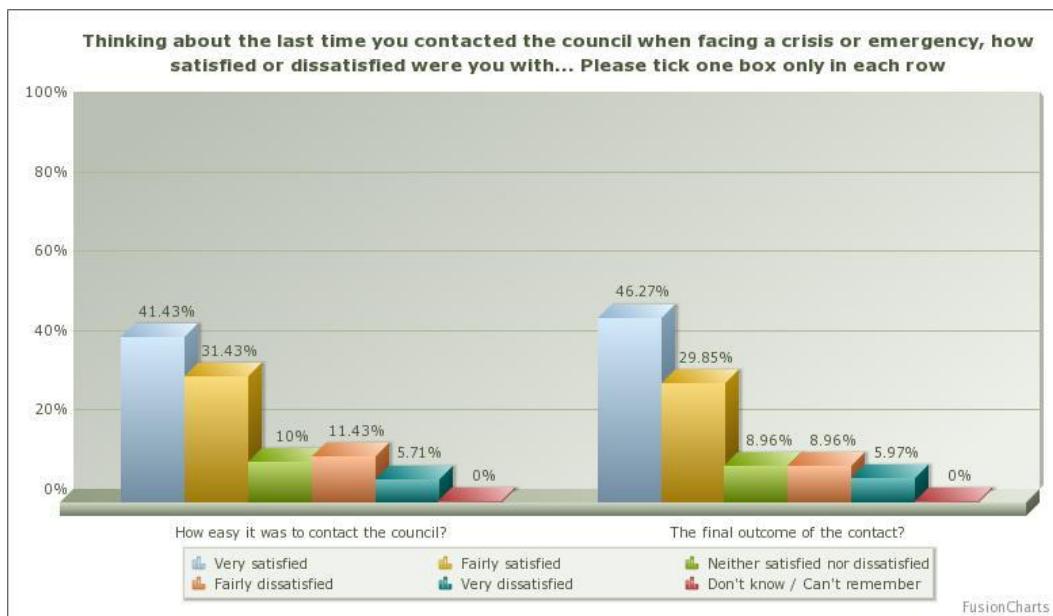
- Agree that those who are not in a position to find work are still eligible (covers a wide range of potential barriers)
- There needs to be a holistic and flexible approach
- Proof should be required for eligibility
- Some comments that there should not be any eligibility conditions

## Awards

- Agree that additional awards should be made in exceptional circumstances
  - Agree that foodbank referrals should be made more regularly
  - Each case should be considered on its own merit
  - Opposing views with regards to offering cash awards:
    - Offers dignity and choice
    - Open to abuse and could be used for non-essential items
    - Utilities and supermarket vouchers allow for more flexibility and can provide more fresh items than foodbank parcels
    - Concerns that supermarket vouchers should be restricted to food items
  - Whilst majority agree that the choice of white goods is correct, washing machines should be considered for all and an option to provide more than one where there is a clear justifiable need.  
Should have option of microwave.
    - Washing machines & freezers help with financial pressures and more cost effective
  - Agreement about recycled and reconditioned goods where possible
  - Furniture generally agreed but consider double bed for adult and have flexibility
  - Mixed views on requirements and size of starter packs
  - Consider help with removals, flooring, clothing, phones, travel costs, rubbish removal and utility bills
  - Concerns about the scheme causing reliance
  - Ensure signposting to other relevant organisations
- 7.7.** In addition the review invited feedback on customers experience when contacting the Council in an emergency. This is part of a wider review looking at improvements to the customer experience and the information available to them. It aims to ensure the Council provides a cohesive and consistent customer journey for those facing an emergency.
- 7.8.** Of the responses received:
- 43.37% had contacted the Council when facing a crisis or emergency
  - 59.1% of these contacted the Council directly with the remainder being referred from partner organisations
- 7.9.** The majority of initial help and advice sought was via the web site followed by telephone contact:



- 7.10.** There were high satisfaction levels on both the ease of contacting the Council and the final outcome.



## 8. Implications

### 8.1. Legal

The scheme is discretionary, and the Council determines its own policy. The policy should be fair and reasonable and should be applied fairly and reasonably. Any consultation undertaken as part of a review should be in accordance with good practice and with the benefit of specific advice as necessary.

## **8.2. Finance**

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.

## **8.3. Policy**

The review of the scheme supports the following strategic priority:

An open and enabling organisation

## **8.4. Equality**

The equality impact assessment on the Emergency Assistance Scheme has been updated following the results of this review of the scheme.

## **8.5. Human Resources**

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

## **8.6. Risk Management**

As the scheme is demand led, there is a risk that a large increase in demand will exceed the budget.

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.

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.

## **8.7. Rural Communities**

There are no direct implications for rural communities

## **8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

There are no direct implications for children and young people

## **8.9. Public Health**

There are no direct implications for public health

## **8.10. 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.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Liz Rimmer, Benefits Manager <a href="mailto:Liz.rimmer@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Liz.rimmer@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a> 01270 371448
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Information on the current Emergency Assistance Scheme: <a href="#">Emergency Assistance (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a>



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** Cheshire East Digital Strategy

**Report of:** Jane Burns: Executive Director Corporate Services

**Report Reference No:** CP/57/21-22

**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. In September 2021 a report was submitted to Corporate Policy Committee detailing the progress made towards this digital priority and the challenges of co-ordinating this activity across the Council and with our partners. Corporate Policy Committee approved a recommendation to develop a cohesive overarching Digital Strategy enabling delivery of our digital ambitions at the scale, focus and impact required.
- 1.2. The report also provided recommendations as to the aims and principles upon which the Strategy should be developed which were approved by Corporate Policy Committee.
- 1.3. The draft Digital Strategy was subsequently submitted to and approved by Corporate Policy Committee in December 2021, subject to formal consultation. That consultation is now complete, and this report provides details of the outcome and requests approval for the final Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Corporate Policy Committee: -
  - Approve the final Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council
  - Approve that further updates are provided to Corporate Policy on progress against the aims of the Strategy on a 6 monthly basis

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1.** To provide a cohesive Digital Strategy for the Council and our partners in support of the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.
- 3.2.** To enable better co-ordination of activity and standards, including with our partners, to increase efficiency and promote innovation by providing a focus for activity and appropriate support.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1.** The Council could continue without a Digital Strategy. This option is not recommended as, without the focus of an overarching Strategy, there are significant risks of inefficiency as well as a limited ability to share expertise and best practice.

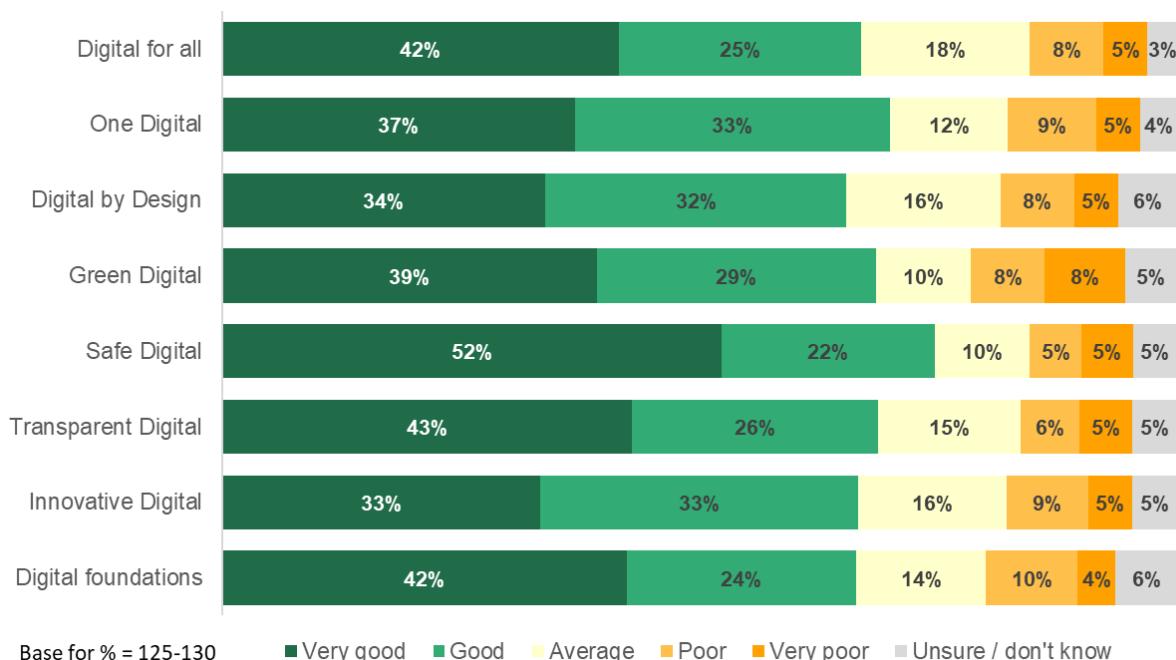
### **5. Background**

- 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 Council's digital transformation, underpinned by a set of principles against which the existing wide range of activities can be co-ordinated and future initiatives can be assessed.
- 5.4.** In September 2021, Corporate Policy Committee approved both the principles upon which the Digital Strategy should be based and the themes around which it should be developed. In December 2021, Corporate Policy Committee approved a draft Digital Strategy, subject to formal consultation.
- 5.5.** An officer-level Digital Board has been established chaired by the Director for Finance and Customer Services. The Board will co-ordinate the delivery of the Digital Strategy, ensuring all actions are delivered and the anticipated outcomes and benefits are achieved.
- 5.6.** The Digital Strategy can be found at **Appendix one**.

## 6. Consultation and Engagement

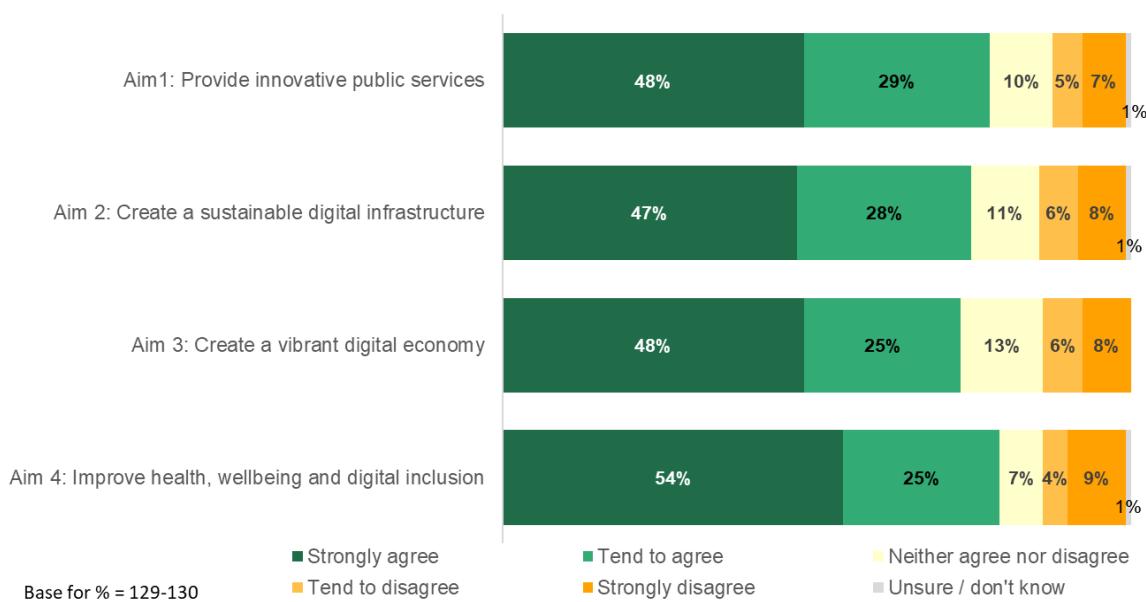
- 6.1.** The draft Digital Strategy was subject to formal consultation between 6 December and 23 January. The consultation was promoted on the Council's website and through press releases, social media, and internal communications. It was issued to the Digital Influence Panel, promoted in our Libraries, and via our Community Co-ordinators. It was shared directly with our partners via the Business Forum and the Digital Inclusion Panel (including representation from Health, Council Voluntary Services and Age UK), with colleagues in Health and Connecting Cheshire and with Senior Managers across the Council engaged in delivering supporting projects or initiatives.
- 6.2.** 179 responses were received with the majority being supportive of the aims, principles and actions contained within the Strategy. A summary of the responses is as follows:-
- 6.3. Digital Principles:** Each of the principles were rated as good or very good by the majority of respondents. No additional principles were suggested.

**Figure 1: Rating of the principles**



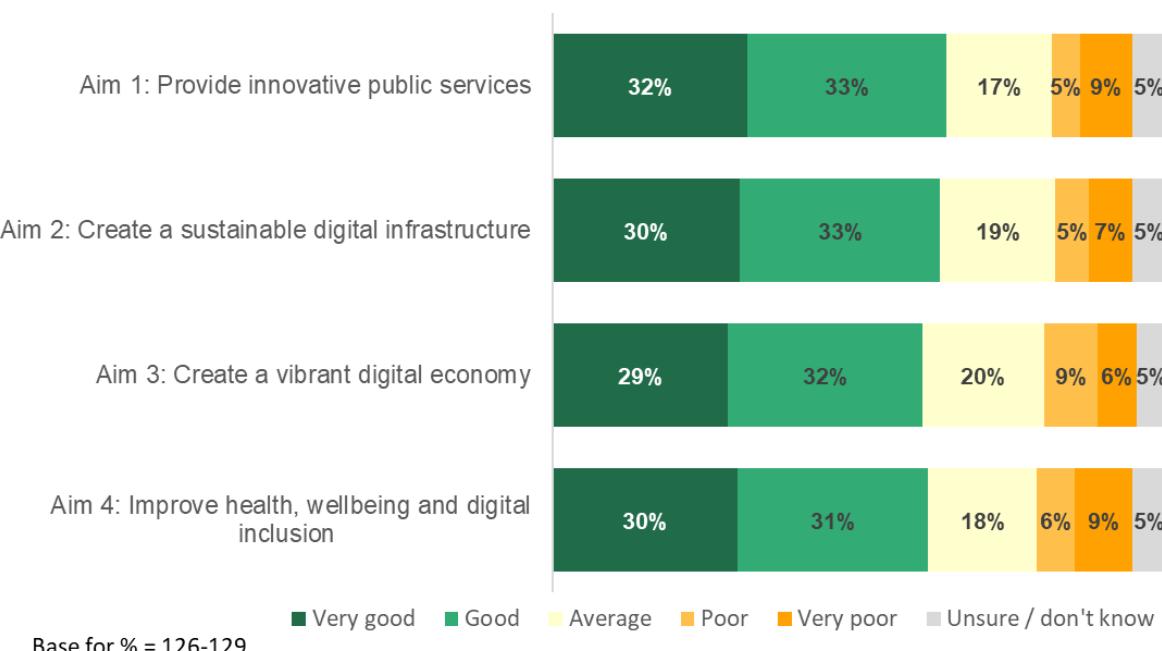
**6.4. Digital Aims:** There was strong support for the overall aims of the strategy being the right areas to focus on with the majority of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing.

