

Economy and Growth Committee

Agenda

Date: Thursday, 16th September, 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

Please note the face coverings will be required to be worn, unless exempt, by those attending the meeting. The meeting is open to the public but due to the social distancing layout of the meeting room public attendance will be limited.

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

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/coronavirus/testing-for-covid-19.aspx

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

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making 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.

For requests for further information

Contact: Rachel Graves

Tel: 01270 686473

E-Mail: rachel.graves@cheshireeast.gov.uk

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021.

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Council's 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 each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

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

5. **Tourism Recovery Plan** (Pages 7 - 32)

To consider and approve the Tourism Recovery Plan.

6. **Tatton Park Update** (Pages 33 - 48)

To receive an update on Tatton Park.

7. **Rural Action Plan** (Pages 49 - 84)

To consider the arrangements to update and refresh the Rural Action Plan for the period 2022 to 2025.

8. **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025** (Pages 85 - 184)

To note the consultation responses and amendments made to the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021–2025 and approve and adopt as the final version.

9. **First Homes and Affordable Housing** (Pages 185 - 210)

To note that a Housing Supplementary Planning Document is being developed and approve the process for the allocation of financial contributions for the provision of affordable housing.

10. **Work Programme** (Pages 211 - 212)

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

Membership: Councillors J Barber, S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, S Edgar, M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair), P Groves, M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, N Mannion (Chair), R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**
held on Thursday, 15th July, 2021 at The Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall,
High Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AX

PRESENT

Councillors M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair), D Brown, C Browne, C Bulman,
P Groves, R Moreton, D Stockton, P Williams, L Braithwaite, S Corcoran,
S Edgar and S Hogben

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates- Director for Economy and Growth
Karen Carsberg- Head of Housing
Andy Kehoe- Head of Estates
Paul Goodwin- Finance Officer
Adrian Leslie- Legal Officer
Helen Davies- Democratic Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair for the meeting was Councillor Mark Goldsmith, this was because Councillor Nick Mannion needed to self-isolate following a positive Covid-19 test. The Chair advised a number of the Committee were also self-isolating which had resulted in an unusual number of apologies.

Apologies had been received from:

Councillor James Barber (Councillor Steve Hogben was substituting),
Councillor Suzanne Brookfield (Councillor Carol Bulman was substituting),
Councillor Marilyn Houston (Councillor San Corcoran was substituting),
Councillor David Jefferay (Councillor Craig Browne was substituting),
Councillor Andrew Kolker (Councillor Steven Edgar was substituting),
Councillor Nick Mannion (Councillor Liz Braithwaite was substituting), and
Councillor Janet Clowes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

4 ASSET TRANSFER POLICY

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise introduced the item to the Committee.

He advised the Committee that the Localism Act had brought about the need for the Asset Transfer Policy in 2011, since then there had been revisions to the Policy in 2016 and it was now time to review the Policy.

The Committee were advised some of the benefits to the proposed revisions would ensure a renewed confidence in the process, a reduced cost to the Council, more social and environmental impacts and a drive forward for projects.

The Committee agreed that the level of detail in the business plan should reflect the scale of the asset. There was some discussion about the low level of response from Town and Parish Councils. Peter Skates gave reassurances to the Committee that the expressions of interest from the Town and Parish Councils indicated a desire for land property assets, there was no pressure to accept assets.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. endorse and approve the revised Policy; and
2. delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Chair of the Committee to consider the results of the consultation and approve the final version of the policy subject to any amendment to the policy being minor.

5 ECONOMY & GROWTH BUDGET 2021/22

Paul Goodwin attending the meeting via Microsoft Teams and introduced the item to the Committee.

The Committee noted that the budget included Public Rights of Way (PRoW) budget lines and under the Terms of Reference (ToR) this area of work fell under the remit of the Highways and Transport Committee. Peter Skates, Director for Growth and Enterprise advised the Committee that this was due to the allocation of budgets rather than aligning with specific Committees.

There was some discussion about Crewe Town Board and the Handforth Garden Village, and a figure of £2million identified in Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was raised to determine if this was now available for other projects following recent announcements of funding in Crewe. Peter Skates agreed to give written responses to the queries.

The Committee asked about the status of the Development of a Transit Site, Karen Carsberg, Housing Strategy Manager advised this work was progressing and was currently awaiting a date to be scheduled for the Committee.

There was agreement within the Committee that further training on finance and financial matters would be valuable.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1 the decision of the Finance Sub-Committee to allocate the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the Economy and Growth Committee be noted
- 2 the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) timelines be noted; and
- 3 the supplementary estimates and virements be noted.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme. Peter Skates, advised this was an opportunity to check the forthcoming agenda items and note any changes.