**Figure 2: Agreement / disagreement that the aims were the right areas to focus on within the Cheshire East digital strategy**



- 6.5. Actions:** The actions underpinning each of the themes were rated as good or very good by the majority of respondents.

**Figure 3: Rating of each set of actions given under the aims**



- 6.6.** Several suggestions were made within the responses which have now been incorporated within the Strategy. These included:-

- Emphasising the need to make data available to our partners to inform their decision making and to the public to demonstrate our performance
- Exploring the potential to utilise our buildings estate to create digitally enabled “pop in” spaces for residents, businesses, or partners
- Exploring the use of digital to provide real time public transport data in support of the Council’s green agenda

- 6.7.** A consistent theme throughout the consultation feedback was the need to recognise that not everyone is able to or willing to use digital channels and that traditional methods of contact must be maintained. There were also references to those who are less confident with using digital and the need to provide support to set up and access digital technologies especially for the elderly, the young and those in rural areas.

- 6.8.** Whilst both issues were incorporated within the Strategy, they have been given greater emphasis in this final version. The introduction to the Strategy has been redrafted to increase the focus on this and a

specific commitment to maintain and improve non digital methods of support has been incorporated.

- 6.9. A further theme was a request for more information on how the plans would be delivered, funded, and measured. The final page of the Strategy explains that detailed plans and measures are being developed and this has again been re-iterated within the introduction.
- 6.10. Finally, a few comments were raised regarding the terminology within the Strategy. This has now been reviewed to ensure “plain English” is used throughout.

## 7. Implications

- 7.1. **Legal - 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.
- 7.2. **Finance** – The Strategy will provide a clear vision for the Council’s digital transformation against which the existing wide range of activities can be co-ordinated and future initiatives can be assessed. The governance, associated with implementation of the strategy, will increase opportunities to achieve efficiencies within the medium term. Any changes to the MTFS will be reported and approved in accordance with the Constitution.
- 7.3. **Policy** – The proposed principle and themes are aligned with the Council’s vision, priorities and values as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025
- 7.4. **Equality** – The fundamental principles underpinning the Strategy ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all digital proposals. 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. A full EIA has been conducted and is included as background papers.

- 7.5. 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.
- 7.6. 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.
- 7.7. Rural Communities** – The fundamental principles underpinning the Strategy ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all digital proposals including our rural communities.
- 7.8. 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. Specific actions have also been incorporated within the Strategy to address the issues of safety on-line.
- 7.9. Public Health** – The Digital Strategy theme of Health, Well-being and inclusion specifically considers digital opportunities to improve public health.
- 7.10. 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.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Helen Gerrard, Head of Customer Services Helen.Gerrard@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 371464
Appendices:	Appendix One – Digital Strategy
Background Papers:	Digital Strategy Consultation Report EIA  <a href="#">Developing a Digital Strategy - report final.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a> <a href="#">Digital Strategy - report final.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a>

ei

This page is intentionally left blank



# Cheshire East Digital Strategy

2022 - 2024

Page 47



# Our Digital Strategy supports our vision of becoming an **open, fair and green** Cheshire East.

Digital is now a part of most people's everyday lives. We use it to buy products, to access services, to connect with family and friends, to deliver our businesses and to support our health and well-being.

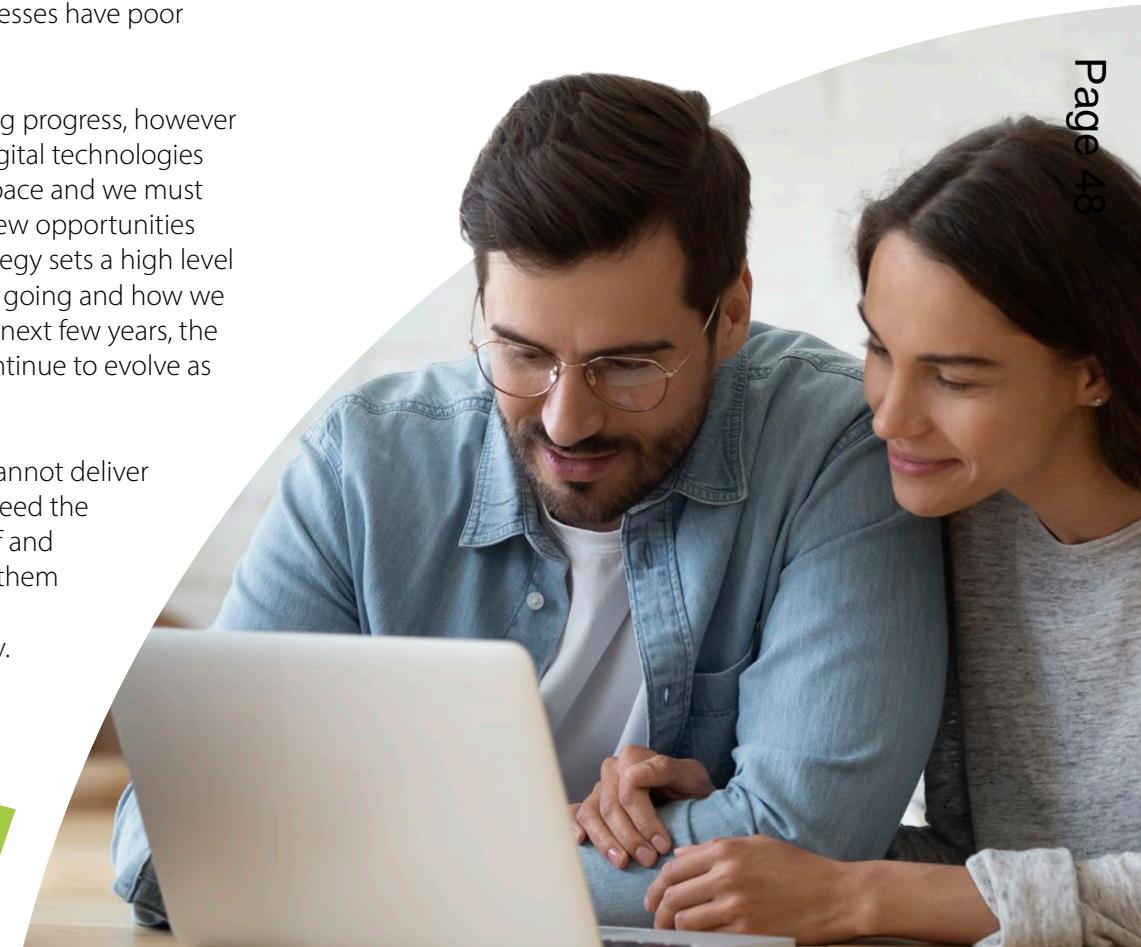
Digital brings significant opportunities for the residents and businesses of Cheshire East. It can help to improve our economy, our care services, make the council a more efficient organisation and enable the council to deliver better services and a better customer experience. It supports much of what the council is doing to become open, fair and green (defined in our Corporate Plan).

Whilst digital undoubtedly creates opportunities, it also brings challenges. We need to ensure that we continue to support those who are unable or choose not to use digital. We need to address inequalities for those in our most disadvantaged

communities and those communities where individuals and businesses have poor connectivity.

We have already made strong progress, however there is more to be done. Digital technologies also continue to change at pace and we must be flexible to adapt to the new opportunities this presents. While this strategy sets a high level framework for where we are going and how we will move forwards over the next few years, the detail of what we do will continue to evolve as we deliver and learn.

We also recognise that we cannot deliver this strategy alone. We will need the support of our partners, staff and communities and we thank them for their contribution to the development of this strategy.





To use the power of digital innovation to redesign the council and the services it provides – making Cheshire East a **better place to live and work** and supporting our **residents and businesses to thrive**.

# OUR DIGITAL AIMS

1

Provide  
innovative  
public  
services

2

Create a  
sustainable  
digital  
infrastructure

3

Create a  
vibrant digital  
economy

4

**Improve**  
health,  
wellbeing &  
inclusion

## OUR DIGITAL PRINCIPLES



### DIGITAL FOR ALL

Everyone can benefit from the council's digital transformation including customers, residents, businesses, rural communities and community sectors.



### ONE DIGITAL

The strategy and solutions will cut across services and communities, ensuring joined-up working, driving efficiencies and improving customer experience.



### 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 council's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough aiming for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045.



### 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. We will develop and adhere to a set of ethical principles for the use of digital technology .



### 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.

## 1 Provide innovative public services

### VISION :

**To be an information-led council, delivering services which are responsive, convenient, accessible and safe in a consistent and cost effective way.**



## Ambitions

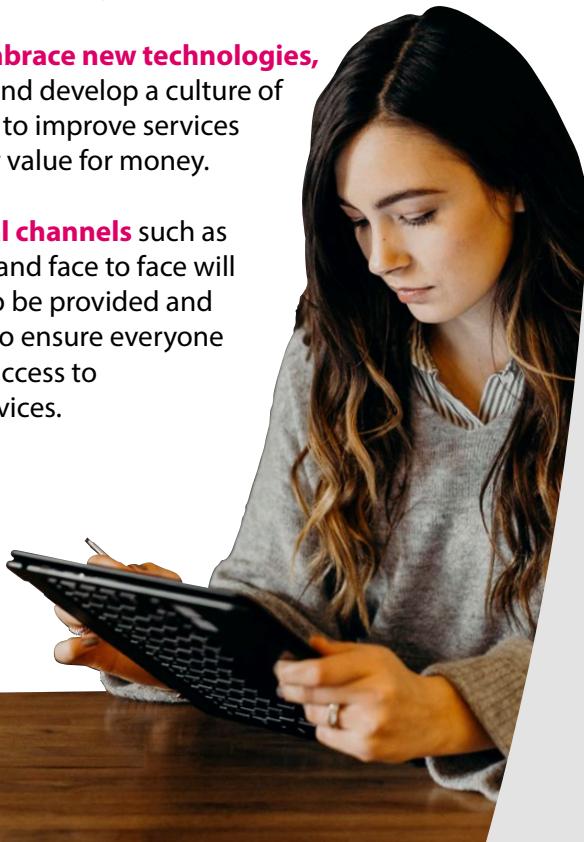
**Digital technology and culture will form our foundations** as an open, fair and green organisation.

**Digital services will be designed around the needs of customers** – they will be accessible and appealing, encouraging those who can to use them, while not excluding those who can't.

**The data we hold will be safe, secure and private** where appropriate and of good quality, underpinning our decision making.

**We will embrace new technologies,** test ideas and develop a culture of innovation to improve services and deliver value for money.

**Non digital channels** such as telephony and face to face will continue to be provided and improved to ensure everyone has equal access to council services.



## Facts & Figures



**The council receives more than 5 million visits per year to its corporate website [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)**



**Around 70% of all enquiries** to the council are made through digital channels – online, through chatbots or e-forms.



## Progress so far...

Our Customer Experience Strategy was approved in 2021 and a programme has been established to deliver its aims.

The corporate website is currently being updated and refreshed to improve the user experience.

Our digital platform is being reviewed to ensure we are making the best use of technology and can deliver an excellent online customer experience.

We have an Information and Data Management Programme to review and make best use of the information we hold and to consider innovative approaches to how we can use that data safely and securely.

We have invested in new technologies for our workforce, initially to support the need for home working during the Covid pandemic but which now brings further opportunities for more efficient working practices.



## Actions - Improve digital services for customers

**1**

**Deliver a re-designed corporate website** which is easy for customers to find information and access council services.

**2**

**Re-design our services around the customer,** work with customers to co-design services which meet customer needs and are delivered in a way which makes it easy for them to access.

**3**

**Implement a customer experience platform** to improve management of all customer contact, including telephone calls, emails and online services.

**4**

**Consider options to enable customers to personalise information and preferences** and to extend the ability to access personal data in a secure and safe environment.

**5**

**Continue to deliver and improve traditional access channels** such as telephony and face to face for those who need them.



## Actions - Make greater use of data to inform decision making

1

**Embed the council's Information Strategy** enabling data-led decision making across services. Make data publicly available to support decision making by partners and to allow council performance to be assessed.

2

**Provide a robust framework for the use of people's data**, and provide staff with the skills and knowledge to use that data confidently and competently.

3

**Implement the technology required to hold data centrally** and ensure data is consistent, secure and accurate across the council – in turn providing a single view of key business entities such as customer and property.

4

**Implement and ensure access to data sharing frameworks** particularly around the adult social care and health domain, to provide support in areas such as violence prevention and mental health.



## Actions - Drive efficiencies and service improvements

1

**Continue to support flexible ways of working** using technology to allow staff to work from any location or within their local communities.

2

**Develop an agile approach to digital transformation** reducing the time and cost of technology change.

3

**Test innovative technologies** including automation to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

4

**Continue to grow our digital ecosystem,** particularly the technology which allows us to seamlessly interface between internal and external systems.



## 2

## Sustainable digital infrastructure

### VISION :

**Supporting the delivery of a world-class, area-wide digital infrastructure,  
allowing everyone to access and benefit from digital technologies.**



## Ambitions

All residents and businesses will be able to access **high speed broadband** in their home or locality.

We will use **Smart City technology** to drive efficiencies and to support the council's green agenda.

We will work with planning colleagues to require **all new developments to allow for fibre broadband**.

We will work towards the government commitment of **full fibre broadband to all by 2025**.

We will modernise **Wi-Fi access** in our council buildings and work with partners to allow staff to work from multiple locations.



## Facts & Figures



Currently, more than **96%** of Cheshire premises can access speeds of **30Mbps or above**



A national target to achieve **85%**

**full fibre gigabit (with speeds >1000mbps) capable coverage by 2025 has been set. Cheshire East's current full fibre coverage position is 28%**

A report by Rural England has found that:



**1/3**

**1/2**

**of rural households are unable to make a mobile phone call indoors**

**are unable to access 4G mobile networks**



## Progress so far...

We have worked with partners across Cheshire to deliver the first three phases of the Connecting Cheshire roll-out, providing broadband access to an additional 106,000 premises; of which over 90,000 are now able to access superfast, or above speeds broadband.

All libraries and Connected Community centres provide access to free Wi-Fi.

We have replaced more than 39,000 street lights in Cheshire East since 2015 with light emitting diode (LED) lighting.



## Actions - Support access to broadband within homes and businesses

1

**Deliver the aims of Connecting Cheshire,** in partnership with Airband, to roll out gigabit-capable, full-fibre broadband connectivity to more than 4,000 properties across rural or hard-to-reach areas of Cheshire.

2

**Identify areas of poor broadband and mobile connectivity** and work with providers to improve.

3

**Work with planning policies** to support 5G provision and to require the provision of full fibre broadband in all new properties.



## Actions - Provide access in the community

1

**Improve the provision of Wi-Fi and the Peoples Network** within all libraries and community centres.

2

**Review and implement options to develop a community grant scheme** to fund equipment, subsidise broadband and Wi-Fi installation for those on low incomes.

3

**Develop proposals to support care leavers** through the provision of affordable connectivity.

4

**Review the Cheshire East buildings estate to identify options to** create flexible, well-connected and short-term/pop-up work spaces.



## Actions - Develop digital technologies to support the council's green agenda

1

**Implement technology to support a reduction in carbon emissions** such as the use of LED street lighting or real time data to promote the use of public transport.

2

**Maximise the use of artificial intelligence** and digital technologies to proactively monitor the condition of our roads, pavements and highway assets. and to support service delivery such as waste services.

3

**Work with planning** to encourage developers to integrate smart technology concepts into new developments, such as domestic car charging points.

4

**Work with distribution network operators** to provide smart grid services to strengthen our ability to manage power usage and generation, and integrate smart technologies such as vehicle-to-grid charging.

### 3 To create a vibrant digital economy

#### **VISION :**

**A digitally skilled workforce and an internationally recognised area for digital businesses to thrive.**



## Ambitions

**Develop the workforce to provide the right skills for our economy** by supporting our residents to improve their skill levels and ensuring education provision meets the demands of our employers.

**Create the right conditions for business growth** with a focus on our key businesses and growth sectors through tailored support, the provision of inward investment opportunities and place marketing.

**Increase the diffusion of best practice** so that small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have the tools to become more productive and encourage SMEs to adopt digital technologies and practices.

**Work with organisations and schools** to support young people into digital careers.



## Facts & Figures



The 2018 Tech Nation report estimated the value of the UK's Digital Tech economy to be nearly

**£185Billion**  
growing at a rate nearly  
**3x faster** than the rest  
of the UK economy.



Cheshire East economy  
annually delivers

**£13.5B**



**45%** of businesses experienced recruitment difficulties and

**85%** cited skills as an issue, with a significant proportion requiring digital and science, technology, engineering and maths or "STEM" skills



## Progress so far...

Delivery of the Digital+ programme providing SMEs with free expert support on digital marketing and technology, including social media and cloud computing, as well as how to optimise their website.

Development of a fresh suite of business development masterclasses and business consultancy to help businesses transform, develop and grow digitally.

Delivery of the Adoption of Digital Accounting and Payment Technology (ADAPT) programme, offering eligible businesses access to a dedicated knowledge portal with best-practice guides and information to support the understanding of the technologies available, the associated benefits and the route to adoption.



## Actions - Provide digital support for businesses

1

**Provide business access through a single portal** where all businesses can go to for support to start up and grow and to attract inward investment.

2

**Provide digital services for businesses** - an online account for all council services to businesses.

3

**Deliver business master classes** to enable businesses to maximise the benefits through connectivity.

4

**Continue to deliver the Adapt Project – (adoption of digital accounting and payment)** partnership with Barclays to promote digital accounting and payment.



## Actions - Develop the digital workforce

1

**Continue to support the work of the Digital Skills Partnership** in supporting digital skills and growth across the region.

2

**Provide young people with innovative opportunities** to develop existing digital skills and learn new ones, such as Luminate Youth.

3

**Develop a programme of digital skills** training for Cheshire East staff to enable them to support customers and businesses to become more digitally enabled.

4

**Work in partnership with Job Centre Plus and Springboard** to provide skills and training, including digital skills, to those on benefits wishing to work in the hospitality sector.



## Actions - Develop the digital economy of Cheshire

1

### **Deliver a wider economic development/place marketing approach**

- establishing and promoting Cheshire East as a centre for digital business and promoting Cheshire East as a vibrant destination for visitors, locals and those looking to relocate.

2

### **Establish Digital Innovation hubs**

to support start-up businesses operating in the digital economy.

3

### **Seek to secure additional resource and funding to develop**

business clustering programmes for fintech and creative industries, and develop 5G pilots.

4

### **Work with Connecting Cheshire**

to provide solutions for businesses with poor or no connectivity.



## 4 To improve health, well-being and inclusion

### VISION :

An area where people (individuals and communities) live well for longer; independently and enjoying the place where they live. Where all residents have the opportunity to make the most of digital technology, giving them the access, awareness, skills and confidence to participate online safely.



## Ambitions

**Utilise digital solutions** to support people to stay independent for longer.

**Empower individuals to care for themselves** and take control of their own health and wellbeing.

**Achieve a joined-up, efficient and informed patient journey**, based on secure, real-time patient data.

**Ensure no-one is excluded** from the benefits of digital.

Older residents and those with a disability, who are most likely to be digitally excluded will **have the skills, knowledge and confidence to use digital**.

**Our children** will have the skills and confidence to enjoy the benefits of digital technology safely and to be protected from inappropriate behaviour.



## Facts & Figures



**14.1%** of Cheshire East adults have never been online or have not been online in the last three months.

**21%**



of Cheshire East adults do NOT have all five basic digital skills

- Communicating
- Transacting
- Problem-solving
- Creating
- Managing information

**22.5%**



of Cheshire East adults are over 65, the fastest growing ageing population in the North West.



## Progress so far...

We have worked with partner organisations to develop digital skills groups and one-to-ones along with devices for members to 'try before they buy'.

Our Connected Communities centres provide spaces, services and activities where people need them, including providing digital access and support to local residents. The Live Well directory of health, well-being and support services website has been updated and now includes Care Finder – an on-line tool which helps you arrange care services.

The 'My CareView' patient held record has also been launched and proactively promoted. We have delivered the Cheshire Care Record, providing a single view of an individual's health and social care information in one digital record.



## Actions - Make digital devices more readily available

1

**Continued maintenance and support for the Department for Education laptop scheme** for children with a social worker.

2

**Develop further opportunities** for the refurbishment, re-use and recycling of disused devices.

3

**Raise awareness of device loan schemes** and the library Hublet devices.

4

**Provide advice and guidance** to make the most of a device and being online through our 'Digital Buddies'.



## Actions - Grow digital skills, motivation and confidence

1

**Deliver and promote a strong local digital skills offer**, bringing together council services and partner organisations to deliver free digital skills training and support.



2

**Provide access to Learn My Way and IT and Chat** within all libraries and community centres.

3

**Work with partners to** develop a proactive approach to keeping our children safe online.





## Actions - Improve the health and independence of Cheshire residents

1

**Deliver and extend** the integrated patient care record.

2

**Review and implement options to mitigate the impact** of the National Digital Switchover due 2025.

3

**Explore how we can use telemedicine and assistive technology** to keep people safe and give them rapid access to support.

4

**Continue to develop “Live well” as the one-stop online portal** and directory to useful information, guidance and advice.



This overarching **Digital Strategy** will be supported with **detailed plans** for each theme and a series of measures against which **our performance can be assessed.**





*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

---

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3rd March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Cyber Security Update
<b>Report of:</b>	Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	CP/64/21-22
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	N/A

---

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on Cyber Security within the Council and outlines key aspects to assure the Committee that information is continued to be treated as a valued asset, with ongoing measures to protect and manage it in line with compliance.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. Threats to the Cheshire East Council's Information Security arrangements are recognised on the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SR4 Information Security and Cyber Threat).
- 2.2. Cyber Security is defined as the protection of computer systems from the theft or damage to their hardware, software or information, as well as from disruption or misdirection of the services they provide. One of the most widespread and damaging threats to materialise is the ransomware exploit. It comes in several variants, each becoming more sophisticated in techniques for spreading and exploitation. The ransomware is designed to extort money from victims through social engineering and intimidation.
- 2.3. This briefing note seeks to assure members across a number of areas about the protections in place to mitigate any associated risk.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. Cyber Risks are becoming more widespread and more sophisticated and the skills and technologies to carry out these attacks are easily acquired by

non-technical criminals from the ‘dark web’. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased criminal activity across several areas including the rise of cyber threats as highlighted by the National Cyber Security Centre.

- 3.2. As recently published Governments Cyber Security Strategy “the government remains an attractive target for a broad range of malicious actors, with approximately 40% of the 777 incidents managed by NCSC between September 2020 and August 2021 affecting the public sector. This is expected to continue to grow.”
- 3.3. In 2020, both Redcar & Cleveland and Hackney councils were hit by ransomware attacks. Despite the relatively small sizes of these organisations the impact on critical public services was disproportionate and acute. These attacks are not an anomaly but part of a significant upward trend.
- 3.4. The Redcar and Hackney attacks have been estimated to have cost £10m for each Council and affected hundreds of thousands of residents. Most systems were recovered within 4 months, but some had taken upwards of six months to recover.
- 3.5. It is now commonplace for organisation to be targeted, and the Council has valuable information and resources that an attacker would likely seek to exploit.
- 3.6. It is noted that threats from nation state actors is of considerable concern, with nearly half of nation state activity being targeted at governments across the world, with the UK being the third most targeted country behind the USA and Ukraine. The NCSC is currently investigating the recent reports of malicious cyber incidents in Ukraine. Incidents of this nature are similar to a pattern of Russian behaviour seen before in previous situations, including the destructive NotPetya attack in 2017 and cyber-attacks against Georgia. The UK Government has attributed responsibility for both these attacks to the Russian Government.
- 3.7. The Cyber Security Strategy states that “while use of ransomware rises, the costs of remediating the impact of ransomware attacks remain significant. This only reinforces the need for strong cyber resilience and strengthens the case for appropriate cyber security prioritisation and investment, to mitigate the risks before they turn into serious incidents”.

#### 4. Briefing Information

##### Awareness

- 4.1. To understand cyber risks numerous resources and guidance are used to help understand potential threats and issues including linking to local WARPs (Warning Advice and Reporting Points), government advice and guidance through the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) and the LGA (Local Government Association), whilst also monitoring cyber security best practice from industry product specialists and suppliers.

- LGA Cyber Maturity report has been used to help identify any gaps.
- Participation in the National Cyber Security Programme (NCSP) including access to the Resilience Direct Cyber Hub
- ICT Security have subscribed to use several NCSC resources e.g., CNR (CERT UK Reporting Network/ and the Network Early Warning Service (NEWS), ACD (Active Cyber Defence) portal incorporating Web check, Mailcheck and PDNS, and through these channels have contact to NCSC representatives.

**4.2.** The Council has a membership with iNetwork and NWWARP (North West WARP) and are working with the NCSC on trial reporting capabilities to increase awareness and visibility of emerging threats.

NWWARP membership includes quarterly meetings to discuss relevant technology and security developments and enhancements within the marketplace, access to the KHub (Knowledge Hub Portal), and CISPP (Cyber Security Information Sharing Partnership) platform, which provide opportunity to review government cyber updates and initiatives with other northwest NHS and LA representatives.

**4.3.** The security landscape is changing so ICT staff regularly review process and policies, against issued best practice and guidance. The LGA offered a funding grant (2020/21) in which they recognised that an authority of this size needed two staff at a certain level of formal training for its IT staff. The grant has been used to train six officers to a level of Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) and Certified Information Security Manager (CISM).

**4.4.** The Council has been working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to access additional funding with a view to improve the Council's security posture. A joint workshop was held where areas of risk were discussed and following this a Risk Treatment Plan was developed. This has been submitted to the DLUHC to assess and a decision on funding is expected February 2022.

**4.5.** The ICT Security team keep abreast of evolving technology trends and reporting to support and protect the authority's information assets, to the best of its ability, from emerging threats impacting service delivery.

**4.6.** It is important that the Council's workforce cyber culture and behaviours are continually assessed and developed, there is mandatory information handling training, cyber awareness training and simulated phishing attacks through which risks can be mitigated.

## Protection

- 4.7. The Council is moving from a traditional ICT Service infrastructure into one that employs several technologies such as “cloud”. This offers several benefits, but the risks afforded need a different approach to security. It is essential that the Council moves Cyber Architecture into a position where the maximum amount of protection can be applied to its Information Assets to offset the risks generated through the rise of malware and in particular ransomware.
- 4.8. The traditional approach of a perimeter defence with your valuable assets protected inside is one many still adopt however it comes with some limitations and some risk. An approach such as “zero trust” would allow the Council a greater level of security whilst allowing a greater flexibility in deploying technologies and using information effectively. The main concept behind zero trust is “never trust, always verify,” which means that users and devices should not be trusted by default.
- 4.9. A Security and Compliance business case has been developed to enable the Council to move to a zero-trust model and mitigate the increasing risks and challenges from cyber-attacks, agile working and increased sharing of information.

## Recovery

- 4.10. The Council creates regular backup copies of its live production data hosted in the core data centre. It is sent over the Cheshire WAN to an offsite location away from the main data centre. The same solution is used for some of the data held in our Azure cloud with the remainder using Azure Backup services. Investigations are underway to modify the on-premises backup system to make additional offline/air gapped backup copies of data.
- 4.11. With the trend to Software as a Service (SaaS), vendors are responsible for the ensuring the availability and security of their services. A standard ICT Security questionnaire issued to all vendors is used to determine whether they follow best practice and meet the security standards expected for storing, protecting, and processing Council data.
- 4.12. Where possible, the Council is adopting a Single Sign On approach to accessing SaaS based applications. This means that security best practice such as password controls, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and conditional access can be applied to further secure who can access data, from what device, and from what location.

The Council is currently looking at options to take an offline backup of information held in Microsoft 365 to allow continuity should the service be unavailable for a prolonged period of time and to provide a further level of protection against ransomware resulting in data encryption or deliberate data deletion.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1. Legal**

- 5.1.1.** The Council must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other relevant legislation in particular that relating to retention of information.
- 5.1.2.** GDPR has brought in substantially higher levels of penalties for data controllers than the previous legislation, up to €20 million (£17m) or 4% of annual worldwide turnover although it is capped at €20 million for public authorities. GDPR has also introduced fines for data processors.

The Council needs to understand what data they control and what is processed on their behalf and build data protection into its day to day processes to ensure that it and organisations processing data on its behalf are compliant.

### **5.2. Finance**

- 5.2.1.** Compliance with GDPR and UK data protection legislation is mandatory; penalties for the Council as a Data Controller under GDPR can be up to €20 million.