Since the agenda had been published, there was one change for the Committee to note:

- 1) The scheduled Committee date of the 15th November 2021 had been changed to 30 November 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be received and noted.

7 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - UPDATE ON PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND SITES SELECTION

The Committee considered the update to the Housing Development Framework, on the procurement process and site selection. The Chair reminded the Committee that during this item they were only considering recommendations 2.1.1, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 as 2.1.2 was to be discussed in Part Two.

RESOLVED: That the:

- 1 progress which has been made in relation to the procurement of the Housing Development Framework be noted;

- 2 disposal route of the dormer Vernon Infant School, Poynton be approved through the Housing Development Framework; and
- 3 the final decisions relating the disposal of these sites be undertaken in line with decision making processes for land and property disposals as outlined in the constitution be noted.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

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

9 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - UPDATE ON PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND SITES SELECTION

The Committee considered recommendation 2.1.2 from the Housing Development Framework update report.

RESOLVED:

That the disposal route of the sites which have been identified for progression through the Housing Development Framework be supported.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.55 pm

Councillor Mark Goldsmith (Vice Chair in the Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Economic and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	16 September 2021
Report Title:	Tourism Recovery Plan
Report of:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/14/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** This report sets out an approach to supporting tourism and the visitor economy in Cheshire East following an economic downturn in the sector due to the Covid pandemic.
- 1.2.** The plan sets out a number of approaches to supporting the sector through its recovery and describes the contribution of the Visitor Economy to Cheshire East and to the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:
 - Open – Through its contribution to the economy of Cheshire East, Tourism and the Visitor Economy brings income into the borough. Since 2011 the Council has published a visitor economy strategy to support longer-term growth in the sector. Recognising the specific needs of the sector the Council's current focus, outlined in this report, is on recovery and resilience.
 - Fair – The Visitor Economy provides an environment that supports the wellbeing of our communities and specifically offers opportunities for employment.
 - Green – Tourism and the visitor economy contribute to Cheshire East being 'A thriving and sustainable place', particularly in relation to it being a great place for people to live, work and visit, contributing to thriving urban and rural economies, the environment and our quality of place.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** To approve the Tourism Recovery Plan as the basis of the Council's approach to economic recovery in the Visitor Economy sector.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** To ensure that Tourism and the Visitor Economy can contribute to Cheshire East being 'A thriving and sustainable place', and a great place for people to live, work and visit, the sector needs support to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. The Council has a role to play in supporting this important sector to recover and in nurturing the conditions that will see it grow once more.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** In normal circumstances the Visitor Economy Strategy would have been refreshed to cover the next five-year period. However, the pandemic has fundamentally changed the context for tourism and the visitor economy, requiring an emphasis on short-term recovery rather than longer-term strategy. Therefore, this recovery plan focuses on the period 2021 and 2022 to assist the sector to survive and recover, preparing the ground for a new Visitor Economy Strategy for 2023 onwards.

5. Background

- 5.1.** The Visitor Economy is a broad term that is defined as the part of Cheshire East's economy which is supported by the expenditure of visitors. These are visitors staying overnight and those on day trips. The total value of the visitor economy pre-Covid was £994 million (STEAMⁱ 2019), due to surpass the Visitor Economy Strategy target of £1bn by 2020. The majority of this relates to the value of day visitors, contributing £742 million. However, the impact of overnight visitors had grown by 66% over 10 years and contributed over £250 million to the economy.
- 5.2.** In the most recent Visitor Economy Strategy (2016-2020), which was approved by Cabinet in April 2016, the focus was on quality of place; infrastructure; dwell time; skills and investment. These are still highly relevant and will continue to have a strong focus. However, there is a clear challenge and requirement post-Covid to encourage, support and sustain hospitality & tourism businesses to enable recovery and subsequent growth in the visitor economy of Cheshire East. There is also a need to encourage resilience in the sector to deal with any future impacts of the pandemic.
- 5.3.** Sector intelligence points to a substantial reduction in the value of the visitor economy for the UK due to the pandemic and therefore we anticipate the value of the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East could have been reduced to

around 2009 levels. Therefore, there is a need to work closely with business and partners to support the sector and to provide conditions for sustainable growth. This will be achieved through providing the sector with a strong voice to secure financial and business support whilst ensuring initiatives such as high-profile marketing campaigns and then opportunities to revisit our approach to attracting business tourism and conferences to Cheshire East once again.

5.4. Why a Recovery Plan and not a new Visitor Economy Strategy?

5.5. The aim of the recovery plan for the period 2021 and 2022 is to assist the sector to survive and recover through targeted support. In addition to the actions of businesses themselves, additional measures and actions may be required to encourage resilience and ensure a strong recovery for our visitor economy sector.

5.6. Therefore, this initial focus is on recovery as a long-term strategy is not considered the right immediate response. Longer term aspirations and strategic approach to achieve them are still important, but we must first ensure that we have a recovering and growing sector in the short term to enable those aspirations to be met. That will enable work on a new Visitor Economy Strategy to be delivered for 2023 onwards, which will look to the medium and longer-term within the context of wider economic strategy.

5.7. COVID – Impact on Hospitality & Tourism

5.8. Coronavirus has impacted the Visitor Economy of Cheshire East with figures for 2020 expected to show the sector falling back to levels not seen since 2009. Hotel occupancy levels have fallen significantly with many seeing levels around 20% compared to around 80% in summer 2019. Events, weddings and attractions have all been impacted along with the supply-chains. The effects on the hospitality sector also impact on our town centres, affecting footfall and vibrancy.

5.9. For Cheshire East, there are no official (Office for National Statistics) estimates yet of the impact of COVID on hospitality sector economic output or on employment, however, we have estimates of Gross Value added (GVAⁱⁱ) and employment, by industry for all recent years (and projections up to the 2030s) from the Council's Cheshire & Warrington Econometric Model (CWEM).

5.10. According to the estimates from current CWEM model: The GVA of Cheshire East's Accommodation sub-sector in 2020 was 48.0% lower than in 2019, while the GVA of the Borough's Pubs, Restaurants & Other Food and Drink Services sub-sector was 45.6% below its 2019 level. To put this in context,

the CWEM estimates suggest that, in 2020, Cheshire East's total GVA (across all industries and services) was only 2.5% lower than in 2019.

5.11. A Recovery Plan

5.12. Over the past few months officers have been taking soundings from businesses and working with Marketing Cheshire to develop an approach to help support the sector through a recovery period. The Tourism Recovery Plan sets out a rationale for how the Cheshire East can recover ground and position itself for future growth. These complements and contributes to a Destination Management Plan (DMPⁱⁱⁱ) at sub-regional level produced by Marketing Cheshire with input from the Local Authorities.

5.13. Cheshire East is ideally positioned to take advantage of some of the key thematic post-Covid trends such as:

- Outdoor experiences
- Friends and family
- Wellness
- Lifestyle and culture
- Sustainable and green

5.14. The plan identifies and describes key areas of activity that support this positioning in Cheshire East including:

- Outdoor events
- Filming/Film Tourism.
- Heritage
- Culture.
- Weddings
- Town Centres
- Visiting Friends & Relatives
- Green Space
- Cycling/walking
- Glamping/Camping/Caravanning
- Historic Estates & Houses
- Spa's & Retreats
- Self-Catering

5.15. In the first year, as restrictions are removed, the focus will be on supporting our towns, tourism & hospitality businesses, and attractions through the re-start of the economy. Working with partners we will work to position Cheshire East as a safe outdoor location with world class product for all. This will

initially target the local resident, visiting friends and relatives and short breaks to discover what is on the doorstep, moving to regional and national as the relevant re-opening steps are met.

5.16. Resilience to the effects of the pandemic continue to be of importance and will help provide more certainty should further impacts occur. Recruitment and retention are immediate issues for the sector's recovery and proposals are being developed that will assist Cheshire East businesses to recruit staff.

5.17. The recovery plan also sets out a number of thematic campaigns in 2021 aligned with the Destination Management Plan priorities between now and 2022, with key actions to guide the Council and its partners through this period of recovery.

5.18. Actions outlined in the plan include:

- Working with Marketing Cheshire and other organisations to develop and promote effective campaigns, media profile and user content.
- Delivering a number of Visitor Economy Forums aligned to business needs with relevant presentations from industry experts.
- Realising the value of the visitor economy as part of regeneration plans and 'Town Centre Vitality Plans' with the aim of creating successful town centres.
- Ensuring Cheshire East tourism & hospitality businesses have access to new tools such as 'User Generated Content'^{iv} to increase their visibility and assist in their recovery.
- Offering Cheshire East tourism & hospitality businesses access to the most up to date research from industry professionals, including research around consumer sentiment.
- Working with partners to understand and address training requirements, job retention and employment opportunities.
- Continuing to utilise government grants to further support sectors including visitor economy, town centres and our rural areas.