### **5.3. Human Resources**

- 5.3.1.** Under the new GDPR data subjects have several rights in relation to their personal data, including confirmation as to whether or not personal data concerning them is being processed, where and for what purpose. This requirement cannot be met if information is not managed in a compliant manner or used as a storage mechanism for information.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Gareth Pawlett, Chief Information Officer and Head of ICT Services <a href="mailto:Gareth.Pawlett@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Gareth.Pawlett@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	N/A

This page is intentionally left blank



*Working for a brighter future together*

## Corporate Policy Committee

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – Progress Review

**Report of:** Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

**Report Reference No:** CP/47/21-22

**Ward(s) Affected:** All

---

<b>Corporate Plan Priorities</b>			
<b>Open</b>	An open and enabling organisation		X
<b>Fair</b>	A council which empowers and cares about people		X
<b>Green</b>	A thriving and sustainable place		X

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025.
- 1.2. The strategy built upon significant progress already made in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and outlined the council's ambitions and plans to continue to promote and advance EDI throughout Cheshire East.
- 1.3. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is a key strategy for the Council as its ambitions pervade all that we do in relation to residents and staff. The strategy supports our corporate plan vision of an open, fair and green Cheshire East. It particularly promotes our "fair" vision of reducing inequalities, promoting fairness and opportunity for all and support for our most vulnerable residents.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1** Progress has been made to implement the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy during 2020/21. The accompanying action plan contains 29 actions, 5 of these have been achieved (17%), 15 (52%) of these have been partially achieved and 9 (31%) have not yet been progressed.
- 2.2** Progress has been slower than anticipated due to the ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic, impacting on the available resource to drive the strategy. A new Director in place to oversee the strategy, together with more available resource will ensure that the strategy can achieve its aims over the next three years.

## **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1.** The Committee is asked to note progress in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and highlight any areas of risk, challenge and good practice.

## **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** The EDI strategy outlined our ambitions to reduce inequalities and promote fairness for all and supports achievement of our Corporate Plan. Oversight of progress of implementation of the objectives of the strategy is part of the Council's commitment to openness and transparency.

## **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** Not applicable.

## **6. Background**

- 6.1.** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was approved in April 2021 by the former Cabinet. It sets out refreshed ambition and objectives as part of the duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and to improve public services for everyone. The strategy set the vision to ensure that Cheshire East is an area of equal opportunity where everyone has a fair chance, and people from all backgrounds take part in community life.

- 6.2.** The EDI strategy sets out five key objectives, which are:

- Include – listen and involve all voices;
- Inspire – celebrate and promote diversity and the positive opportunities it brings;
- Integrate – deliver and promote accessible services for all; and
- Inform – empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour
- Impact – support and deliver meaningful change

- 6.3.** A workplan was developed to document the key actions proposed to deliver the ambitions of the plan. The plan has been led collectively from officers across the council. Progress against the plan has been considered by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board. Membership of the board includes the Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 6.4.** A “stock take” review of the EDI strategy was undertaken in January 2021. This has provided an opportunity to assess progress made to date in delivering the identified actions to implement the ambitions of the strategy. This is captured in detail in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.5.** The review of progress is to ensure that the actions are progressing to plan and are meeting the agreed aims and objectives of the strategy. The review also offers an opportunity to identify areas of good progress, and areas which may benefit from accelerated focus.
- 6.6.** In summary, 17% of actions have been achieved, 52% have been partially achieved and 31% have not yet been progressed.
- 6.7.** Highlights in the progression of the strategy after the first year are as follows:

#### **Include**

The council have an Equality Champions network in place and staff network peer groups. Since the strategy was launched an additional staff group for men, called “The Circle” has been established. A Young Persons network is being developed as an additional staff group to support young employees.

The Council has recently launched its Customer Experience, Workforce and Digital strategies, all of which support our EDI objectives.

#### **Inspire**

Local events and awareness days have been greatly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Where possible in 2021, online events were held, such as the Virtual Pride events. A list of Awareness Days for 2022 has been agreed by the EDI Board and an accompanying activity plan is under development to support these campaigns. This will be shared with members when confirmed.

The Census 2021 data will be reviewed by the Business Intelligence team and will be used to update our profiling information. The publication of first results by the Office for National Statistics is due in late spring 2022, with the final release of all census data outputs scheduled for March 2023.

#### **Integrate**

The council continues to conduct Equality Impact Assessments for key decisions, projects, and strategies. An equality impact assessment was recently produced for the review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. During 2022/23 this process will be reviewed to ensure that it remains robust and reflects best practice.

### **Inform**

The council continues to offer a range of training and development activities to staff through its “Learning Lounge” system. Courses such as unconscious bias, helping disabled customers, supporting carers in the workplace, Time to Change and mental health awareness have taken place, and been fully booked, during 2021. An upcoming development will enable staff to create their own learning plan and use this to support their personal development review conversations.

### **Impact**

The council is committed to publishing an Annual Report on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. All of the data and intelligence gathered through progression of the strategy will be reported and published in 2022. This report will be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee.

- 6.8.** The implementation of the EDI strategy has coincided with a period where the Council is continuing to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic response continues to have significant impacts across service areas and available resources, this impact is reflected in the pace of progression during the first year of the strategy.

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

- 7.1.** Consultation was undertaken to inform the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy in 2020/21. The outcome of the consultation can be found via the following link:

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Consultation Results**

- 7.2** Consultation and engagement with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board, to inform this report, took place in January 2021.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

The strategy, and its associated workplan, have been developed in the context of our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires the council to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

## **8.2. Finance**

There are no direct financial implications of this report. Areas identified for acceleration will be subject to a Business Case being submitted, in order to provide any necessary funding.

## **8.3. Policy**

The equality, diversity and inclusion strategy is a key policy document for the council.

## **8.4. Equality**

The EDI strategy sets the vision and objectives for the council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

## **8.5. Human Resources**

There are no direct human resources implications of this report.

## **8.6. Risk Management**

There are no key risks identified in relation to the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy. There have been some low-level risks identified in relation to the pace of progress. Risks continue to be managed by the EDI Board and mitigating actions developed to manage emerging risks.

## **8.7. Rural Communities**

The “integrate” objective of the EDI strategy focuses on delivering and promoting accessible services for all. Rural communities should be positively impacted by implementation of the strategy.

## **8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

Children and Young People and Cared for Children should be positively impacted by the implementation of the EDI strategy. They are particularly considered in relation to the “include” objective, which refers to “listen and involve all voices”.

## **8.9. Public Health**

Progression of the EDI strategy promotes and supports public health. The strategy commits to strive to provide equal life opportunities for all residents. These include not only those with protected characteristics but also those who may be disadvantaged through socio-economic factors, such as employment opportunities, physical and mental health and access to educational opportunities.

**8.10. Climate Change**

The EDI strategy was developed in accordance with the “green” priority of the Corporate Plan.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change <a href="mailto:Sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a> 01270 686414
Appendices:	<b>Appendix 1 – EDI Strategy Progress Review</b>
Background Papers:	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025 <a href="http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s84312/Equality%20Objectives%20-%20report%20final.pdf">http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s84312/Equality%20Objectives%20-%20report%20final.pdf</a>

## APPENDIX 1

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – Progress Review January 2021

<b>Objective 1: INCLUDE – Listen and involve all voices</b>					
<b>1a We will promote inclusive opportunities for two-way conversations</b>					
Key Actions	Target Date	Expected Outcome	Data Source and Evaluation methodology	Lead responsibility	Progress – Jan 21
1. Develop our network of equality champions both internal and external to the council, as advocates and promoters of equality and inclusion	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for inclusive two-way conversations grow</li> <li>Policies and strategies are co-created</li> <li>Staff Groups represented at the EDI Board</li> </ul>	HR to provide number of equality champions (40 in 2020) Stakeholder list of external equality champions to be developed	Policy and Change  Individual network group members	<u><b>Partially achieved</b></u>  Equality champions network in place. The network requires re-energising following the pandemic.  Staff network updates a standing agenda item on the EDI Board.  Meeting has taken place with the Police to learn from their Top 50 inclusive employer recognition. Meeting set up with the Fire Authority equality lead.  Mens network “The Circle” established.  Young employers’ network being established.
2. Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.	Ongoing	Documentation and other published material is suitable for the audiences which are accessing it.		Web team & EDI officer to monitor publications online and check all documentation is accessibility checked.	<u><b>Partially achieved</b></u>  This area will be reviewed as part of the Consultation and Engagement group, which will start its work in March 2022.
3. Work collaboratively with voluntary, community and	Ongoing	Collaborative activities and communications are developed and promoted where appropriate.	Agreed list of awareness days and events will be used.	Communities team. Communications team. Policy and Change	<u><b>Partially achieved</b></u>  An asset-based approach is taken in relation to developing services with the Voluntary,

## APPENDIX 1

faith organisations to share key messages and opportunities for engagement.				department.	Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector. Experts by experience are sought and a suite of resources used to develop services with our communities to empower them to serve themselves.
<b>1b We will seek to listen in order to understand</b>					
1. Expand our opportunities and methods of engaging with residents, partners and stakeholders to ensure that we are proactive and inclusive.	Ongoing	To ensure that all residents can engage with the council. To support digital inclusion. To understand barriers preventing effective engagement and working to remove them.	Consultation and Engagement data will be used to evidence an increase in the involvement of underrepresented groups.	Communities Team Policy and Change Department	<p><b>Not yet achieved</b></p> <p>A cross council Consultation and Engagement group has been established and will work together from March 2022.</p> <p>The Customer Experience and Digital strategies have been launched, which include EDI objectives.</p> <p>A Live Well for Longer strategy is being developed, which has been coproduced with residents. The vision for the strategy is creating an equal partnership between residents and system leaders to ensure all services are designed and delivered in line with resident needs.</p>
2. Know our audience and communities through robust and up to date stakeholder mapping and management	July 2022	The veteran community will have up to date information on where local support is available  -Support mental health -Safe place for veterans -Volunteering opportunities -Bring the community together -Create a charity network -Public awareness around	The Communities team will capture both quantitative and qualitative feedback directly from people attending events.	Communities team	<p><b>Not yet achieved</b></p> <p>Following analysis of a recent CVS study, a need was identified for local services for veterans. The team liaised with veteran charities and are working towards establishing a veterans hub in Cheshire East. Suitable premises have been identified in Crewe. This facility will offer services to the veteran community.</p> <p>We are working with 2 charities to bring the</p>

## APPENDIX 1

		our veteran community -Services working together -Family fun days -Veterans into employment -Training opportunities			community together for 2022-Armed Forces Day at Queens Park in Crewe for a 2-day large event. Help For Heroes and Crewe Military vehicle charity will be working in partnership engaging with the veteran community over this event offering support and entertainment to families.  Stakeholder mapping to be completed and maintained for all community groups promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.
3. Use and consider information including data and intelligence to inform our thinking and action	June 2022.	Develop an EDI scorecard to monitor performance and diversity across services. The scorecard will ensure; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation understands the effects of employment policy and practice on its workforce.</li> <li>• The organisation has sufficient information about staff to inform robust equality analysis.</li> <li>• The workforce profile is updated regularly.</li> <li>• Data is looked at organisationally and service by service.</li> <li>• It is possible to analyse data by all of the protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	Unit 4 ERP system	Business Intelligence team	<p><b><u>Partially achieved</u></b></p> <p>An initial staff EDI profile has been developed. Further work needs to be undertaken to gather staff information in relation to age (or DOB to allow calculation), gender reassignment and pregnant (not maternity). These areas are not currently included in HR reporting.</p> <p>Further work requires progressing in relation to understanding our communities and understanding how we may best tackle inequalities.</p>

## APPENDIX 1

		<p>The organisation has gathered and published information and data on the profile of its communities and the extent of inequality and disadvantage. Plans are in place to collect, share and use equality information with partners.</p> <p>A comprehensive set of information about local communities/protected characteristics needs and outcomes is regularly updated and published and used to identify priorities for the local area.</p>			
<b>Objective 2: INSPIRE – Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings</b>					
<b>2a. We will promote local events and activities that seek to reduce isolation, raise awareness and encourage participation</b>					
1. Develop a communication and engagement plan to identify key events and activities that the Council will promote and support each year	Annual calendar to be agreed.	<p>Residents and staff receive communications around awareness days and associated activities.</p> <p>Improved understanding and awareness.</p> <p>Diversity and inclusivity promoted in the workplace.</p>	<p>Approved version of the Awareness Days list.</p> <p>Events plans co-created for agreed events.</p>	<p>Policy and Change Department.</p> <p>Equality Champions</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>Draft 2022 list produced. List to be shared with Directorate boards, staff networks, champions and communications team to agree a final list.</p>

## APPENDIX 1

2. Support and promote community action and cooperation across our partnerships to improve cohesion	Ongoing	<p>There is an increase in the involvement of underrepresented groups.</p> <p>There are a range of innovative approaches to involving communities and arrangements are made to meet specific or individual needs.</p> <p>Vulnerable people/communities are participating including the hardest to reach in the community.</p> <p>There is evidence that mainstream engagement mechanisms are increasingly involving previously under-represented groups.</p> <p>Communities are encouraged or supported to influence or make decisions.</p>	Explore how the Census 2021 data can be used within the council to inform action and design – updated profiles and increased.	Communities team Business Intelligence team	<p><b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b></p> <p>The communities team have established leads, together with work programmes, for a range of “hard to reach” groups.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council will participate in the Cheshire Equality Leads Forum to work effectively with partners.</p>
3. Support our staff through Peer Networks and events	Ongoing	<p>Continued development of the Peer Networks and their role.</p> <p>Ensure that policies and strategies are co-created with the Peer Networks.</p>	Evidence that publications reflect our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. To be audited within the annual equality report.	Policy and Change department.	<p><b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b></p> <p>Policy development framework being reviewed and revised arrangements will be implemented during 2022/23.</p>

## APPENDIX 1

<b>2b. We will proactively take action to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of the communities we serve</b>					
1. Apply fair recruitment and selection procedures	Ongoing	Ensure that applicants can see their lived experiences amongst others in the workforce	Equality profiles of applicants and new starters	Workforce development Organisational development	<b><u>Partially achieved</u></b>  The Workforce Strategy 2021-2025 was approved in November 2021 and sets out how the Council will develop the workforce to support Corporate Plan priorities. This includes a key priority around "Inclusive Workforce" and actions to ensure that everyone has a voice.
2. Make reasonable adjustments to ensure the work environment and culture meets the needs of all our staff	To be in place for any return to office	Register for the Sunflower lanyard recognition scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff with hidden disabilities will feel more comfortable at work</li><li>• All staff to be aware of what the scheme is and how to help</li><li>• Specialist training for customer facing staff</li></ul> Ensure that all staff have the correct equipment they need to enable them to do their jobs. Improvements have been made to the working environment. Reasonable Adjustments are provided in a timely fashion consistently across the organisation		HR Differently Abled Network Equality Officer Workforce development Organisational development	<b><u>Partially achieved</u></b>  The EDI Board have approved a pilot scheme to provide sunflower lanyards to those with hidden disabilities. The pilot scheme will be supported by awareness training for all staff, with specialist training for those in customer facing roles.  The organisation has a policy for Reasonable Adjustments for staff and Members and managers are trained to implement it.

## APPENDIX 1

		Differently abled network to review reasonable adjustments guidance to inform policy development.			
3. Monitor and review employment practice and our policies and procedures that support them	Disability confident application to be submitted by 30/06/21  Every PDR cycle	Achieve Disability Confident Employer (level 1) status by 2023 and Level 2 by 2025  Ensure EDI is built into the PDR process to encourage staff to take responsibility for their EDI knowledge and training.	Application via link.	HR Differently Abled Network  Organisational development	<p><b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b></p> <p>The shared HR service across Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester has “Disability Confident” status. Cheshire East council is seeking this status in its own right to send a positive message of support for employees and potential employees with disabilities. This action requires some dedicated support to progress.</p> <p>OD wellbeing initiatives are promoted every week in the internal e-newsletter “team voice” with variety of activities, information and links along with a dedicated web pages for all staff to access.</p> <p>OD run the Managers Share and Support sessions and Time to Listen and Chat (TLC) calls twice a week.</p> <p>OD have supported International Men’s and International Women’s days, incorporating activities into our Wellbeing months.</p> <p>Learning Lounge offers 2 mandatory eLearning modules to support EDI strategy; Equality in the Workplace and Dignity at Work.</p> <p><b><u>What's planned:</u></b> In the new year the upgrade to learning lounge will provide managers with a dashboard, where</p>

## APPENDIX 1

					<p>they can see who in their teams have completed training. Managers can then take ownership to encourage staff to complete the mandatory training and set this as an action on their PDR as required.</p> <p>Managers and staff are to discuss and comment on their wellbeing during the PDR conversation, to ensure support and action planning is embedded.</p> <p>The mandatory courses are being reviewed and it is being considered to set these to annually completion, where staff will be sent reminders when they need to re certify.</p>
--	--	--	--	--	---

### Objective 3: INTEGRATE – Deliver and promote accessible services for all

#### 3a. We will ensure that we consider, communicate and consult with all people regardless of their protected characteristics when developing or changing our services

1. Undertake Equality Impact Assessments across all development and change activities including services we buy and commission	Ongoing	Polices, strategies and decisions being shaped and informed by equality impact assessments.	Increased number of EIAs.	All staff – with support from Policy and Change department	<u>Partially achieved</u> EIAs are a standard part of committee reports and accompany all HLBCs which accompany the MTFS. EIA and associated process will be reviewed during 2022/23.
2. Provide training and guidance to ensure equality impact assessments are fully	2022/23	Create support package for Members to provide advice and guidance on EDI matters to ensure that members have a greater understanding and can	Training outcomes.	Member EDI Champion, supported by Democratic Services. Workforce	<u>Partially achieved</u> Member EDI champion has written to all Members to encourage them to complete the e-learning package.

## APPENDIX 1

understood		challenge inequality appropriately.		Development. Policy and Change.	Additional Member training will be progressed alongside officer training. This will occur following the review of EIAs.
3. Publish all equality impact assessments to provide transparency, assurance and information on our decision making	Ongoing	<p>There is senior level commitment to using and understanding equality analysis/ impact assessment to inform planning and decision making.</p> <p>The organisation's assessments are accessible, robust and meaningful. There is evidence that Members routinely take account of equality analysis/ impact assessment when making decisions.</p> <p>Decisions around budget cuts and savings have taken account of cumulative impact.</p> <p>The findings, recommendations and conclusions are shared effectively to inform decisions and planning.</p> <p>Mitigating actions are identified where appropriate</p>	<p>Details to be included in Annual Equality Report.</p>	<p>Policy and Change department.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b> – ongoing action.</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments are published on the council's website.</p>

### 3b. We will ensure that all services we commission meet their obligations under the Equality Act

1. Engage and work with our local	June 2023	The community and voluntary sector say that they are treated as equal		Commissioning Team TOGETHER	<b>Partially achieved</b>
					Have achieved in People's services:

## APPENDIX 1

communities to co-produce and co design our local service offer and the design and delivery of major projects such as town centre regeneration schemes and improvements to local neighbourhoods		<p>partners by the Council.</p> <p>The organisation achieves considerable social value from its contracts</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning handbook</li> <li>• Standard specification</li> <li>• Performance Management framework</li> <li>• Social Value policy</li> </ul> <p>This work now needs to be consistently replicated across the council.</p>
2. Require our suppliers to provide adequate and timely equality monitoring information	Ongoing	<p>Local procurement is positively influencing the local economy</p> <p>There is evidence of providers meeting the organisation's equality objectives.</p> <p>Providers understand and can articulate a commitment to equality.</p>	Contract Management data	Procurement	<p><b><u>Partially achieved</u></b></p> <p>Tenders – discretionary exclusion from any tender if found to be in breach of any labour laws. This is backed up with a contractual clause "perform its obligations under the Contract in accordance with all applicable equality Law and the Council's equality and diversity policy as provided to the Supplier from time to time". We did have an example of this last year and we didn't award the contract to the supplier.</p> <p>Annual social value survey          "When appraising and selecting potential suppliers, do you have processes in place to check the ethical practice of potential suppliers and their supply chains" - 35% of suppliers who responded confirmed that extensive checks were completed on their suppliers and supply chains          New contract management system will include policies to be held centrally. This will replace the</p>

## APPENDIX 1

					annual social value survey and make social value benefits business as usual and part of contract monitoring.
3. Ensure that any venue we use or event we promote does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's protected characteristic					<p><b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b></p> <p>This action requires progressing.</p>

### Objective 4: INFORM – Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour

#### 4a We will take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, taking positive and immediate action where possible

1. Continue to reinforce and promote the Council's values and behaviours to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.		<p>Improved quality and availability of EDI training for Learning Lounge. Ensure all protected characteristics are adequately covered by training available.</p> <p>All staff to take responsibility for their own learning to develop awareness and understanding of different peoples' lived experiences.</p>	<p>Reports on uptake to be produced and inform annual report.</p> <p>Increase number of EDI related training opportunities.</p>	<p>Staff Networks Workforce development</p>	<p><b><u>Partially achieved</u></b></p> <p><b><u>What's been achieved:</u></b> Several courses on learning lounge provide training on the protected characteristics: Equality in the workplace and Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Basic Autism Awareness course, Accessible Information, is available for staff to complete.</p> <p>Learning Lounge offers a good selection of e-learning and delivered courses around equality, diversity, inclusion and raising their own awareness; Acceptable Behaviour and Language Including Unconscious Bias (8 sessions delivered to 120 people), Helping Disabled Customers (155 completed since April 19), Supporting Carers in the Workplace (48 completed since April 19), Time to Change, Equality &amp; Diversity, Mental Health Awareness,</p>
---	--	---	---	---	--

## APPENDIX 1

					<p>HIV Awareness, Introduction to Bipolar, Customer Service and Pre retirement training. All courses are promoted to staff with many courses fully booked and staff waitlisted, which shows a real commitment to developing their knowledge and understanding.</p> <p><u>What's planned:</u> Cultural competency e learning module is in development.</p> <p>In early 2022 staff will be able to create their own learning plan on learning lounge and use this to support the PDR conversations.</p> <p>In Jan 22 a conversation to set out the E&amp;D training plan for 2022-2024 will be discussed, so its likely further courses will be commission or developed to support the focus areas.</p>
2. Provide access to clear and robust HR policies and procedures to support officers and managers when challenging poor or unacceptable behaviour	Ongoing	<p>Policies to be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are up to date. Reviews to be conducted in collaboration with staff networks where relevant.</p> <p>Senior leaders in the organisation have stated their commitment to a diverse workforce and have made clear what is expected from staff when delivering services to the community.</p>	<p>Training provided via Learning Lounge</p>	HR	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>Agile and flexible working policy updated.</p>

## APPENDIX 1

### 4b. We will work in partnership to keep people safe and connected

1. Contribute and collaborate with partners and stakeholders to tackle hate crime and promote hate crime reporting	Ongoing	To support the aim for no criminal offences to be committed against a person or property that is motivated by an offender's hatred of someone because of their: race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, ethnic origins, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.	Hate Crimes reported through the "True Vision" website.	Communities team	<b>Achieved – ongoing action</b>
2. Take targeted action to educate, inform and challenge the stereotypes faced by our marginalised communities (e.g., migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)	By 2024  GRT Group to be launched in March 2022.	The wider community will benefit from the knowledge from this group and the positive relationship with the council.  To provide sustainable jobs and enhance skills within individuals whilst supporting our hard-to-reach communities.	Evaluation of actions to be considered.	Communities team	<p><b>Partially achieved</b></p> <p>It is recognised that education is vital in tackling discrimination, so we have partnered with a number of schools across the borough to hold workshops aimed at all ages.</p> <p>The Communities team are working with community partners to identify and upskill residents (many of whom from a BAME / migrant community) to facilitate the workshops and provide a unique perspective.</p> <p>A meeting has been set up with the GRT community to establish their aims and support with using external sources to support the setup of a constituted group. A launch date is due in March 2022 for the new GRT group.</p> <p>In August 2021 we supported the Afghan wraparound support in a nearby hotel where we welcomed 23 families. 5 families were rehomed into Cheshire East houses, from this we identified an individual who suited a position we</p>

## APPENDIX 1

					had advertised working within the communities team. This person is now employed by the Council as a translator working with at the hotel supporting the Afghan project.
3. Promote and signpost to networks that provide advice and support to anyone impacted or experiencing discriminatory behaviour or action	Ongoing	Services are co-produced with service users wherever possible and service users can influence changes	Promotion through digital and non-digital channels.	Communities team EDI Board	<p><b>Achieved</b> - ongoing</p> <p>We have a network of Connected Community Centres across the borough which provide a place for local people to connect and gather information. Surrounding the Connected Community Centres is an infrastructure of partnership agencies who convene on a regular basis and use local intelligence to identify gaps in service and work in collaboration to meet need identified. The Neighbourhood Partnerships are an essential communications channel to disseminate information to the heart of the community.</p>

### Objective 5: IMPACT – Support and deliver meaningful change

#### 5a. We will be open and transparent in publishing the progress of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives

1. Publish an annual report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East in the public domain	Annually	To have an oversight of Council performance in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.	All EDI data	Policy and Change department.	<p><b>Not yet achieved</b></p> <p>To be completed by June 2022.</p>
2. Publish the Gender Pay Gap report in the public domain	Annually	There is evidence that the organisation is actively working on reducing its Gender Pay Gap.			<p><b>Partially achieved</b></p> <p>2020/21 report published.</p> <p>Report in relation to 2021/22 will be presented to</p>

## APPENDIX 1

					the April 2022 EDI Board <b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b>  This action is outstanding and requires progression.
<b>Objective 6 – Continuously improving equality, diversity and inclusion (additional actions identified to embed the objectives of the EDI strategy)</b>					
1. Review and refresh EDI board	Dec 2021	EDI board has a clear role in delivering the EDI Strategy.  EDI Board representation to reflect its delivery role.  EDI strategy implemented with proper buy in and commitment at all levels.	Demonstrated progress on delivering work plan priorities  Increased attendance and participation at EDI board meetings	EDI Officer and EDI Board chair	<b><u>Partially achieved</u></b>  Progress delayed slightly due to staffing changes. New Director in post from end of November 21. Revised target date now April 22.
2. Review and refresh Directorate level EDI Boards	Dec 2021	Clear links achieved between directorates and EDI board.	Meetings happen quarterly and feeding back to EDI board	EDI Officer and EDI Board chair	<b><u>Partially achieved</u></b>  Some directorate groups have not met due to covid response commitments. The directorate group for Corporate Services requires refreshing now that new staff are in post.  The EDI Board receives regular updates from directorates and EDI Board members attend directorate meetings.
3. Ensure appropriate access to CLT for staff network group as required.	Ongoing	Members of the network groups can request to meet with CLT to discuss their experiences and ideas for improvement.	Attendance at meetings is representative of staff network membership	Staff network members	<b><u>Not yet achieved</u></b>  As several CLT members are new to the organisation, they will be invited to attend the staff network groups as part of their induction. It may be appropriate to have a CLT lead member for each of the staff network groups.

This page is intentionally left blank



*Working for a brighter future together*

## Corporate Policy Committee

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** Update on Workforce Efficiencies and Terms and Conditions Review

**Report of:** Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

**Report Reference No:** CP/41/21-22

**Ward(s) Affected:** All Wards

---

<b>Corporate Plan Priorities</b>	<b>Open</b>	An open and enabling organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Fair</b>	A council which empowers and cares about people	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Green</b>	A thriving and sustainable place	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report provides an update for members on the progress to review workforce efficiencies and terms and conditions.
- 1.2. The report also provides information on the current employee relations context and information from the benchmarking exercise recently undertaken.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This Committee on 7 September 2021 recognised the immense challenges faced by our workforce and thanked staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic. The Council's priority continues to be supporting and developing them to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient, and empowered.
- 2.2. The pandemic has altered how our staff are working. 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.

- 2.3. The Committee has agreed a new 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 sets out our approach to more permanent agile and flexible ways of working.
- 2.4. 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. The intention is that identified savings will reduce costs over the longer term and protect jobs.
- 2.5. Savings of £758,000 have been agreed by officers from reduced staff travel, enabled through different ways of working. This is the figure now included in the MTFS 22/23 – 25/26. A permanent 30% reduction in average miles claimed across services is one part of that commitment. To date the overall picture is encouraging, however, this relies on permanent changes to behaviours, without which some of the savings may be at risk. Any impact will be considered as part of the regular financial reports.
- 2.6. A review of terms and conditions has been undertaken which has included benchmarking against other Councils in the North West, to ensure that Cheshire East Council is aligned with other Local Authorities in its application of terms and conditions of employment. The findings from the review suggest that the Council is not out of line with other Local Authorities, although there are some areas where we are more generous than our peers.
- 2.7. The employee relations context is sensitive at present as the national employers and trade unions have yet to reach agreement on the 2021/22 pay award and the trade unions have been consulting their memberships on industrial action. Although this does not impact directly on local employee relations it does provide a context and may influence the way that the trade unions choose to respond in any negotiations.
- 2.8. Mindful of the context and the need to balance fairness with affordability, officers are preparing a package of measures which can be negotiated with the trade unions. The package is expected to include proposals to change some terms and conditions as well as proposals to introduce or improve benefits for staff which are linked to new ways of working and the Council's Carbon Neutral ambitions and will include a Staff Travel Plan. This work is currently being scoped/developed.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. To note progress made in achieving savings arising from staff travel for 2021/22.
- 3.2. To note that the Regular Car User allowance re-application process has been completed and the results are being implemented in accordance with the Council's policy.
- 3.3. To support a revised approach to formal consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions with a view to developing a package of measures

which will include changes to staff terms and conditions and improved benefits for staff aligned to the Council's new ways of working and the green agenda relating to staff travel.