5.19. Cheshire East Council has already distributed grants to many hospitality businesses and specific grants such as 'The Welcome Back' fund have also been used to support town centres and hospitality businesses.

5.20. The success of the recovery plan requires a multi-disciplinary approach involving a range of CEC departments, Tourism Agencies, businesses, Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and research agencies along with neighbouring authorities, the LEP and Marketing Cheshire.

5.21. A wider context

5.22. Three recent Government strategies have been published that are of particular relevance to this sector. In June 2021 the Government published a Tourism Strategy recognising that Tourism is an economic, social and

cultural asset and a major contributor to jobs and growth. It set out an aspiration to reach 2019 levels at least a year faster than independent forecasts predict. In July 2021, the Government also published a Hospitality Strategy focused on reopening, recovery and resilience alongside a High streets Strategy.

- 5.23.** In partnership with the Council, the visitor economy in Cheshire and Warrington is supported by the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the local Destination Management Organisation (Tourism Board), Marketing Cheshire. A Destination Management Plan (DMP) helps to articulate the priorities for the sub-region but needs to be supported with tourism strategies (or recovery plans) for all parts of Cheshire including Cheshire East.
- 5.24.** The recovery plan and longer-term strategy detail the actions that Cheshire East needs to take to develop or enable a successful visitor economy. However, they also demonstrate how we are contributing to achieving a shared vision, priorities and targets described in the DMP, so contributing to a national Tourism Strategy from Visit Britain and Visit England.
- 5.25.** To be effective the recovery plan and future Visitor Economy Strategies must also link to the aspirations and priorities of local tourism associations, sector groups and Cheshire East Council plans – economic, rural, cultural, transport, environmental and spatial – to make the most of available capacity and resources.
- 5.26.** The Plan provides a framework for support and promotion that will assist the sector to be resilient in the short-term and to recover. It sets out several actions that will enable the sector to take advantage of opportunities and position Cheshire East as a safe, accessible destination with quality assets and experiences. This includes partnership working, promotional campaigns, a focus on both rural assets and town centres, addressing recruitment and retention issues, business support, networking opportunities and research to inform a future Visitor Economy Strategy. However, plans need to be flexible and responsive enough to deal with the continuing influence of the Pandemic over this period. Therefore, the Council will keep measures under review and may still have to respond to changing circumstances.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** The recovery plan sets out a number of measures that will be reliant on engagement with businesses, directly or through Marketing Cheshire, to inform how actions are implemented and to monitor their impact.
- 6.2.** This, together with research over the recovery period, will be used to inform the development of the next Visitor Economy Strategy. A report will be brought back to the Committee in the 2022/23 cycle that will update Members on the recovery and the proposed Visitor Economy Strategy.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report and its recommendations.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report and its recommendations. Actions outlined in this report will be delivered within existing Visitor economy and other relevant service budgets, approved grants or subject to the Council's business planning process.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The Visitor Economy is a valuable contributor to the rural, visitor and cultural economies of Cheshire East, and along with its contribution to 'quality of place', it plays an important role in economic well-being.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. Given that the proposal does not represent any change of policy an EIA has not been conducted. There are no direct implications for equalities.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There are no direct implications for risk management.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. Tourism and the visitor economy are a significant contributor to the rural economy with many of the major attractions and accommodation providers being in the rural areas.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. Children, young people and their families form a large part of the visitor audience for attractions in Cheshire East, many of which include outdoor facilities. Encouraging visitors, to what is largely an outdoor activity venue, will have a positive impact on quality of life, providing social, mental and physical health benefits for all age groups.

7.8.2. Future opportunities for cared for children will be considered in developing proposals for recruitment and careers in the hospitality sector.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. Cheshire East has many outdoor attractions to visit, which can offer a positive impact on quality of life, providing social, mental and physical health benefits for all age groups.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. The tourism and visitor assets of Cheshire east often depend upon the quality and sustainability of the environment. Some attractions provide significant environmental assets for Cheshire East and their operators are delivering actions related to environmental sustainability, nature-based sequestration and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brendan Flanagan Head of Rural and Cultural Economy Brendan.flanagan@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07802583903
Appendices:	Tourism Recovery Plan 2021
Background Papers:	Visitor Economy Strategy Visitory-Economy-Strategy-2016-2020 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

ⁱ **STEAM:** The Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) is a nationally used, statistically robust tourism economic impact modelling process which approaches the measurement of tourism from the bottom up, through its use of local supply side data, tourism performance and visitor data collection. STEAM quantifies the local economic impact of tourism, from both staying and day visitors.