- 3.4.** To note that authority has been delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to implement any changes following consultation/negotiation.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** To inform the committee of the progress made to date in delivering staff travel related savings.
- 4.2.** To inform the committee of the revised approach to the review of workforce efficiencies and terms and conditions, which reflects the current employee relations context.
- 4.3.** To provide assurance that the re-application process for regular car user allowance, although a separate piece of work, the implementation of the results of the re-assessment process is vital to achieve the overall savings from staff travel. The total savings allocated to this item in the MTFS is £193k and therefore any shortfall would need to be met from other budgets in services. It is also important to ensure that the Council's policy is being applied fairly and consistently.
- 4.4.** Negotiations with the Trade Unions will begin in due course and will need to focus on options that represent a realistic way forward which will deliver savings that are required both in the short term and long term, protect jobs, develop further new ways of working and align with the Council's new ways of working and Carbon Neutral ambitions.

#### **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** The Council could focus on making changes that do not need to be negotiated or agreed with the trade unions which could include increasing the reduction in business travel further from 30% to 35% or 40%. This option will prove challenging for some Directorates to meet based on the forecasts that have been provided by some services.
- 5.2.** The council has run a voluntary severance programme (MARS) in previous years which could provide some additional savings from workforce efficiencies, this will be considered by officers in due course.

Option	Impact	Risk
Increase the reduction in business travel to 35% or 40%.	MTFS savings would be achieved.	Some services are not able to reduce business travel by 35% or 40% without it having a detrimental impact on service delivery.

Run MARS	Contribute to overall MTFS savings and enable services to redesign by allowing some staff to leave voluntarily.	Staff do not volunteer, or services cannot allow staff to leave.
----------	---	--

## 6. Background

- 6.1. As reported at Corporate Policy Committee in September 2021, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings of £50k in 2021/22 were achieved through reduced travel costs. Corporate Leadership team have since committed to save £758,000 from staff travel budgets through new ways of working, this figure is now included in the MTFS 22/23 – 25/26. As part of this overall savings target it was agreed that staff travel budgets would be reduced by 30% permanently by fully utilising new ways of working, new technology and to contribute to the Council's Carbon Neutral ambitions. This would have realised a saving of £428k in 2021/22, forecasts from services, however, indicate that this figure is likely to be £371k. The shortfall will need to be made up during 2022/23 and 2023/24 from alternative measures if these figures are confirmed at outturn. A Regular Car User allowance re-application process has been completed and the results are being implemented in accordance with the Council's policy.
- 6.2. Discussions with the trade unions will focus on developing a package of measures which include some that will benefit their members as well as some changes to terms and conditions. It is hoped that the trade unions will engage constructively in these discussions and provide additional options which could be considered to reach a negotiated agreement.
- 6.3. The benchmarking information indicates that there are areas where Cheshire East Council is more generous than other councils. Anonymised details relating to staff travel are set out in Appendix 1.
- 6.4. It is important to recognise the challenging working environment for our staff over the past two years and it is vital to minimise disruption for the workforce wherever possible. Any decisions must be balanced with impact on Council Taxpayers and overall affordability. It is unlikely that the total savings targets in the MTFS will be achieved without some changes to terms and conditions being agreed. Any changes that are proposed would need to be balanced against a background of rising living costs for staff, recruitment and retention issues in some services and maintaining staff morale.
- 6.5. The pandemic has resulted in many staff within the council working from home and this has in turn enabled staff through the introduction of new technology to undertake the majority of meetings virtually rather than face to face. It is important that this new way of working is maintained and where possible increased over the medium/long term to achieve the aims of the council's carbon neutral agenda. Managers will need to review and change the working arrangements for their teams and identify meetings (internal and external) which do not need to be conducted face to face with colleagues and with residents/clients as this will deliver ongoing financial savings in addition to carbon reductions.

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

- 7.1. Any work undertaken in relation to a review of terms and conditions would require extensive consultation and engagement with staff and the trade unions and where changes to terms and conditions are being proposed these would need to be agreed formally by the trade unions. Trade Union / Staff consultation will be crucial in making any changes to terms and conditions and appropriate consultation and engagement will need to begin at the appropriate time.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

- 8.1.1. The Council has a consultation process it must adhere to with the recognised trade unions to seek to negotiate and agree any proposed changes to terms and conditions of employment with the trade unions. This process should be commenced as soon as possible to ensure appropriate consultation and engagement can take place to enable the savings to be made.
- 8.1.2. Changes implemented unilaterally without consultation and agreement may amount to a breach of contract and give rise to legal claims against the Council.
- 8.1.3. The most likely claims in this scenario are breach of contract claims, unlawful deductions and potentially Unfair (Constructive) Dismissal claims if the changes are significant. Depending on the outcome of those, this may offset the cost saving benefits of the changes to terms and conditions.
- 8.1.4. In circumstances where agreement cannot be reached on changes to terms and conditions of employment, the Council may dismiss and offer re-engagement on the revised terms. This is known as 'dismissal and re-engagement'. Such dismissals will count as a dismissal in law but can be fair if the Council can show that it had a fair business case for the changes, consent was sought, a full consultation process followed, and that dismissal was a last resort.
- 8.1.5. Early consultation and reaching agreement with the recognised Trade Unions is therefore a key strategy in having the necessary changes agreed by all parties and minimising the risk of such claims arising.

### **8.2. Finance**

- 8.2.1. Officers have committed to find savings of £758,000 from staff travel by making changes to the way we work. This saving commitment replaced staff travel related savings included previously in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and were then subsequently reflected in the MTFS 2022/23 - 2025/26. The commitment included agreement to permanently reduce business mileage across the council by 30% which aims to achieve a staff travel budget saving of £428,000 from 2021/22; reassess all council staff classified as Regular Car Users reducing the staff travel budget by a further £193,000 from 2022/23; and explore the HMRC rate for casual car use for staff and Members.

8.2.2. The council is committed to achieving the full savings of £758,000 by 2022/23, with the full reduction in budgets included in the latest version of the council's MTFS. If savings cannot be delivered in these ways, the alternatives would be needed to offset any shortfall.

### **8.3. Policy**

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

### **8.4. Equality**

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

### **8.5. Human Resources**

8.5.1. Trade union and staff engagement conversations will continue to ensure that all views and ideas are considered to develop a package of measures to discuss with the trade unions. Further work involved in engagement/consultation with the trade unions and staff will require appropriate resources to be dedicated from Human Resources, Finance, Legal and appropriate project support.

8.5.2. Negotiations and reaching agreement on changes to staff terms and conditions can take time therefore, it is vital that consultation starts as soon as practicable to enable these savings to be achieved in the prescribed years they have been included in the budget.

### **8.6. Risk Management**

8.6.1. 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 considered.

### **8.7. Rural Communities**

8.7.1. No implications for rural communities.

### **8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

8.8.1. No implications for Children and Young People/Cared for Children.

### **8.9. Public Health**

8.9.1. No implications for Public Health.

### **8.10. Climate Change**

8.10.1. Some changes to staff travel will have a positive impact on the climate change, where for example staff business mileage is reduced. The proposals will produce a projected annual carbon saving of 247.24 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2e).

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Sara Barker, Head of HR Sara.barker@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270686328
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Benchmarking information
Background Papers:	Medium Term Financial Strategy

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix 1 Benchmarking Information

Allowance		Cheshire East Council	Council 1	Council 2	Council 3	Council 4	Council 5	Council 6	Council 7	Council 8	Council 9	Council 10
Mileage Occasional Casual	First 8500 <999cc	46.9p	46.9p	46.9p	48.9p	46.9p	30p	46.9p	46.9p	58.6p	46.9p	46.9p
	First 8500 10000cc>	52.2p	52.2p	52.2p	54.4p	52.2p	13.07p	52.2p	52.2p	52.2p	52.2p	52.2p
	First 8500 12000cc>									48.7p		
	First 10000 miles											
	> 10000 miles											
		Council 11	Council 12	Council 13	Council 14	Council 15	Council 16	Council 17	Council 18	Council 19	Council 20	
	First 8500 <999cc											
	First 8500 10000cc>											
	First 8500 12000cc>											
	First 10000 miles	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	45p	
	> 10000 miles	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	25p	

Allowance		Cheshire East Council	Council 1	Council 2	Council 3	Council 4	Council 5	Council 6	Council 7	Council 8	Council 9	Council 10	Council 11	Council 12
RCU Allowance	Paid	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	999 cc <	£846	£846	£881.80	£846	£846	£ 1,057	£846				£846	£423	
	1000 cc >	£963	£963	£1,003.75	£963	£963	£ 963	£963				£963	£423	
	1200 cc >						£ 929							
	< 120g/km CO2									£866.70				
	121-150g/km CO2									£840.38				
	151-185g/km CO2									£814.05				
	186-225g/km CO2									£787.73				
	Over 225g/km CO2									£761.40				
	Grade 1-7													£846
	Grade 8 >													£963

Allowance		Cheshire East Council	Council 1	Council 2	Council 3	Council 4	Council 5	Council 6	Council 7	Council 8	Council 9	Council 10	Council 11	Council 12
Mileage Regular Essential	< 6000 miles									45p				
	6000 - 10000									Business miles				
	1000 >									25p				
	First 8500 <451cc										28.3p			
	First 8500 <999cc	36.9p	36.9p	38.5p	36.9p	36.9p	46.1p	36.9p			36.9p			
	First 8500 10000cc>	40.9p	40.9p	42.6p	40.9p	40.9p	40.9p	40.9p			40.9p			
	First 8500 12000cc>						37.9p							
	>8500 <451cc										9.9p			
	>8500 <999cc	13.7p	13.7p	14.3p	13.7p	13.7p	17.1p	13.7p			13.7p			
	>8500 1000cc >	14.4p	14.4p	15p	14.4p	14.4p	14.4p	14.4p			14.4p			
	>8500 1200cc >						12.3p							
	First 10000 miles <1000cc											36.9p		
	> 10000 miles <1000cc											13.7p		
	First 10000 >1000cc											40.9p		
	>10000 miles >1000cc											14.4p		
	First 10000 miles								30p			45p	45p	
	> 10000 miles								25p			25p	25p	



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

---

**Date of Meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Report Title:** Health and Safety Update Quarter 3

**Report of:** Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services

**Report Reference No:** CP/38/21-22

**Ward(s) Affected:** All

---

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1. The purpose of this report is to ensure Members of the Corporate Policy Committee are briefed on the health, safety and wellbeing of the organisation and understand how the Council's responsibilities as an employer and to members of the public are met. The Corporate Health and Safety Forum, which consists of representatives from management and the Trade Unions, meets on a quarterly basis and provides both an overview and a route for escalation.

### **2. Executive Summary**

2.1. This report and the Appendix provide a summary of data regarding accident and information data for the Council and maintained schools for Quarter 3 2021/22, the year to date and comparative data for the same periods in the last two years.

### **3. Recommendation**

3.1. That the Corporate Policy Committee note the update.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1. To ensure that Members are aware of Health and Safety activity and developments in line with the Committee's terms of reference.

### **5. Other options considered**

5.1. Not applicable

## 6. Background

- 6.1.** Table 1 sets out the key accident and incident data for Quarter 3 2021/22, with Appendix 1 providing further details of accident and incident information for the Council and maintained schools, and the work of the Health and Safety team for Quarter 3 2021/22 and the year to date.
- 6.2.** Comparative data for the last two years is included to recognise the impact of lockdown restrictions across Council services and maintained schools during 2020/21.
- 6.3.** Accident and incident rates for Council employees and members of the public have increased in Q3 by comparison to the previous year but are still lower than the same period in 2019/20. The exception to this is in maintained schools. There are no areas of concern in terms of trends or sites to bring to the Committee's attention; we have noticed an overall increase in recording of accident and incidents in schools in 2021/22 to date.

*Table 1 - Quarter 3 Accident and Incident Figures*

Council (EMPLOYEES)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Average Head Count	3,385	3,602	3,951
Accidents	37	44	66
RIDDOR Reportable	-	1	4
Incident Rate	10.93	12.22	16.70

Schools (EMPLOYEES)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Average Head Count	2,994	3,107	3,094
Accidents	32	26	23
RIDDOR Reportable	-	-	1
Incident Rate	10.69	8.37	7.43

Council (MOTP)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Accidents	118	71	224
RIDDOR Reportable	1	2	6

Schools (MOTP)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Accidents	86	155	76
RIDDOR Reportable	-	-	7

Total Accidents	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Council	155	115	290
Schools	118	181	99

Incidents	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Council	135	180	105
Schools	7	7	30

- 6.4. Accident and incident/near miss reports are recorded for members of staff and for members of the public. This covers Council and school staff/employees, and members of the public who are injured or have a near miss on Council land, or in the course of receiving services provided by the Council.
- 6.5. In a school context, accidents and incidents to pupils are treated and recorded as members of the public. As the RIDDOR reporting guidance is to record when a person is taken directly to hospital for treatment, many accidents are initially flagged as RIDDORs as pupils attend hospital as a precaution. The Health and Safety Executive advice is for these to be reported under RIDDOR only where there is a fault with equipment, facilities or the accident arose as a lack of supervision.
- 6.6. An accident is an unplanned and uncontrolled event which causes injury to persons, damage to property or a combination of both. Examples include a fall resulting in a fracture, incorrect operation of machinery leading to a breakdown, an act of non-consensual physical violence done to a person at work.
- 6.7. An incident, or near miss is an unplanned and uncontrolled event which does not cause injury or damage but could do so. Examples include articles falling near to people, short circuits on electrical equipment, and verbal aggression towards employees.
- 6.8. The data in Table 1 includes events which have been reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, or Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR). These regulations require the employer to report certain categories of accident, injury, certain diseases, and certain types of dangerous occurrences (those which had the potential to cause injury) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Also reportable are accidents where the injury results in the person being off work for more than 7 days. The HSE may choose to further investigate these reports.
- 6.9. There was one RIDDOR reportable accident recorded in Quarter 3, this relates to a member of the public injured after falling off their bike on a footpath and having struck a piece of edging. They had minor injuries and a check-up at A&E. The obstacle has been removed and the surface made good at the site.
- 6.10. There are no accidents or incidents requiring HSE investigation from Council or School figures during the year to date.
- 6.11. An incident, although an event where no physical injury occurs, although this may still be reportable under RIDDOR depending on the circumstances. Data is provided on events reported from Council staff, School Staff and Members of the Public (MOTP).
- 6.12. Data relating to the Council's Alternative Service Delivery Vehicles is not reflected in these figures. This information is reported to and considered by

their respective Boards. An outline of the health and safety management systems in operation at Ansa is outlined in Appendix 2 to this report.

- 6.13.** Data relating to Academies is also excluded. Academies are responsible for completing their own accident reporting, including making RIDDOR reports to the Health and Safety Executive where necessary. There is no requirement for Academies to publish information in relation to accidents and incidents publicly, but arrangements for responsibilities for Health and Safety, including monitoring and reviewing activity will be set out in the school's Health and Safety policy, which they are required to have to ensure compliance with various Health and Safety legislation.
- 6.14.** A range of Health and Safety related training is co-ordinated by the Health and Safety team, in conjunction with the Council's Workforce Development team. This is provided to Council and School delegates. Course provision usually includes a variety of first aid training, including refresher and requalification training, and courses such as "Leading Safely" and "Managing Safely" supported by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).
- 6.15.** During the pandemic, and whilst colleagues are supported to work from home wherever possible, essential training to support service delivery, primarily around first aid has been prioritised and conducted following Covid secure practices. We have been working with our training provider to identify where training can be effectively delivered using remote means, and courses have been delivered during using this from Quarter 3 onwards.
- 6.16.** Details of courses and attendance for Quarter 3 are provided in the Appendix. Course attendance was affected by cancellations due to Covid during this quarter, and a lower number of courses were delivered due to the Christmas break. However, course feedback has been positive, particularly around the care taken in delivering face to face training.
- 6.17.** Support to maintained schools is supplemented by a bought back advice and guidance service provided by the Health and Safety team. This is also available to Academies. Visits to schools were paused during the first national lockdown and have been subsequently provided through a combination of 'virtual' and physical site visits, which have been positively received.
- 6.18.** The majority of school visits during Quarter 3 have been on-site, although the decision for remote or on-site visit is made between the school and the Schools Health and Safety advisor prior to the visit; a small number of visits needed to be re-arranged during the quarter due to the impact of the omicron variant, but these have all been re-scheduled. Advice and guidance has been

provided throughout the pandemic, to the Council's Education team, and individual schools as needed.

- 6.19.** The Health and Safety team undertake reviews of policies on a rolling basis to ensure they reflect relevant legislation, current best practice, and the operation of the Council. Updates to existing policies are made following consultation with the Corporate Health and Safety Forum; the following policies will be considered at the meeting of the forum later in March.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Legal**

- 7.1.1. Activity relating to the summaries in this report contributes to ensuring that the Council's statutory responsibilities as an employer are met.

### **7.2. Finance**

- 7.2.1. There are no implications for the Council's MTFS arising from this report.

### **7.3. Policy**

- 7.3.1. Policy implications are covered in the body of the report.

### **7.4. Equality**

- 7.4.1. There are no direct equality implications arising from this update report.

### **7.5. Human Resources**

- 7.5.1. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report; the activity outlined in this report is to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees.

### **7.6. Risk Management**

- 7.6.1. There are no specific risks arising as a result of this update report.

### **7.7. Rural Communities**

- 7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities arising from this update report.

### **7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

- 7.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people arising from this update report.

### **7.9. Public Health**

- 7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health arising from this update report.

**7.10. Climate Change**

7.10.1. There are no direct implications for climate change arising from this update report.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Josie Griffiths Head of Audit and Risk Management <a href="mailto:Josie.griffiths@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Josie.griffiths@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Q3 Accident and Incident Statistics
Background Papers:	n/a

# Accident and Incident Statistics Q3 2021/22

OFFICIAL

Council (EMPLOYEES)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Average Head Count	3,385	3,602	3,951
Accidents	37	44	66
RIDDOR Reportable	-	1	4
Incident Rate	10.93	12.22	16.70

Schools (EMPLOYEES)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Average Head Count	2,994	3,107	3,094
Accidents	32	26	23
RIDDOR Reportable	-	-	1
Incident Rate	10.69	8.37	7.43

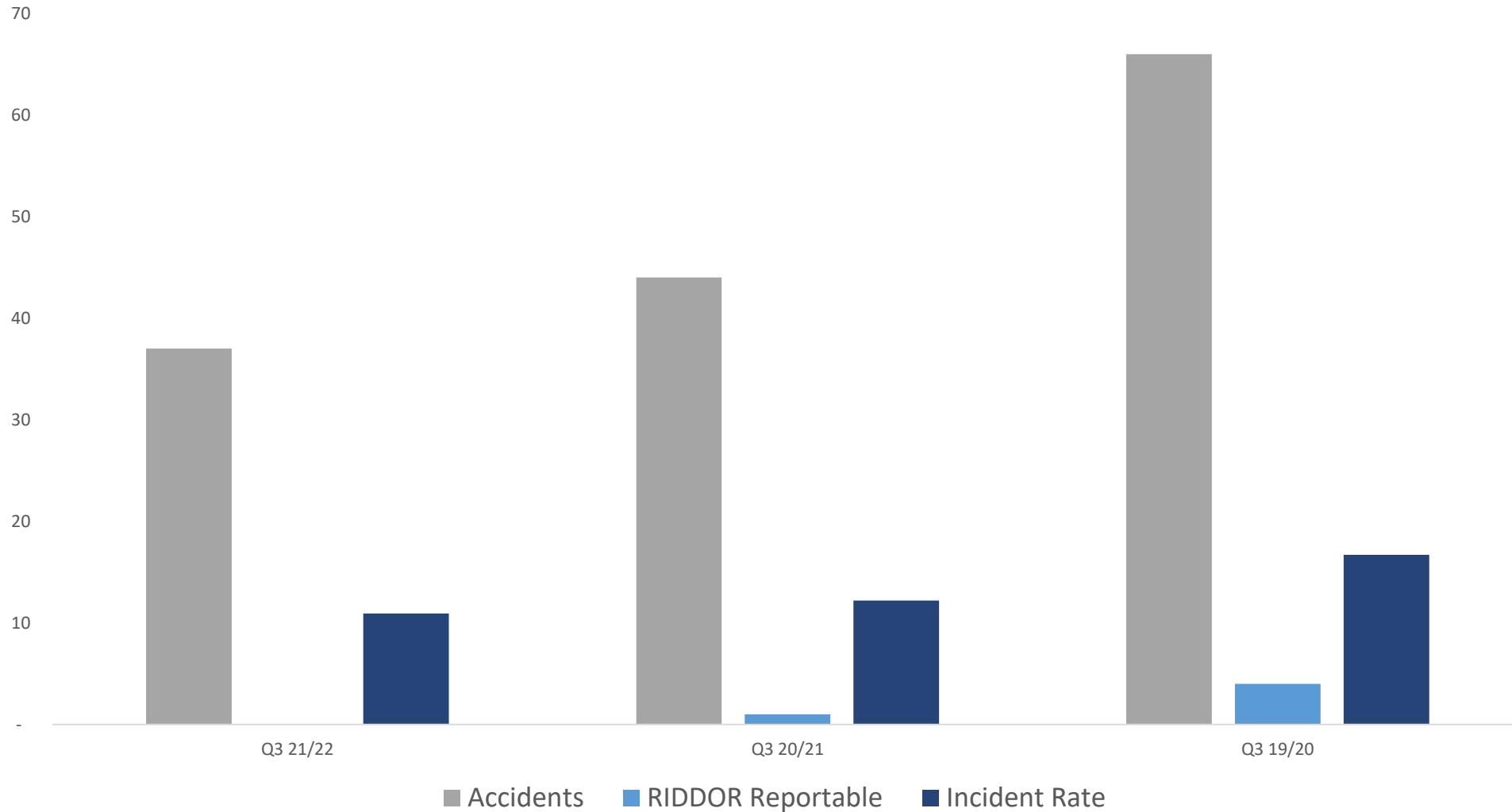
Council (MOTP)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Accidents	118	71	224
RIDDOR Reportable	1	2	6

Schools (MOTP)	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Accidents	86	155	76
RIDDOR Reportable	-	-	7

Total Accidents	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Council	155	115	290
Schools	118	181	99

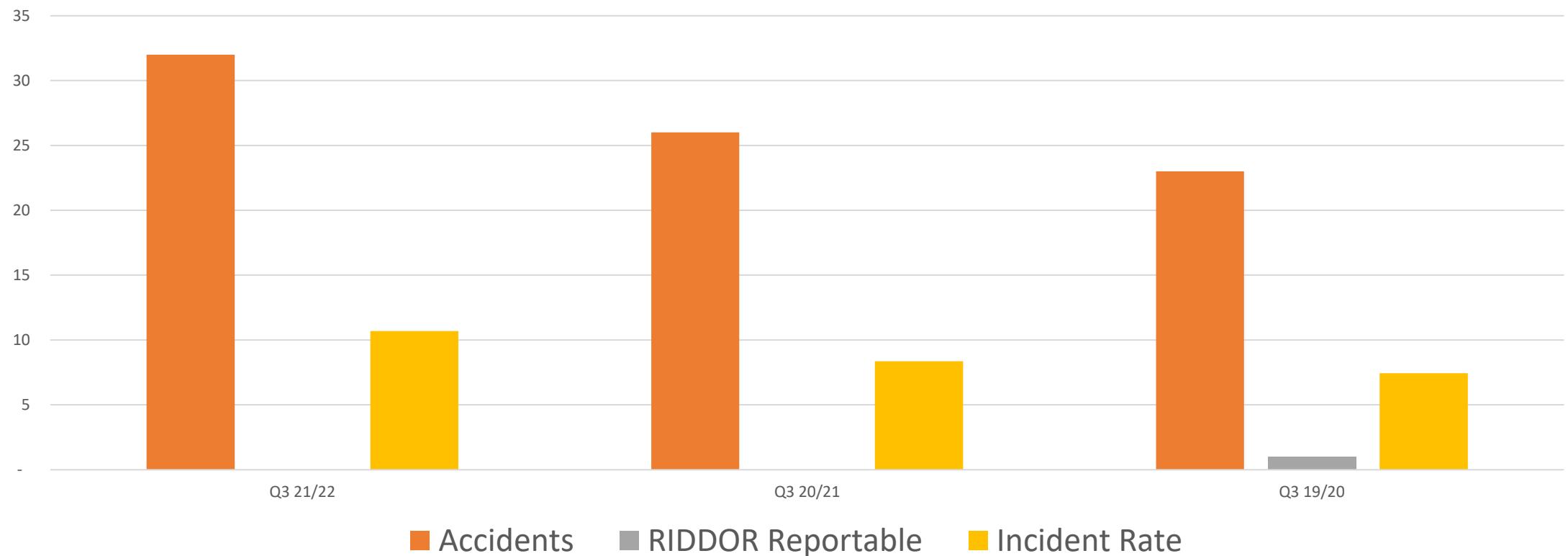
Incidents	Q3 21/22	Q3 20/21	Q3 19/20
Council	135	180	105
Schools	7	7	30

## Council Employee Accident Information



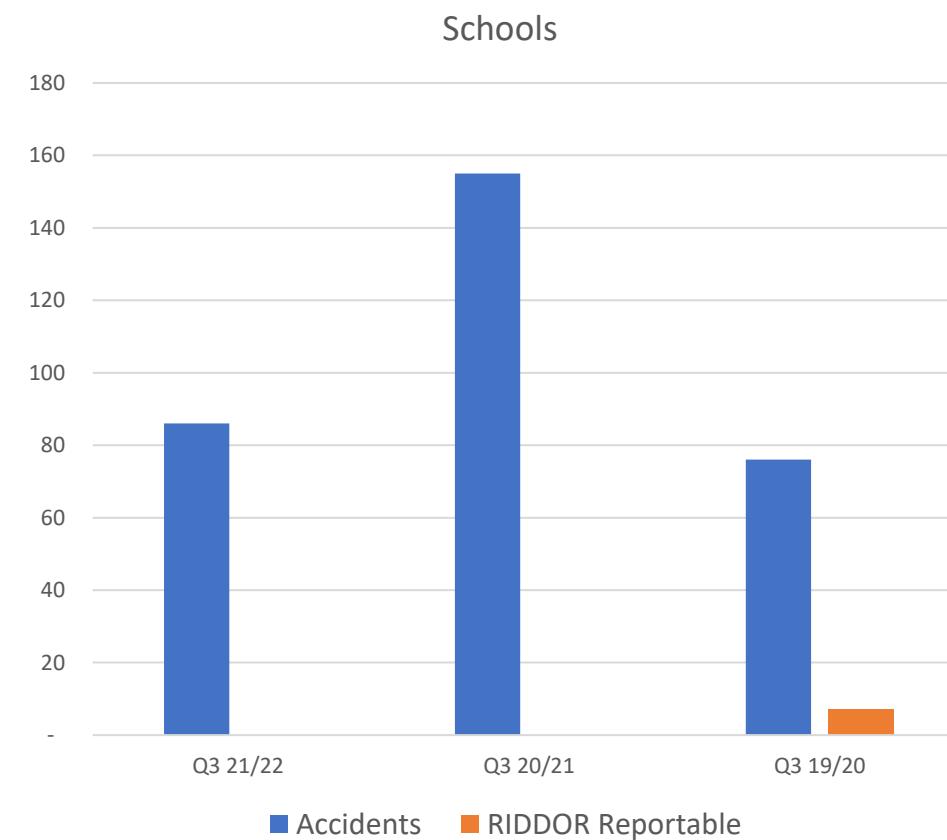
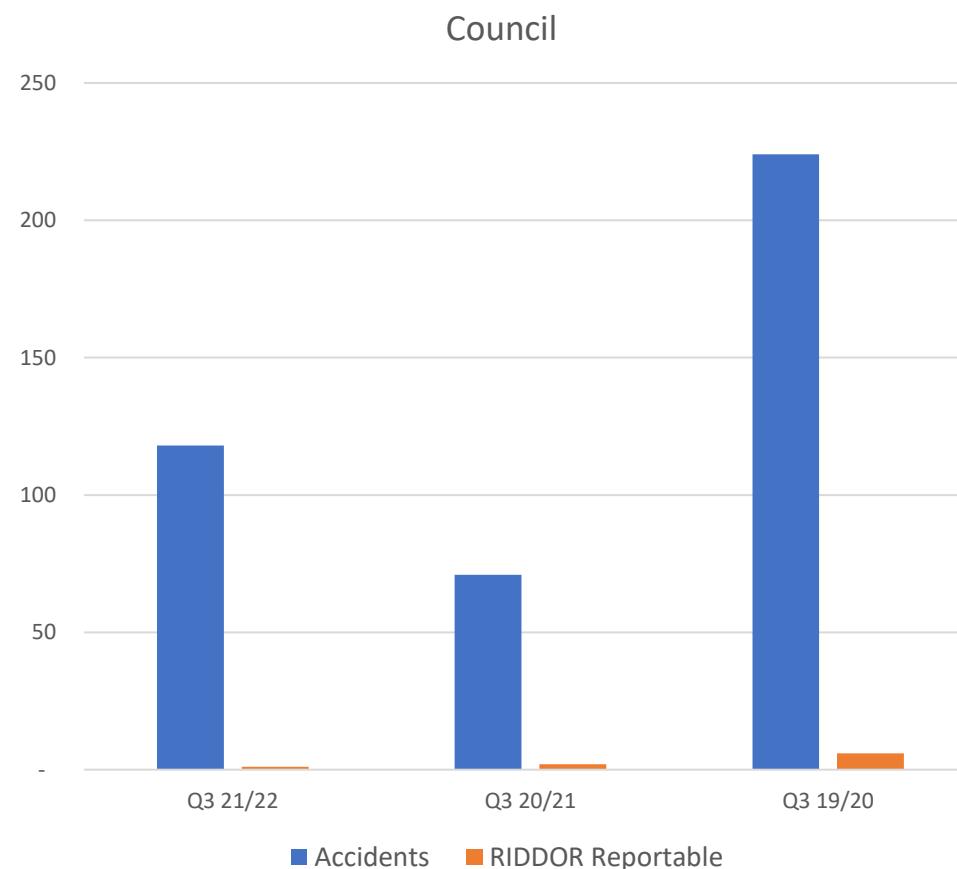
OFFICIAL

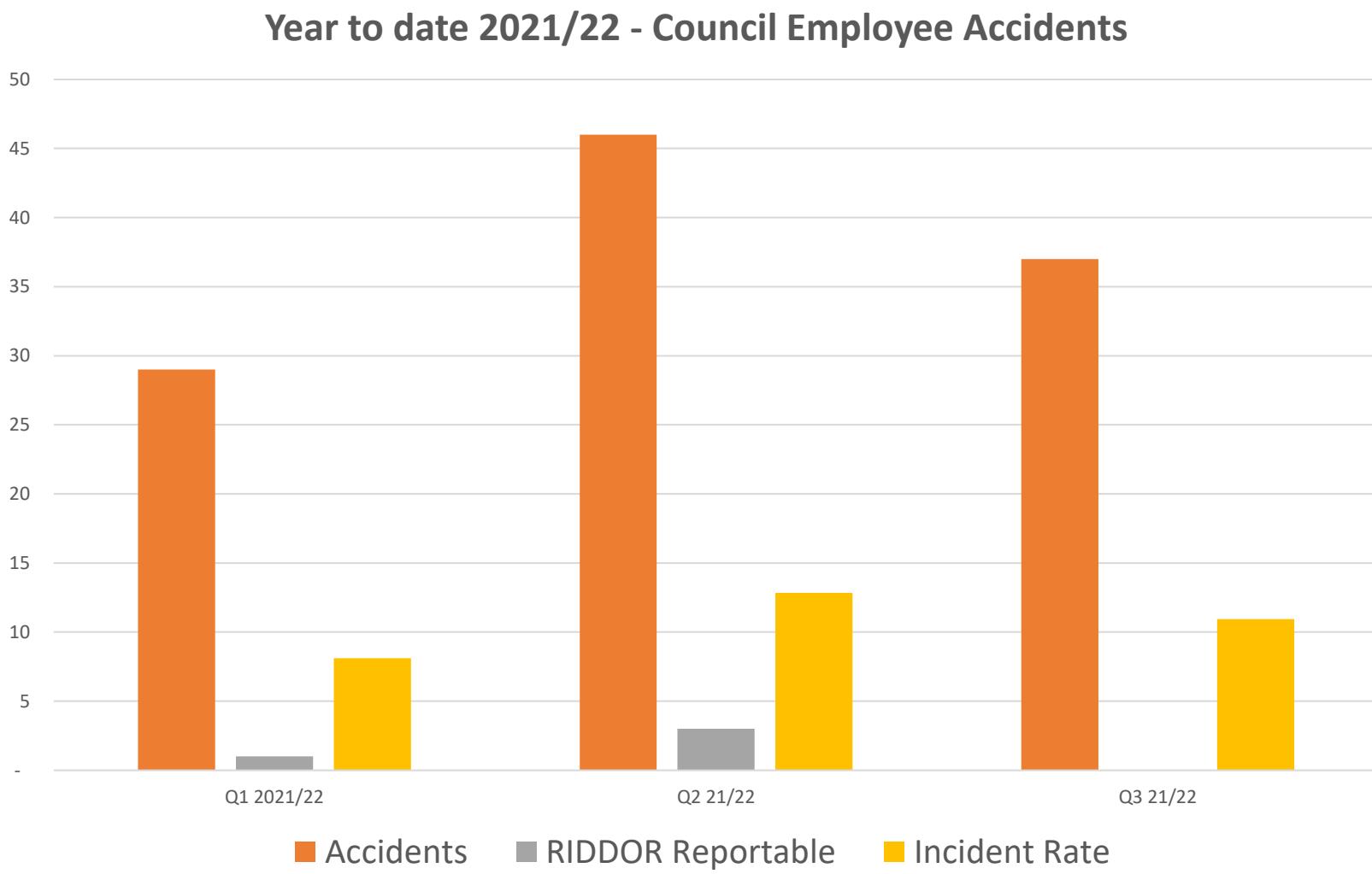
## School Employee Accident Information



OFFICIAL

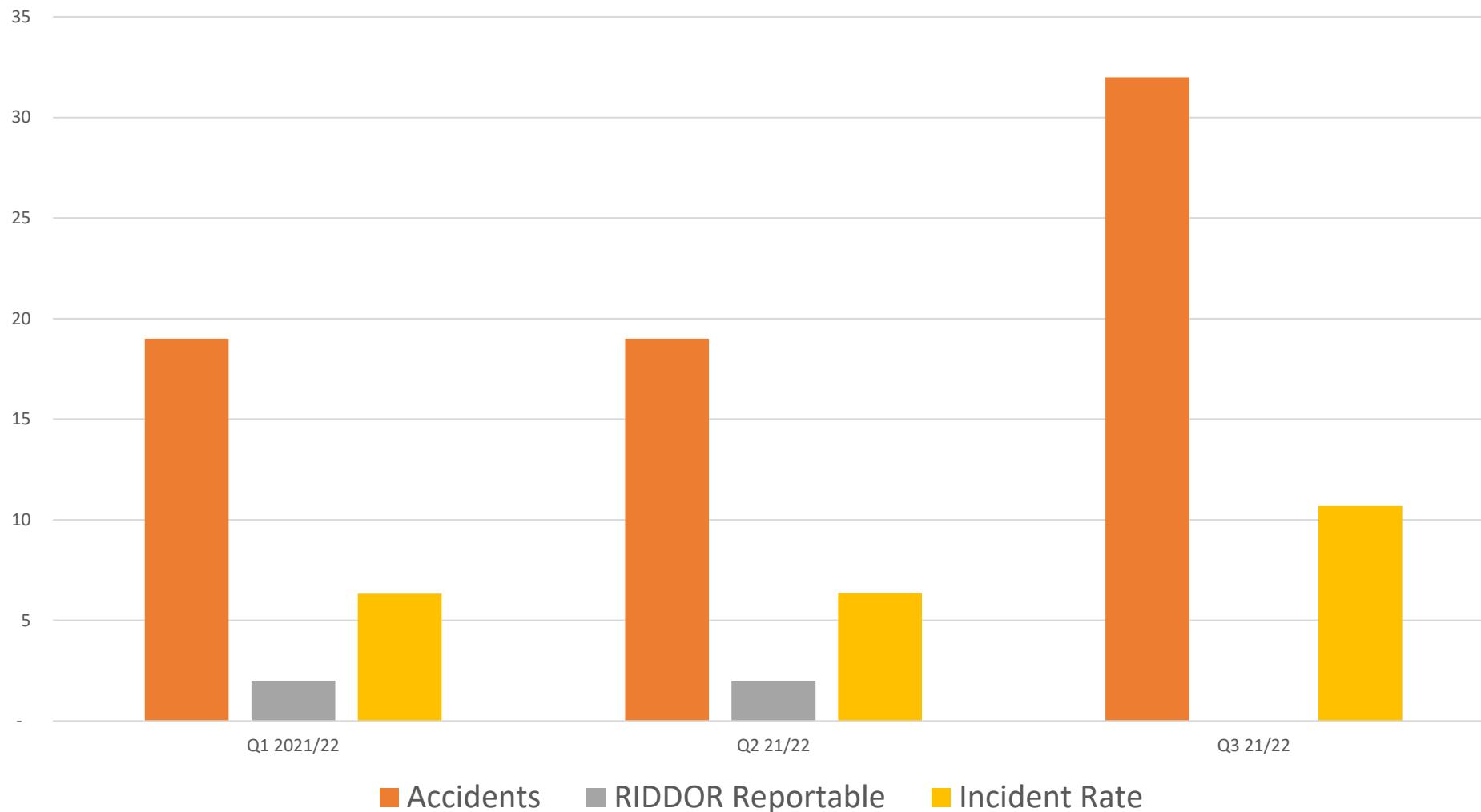
# Members of the Public (MOTP) Accident Numbers Q3 2021/22





OFFICIAL

## Year to date 2021/22 - School Employee Accidents



OFFICIAL

# School Visits - Quarter 3 2021/22

Type of School	Q1 Visits Carried out	Q2 Visits carried out	Q3 visits carried out
Primary Maintained	16	8	11
Primary Academy	12	7	6
Secondary Maintained	0	0	1
Secondary Academy	5	0	0
Special	1	1	0
Special Academy	0	1	1
Local Exhaust Ventilation Tests – D&T	0	2	N/A Service no longer provided
Local Exhaust Ventilation Tests - Science	0	2	N/A Service no longer provided

# Training Provision – Quarter 3 2021/22

<b>Course</b>	<b>Number of Courses held</b>	<b>Council Staff Attendees</b>	<b>School Staff Attendees</b>
First Aid at Work (blended-learning) (3 days)	4	10	15
First Aid at Work Re-qualification (2 days)	3	10	5
Paediatric First Aid (blended-learning) (2 days)	5	2	24
Emergency First Aid at Work (1 day)	4	14	8
Basic First Aid (half day) Delivered in a school	1	0	5
AED (Defibrillator) & CPR Refresher for Tatton Park (half day)	1	11	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>57</b>

## Oversight and Monitoring of Health and Safety at Ansa

1. Ansa operates a Management System under the framework of ISO 9001 for managing the quality of work outputs. ISO 14001 Environmental Management and ISO 45001 for Health and Safety Management (previously OHSAS 18001) have also been added. These standards are a common benchmark for compliance and good practice for organisations in any sector.
2. Ansa has regular re-certification audits where an external, UKAS accredited auditor examines our business systems for conformity to the ISO standards. ANSA has recently been recommended for continued certification as conforming with all three standards for another 3 years, with no non-conformances found in the recent audit

### **Internal**

3. Operational teams undertake routine checks including vehicle checks (pre-use daily checks, defect reporting), facility checks (scheduled walkarounds, planned inspections), workplace supervision (e.g. gate checks, crew checks) all of which include elements of ensuring safe working practices are in place.
4. As part of the ISO 45001 certification Ansa undertake a program of internal audit of operational management and activity against the processes and good practice described in the management system. These checks are assisted by an external consultant who has been associated with the organisation since its inception.
5. The HR team monitor the provision of occupational health and wellbeing support for staff. We carry out ongoing health surveillance on all operational employees to ensure that their health is not impacted by their work. This includes audiometry, spirometry, skin assessments, hand arm vibration (HAV)'s and HEP A&B vaccinations, the requirements vary depending on the role. Any concerns that are raised from the surveillance are dealt with accordingly, otherwise the employees are assessed at the recommended intervals.

### **External**

6. As part of the ISO 45001 certification Ansa invite external auditors to annually check both the management systems and operations for compliance with the international standard, legal requirements, and industry good practice. Ansa have held certification to ISO 45001, and its predecessor OHSAS 18001, since 2018.
7. Ansa have been awarded a gold award by RoSPA for workplace health and safety each year since 2015. Submission for this award includes providing evidence of both operational control of hazards and of effective risk management.
8. To support the fleet operators' licence, Ansa undertakes audits of the required compliance which include several elements of workplace and vehicle safety.

### **Reporting**

9. Ansa use the PRIME system for reporting. H&S activity including accident and incident figures are reported quarterly to the SHEQ Forum which includes representatives from all areas of the organisation and from TU. The same report is presented to the SMT and Board. H&S is a standing agenda item on regular management team meetings to facilitate regular updates and discussion. Senior management have direct reporting lines to all operational teams.

## 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/28/21-22	14 Apr 2022	Approach to Consultation and Engagement	To develop a new approach to consultation and engagement methods/processes.	Director of Policy and Change	Yes	Yes	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/63/21-22	14 Apr 2022	Community Governance Review report	To report on the outcome of the consultation and the advice from the CGR Working Group and make recommendations to Council on 27 February	Executive Director Corporate Services	Statutory process With decision-making at full Council	yes	TBC	An open and enabling organisation	No
	14 April 2022	CEC Constitution - Codes and Protocols	To report on the outcome of the consultation and the advice from the Constitution Working Group and make recommendations to Council on 27 February	Director of Governance and Compliance	Yes, via the Constitution Working Group	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/39/21-22	14 April 2022	Open Data - Annual Report	To provide an update on progress	Executive Director Corporate Services	No	No	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
	14 April 2022	ICS	TBC	Executive Director Health, Adults and Integration	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
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
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

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/48/21-22		Corporate Peer Challenge Annual Update	TBC	Executive Director Corporate Services	TBC	TBC	Yes	An open and enabling organisation	No
CP/40/21-22		Performance Reporting Update	To review a report on new arrangements for performance reporting in 2022/23	Director of Policy and Change	No	No	No	An open and enabling organisation	No