ⁱⁱ **GROSS Value Added (GVA):** measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector. It represents the value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced, less the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production.

ⁱⁱⁱ **DMP:** A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources. It is produced for an area by a Destination Management Organisation (in this case Marketing Cheshire) on behalf of the stakeholders. VisitEngland (the National Tourism Board) encourages and supports the development of Destination Management Plans throughout England as an essential tool in the delivery of a successful visitor economy.

^{iv} **User Generated Content (UGC):** This refers to the content that is created by the users of a brand (visitors to Cheshire in this case). It can be anything from comments, reviews, and images to social media posts. Marketing platforms can harness UGC to benefit the brand, as it is often more trusted than traditional advertising as it is seen as being unbiased and created by users rather than paid for by the brand.



Cheshire East Tourism Recovery Plan

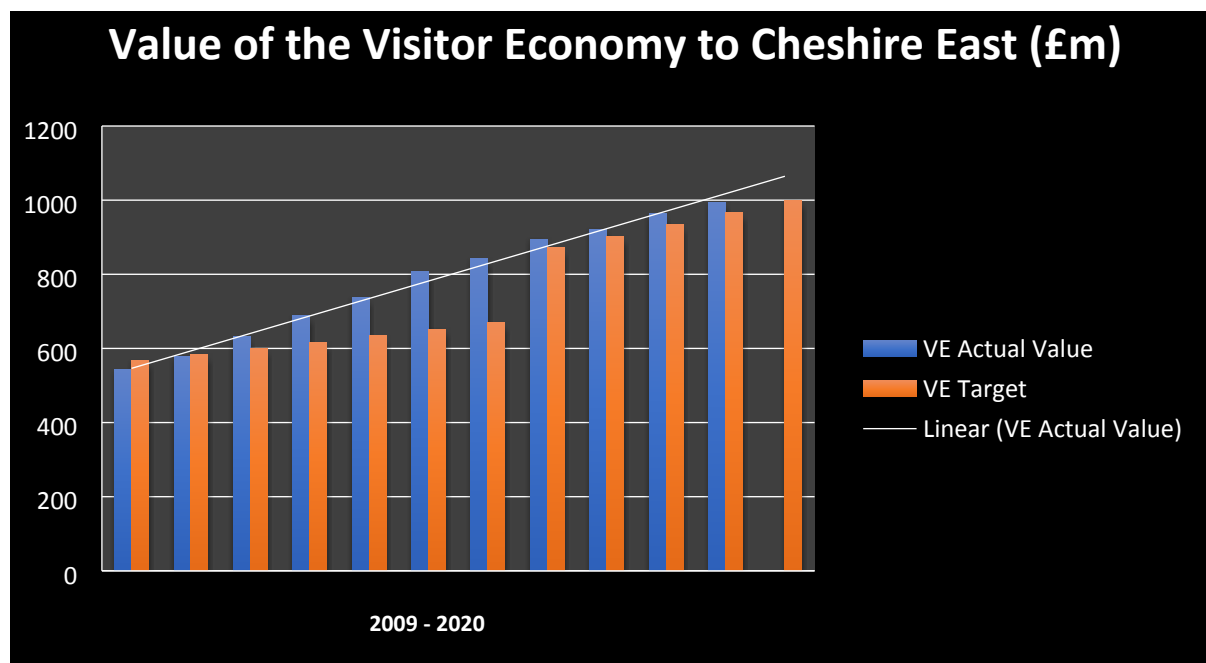
2021

TOURISM RECOVERY PLAN

Overview: Cheshire East Visitor Economy recovery

Cheshire East has an exciting tourism product that continues to evolve despite the challenges and impact of the Covid pandemic. Jodrell Bank is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; Tatton Park is the 3rd most visited paid for attraction in the North West; there is accessible countryside from riverside walks to the Peak District fringe; market towns including Macclesfield, the gateway to the Peak District and the former home of Ian Curtis (Singer/song writer with Joy Division). This combined with accommodation from luxury hotels to cosy boltholes, world class events, farm-stays, and the best health club spa in the 'Good Spa awards 2019' means that Cheshire East's visitor economy has the potential to come back stronger than before.

The pandemic has shown how important our restaurants, bars, cafes, theatres, museums, tourist attractions and retail destinations are to our area, its life and its economy, reflecting the adage 'sometimes you don't know what you have until it's gone'. Before the pandemic, the overall 'economic value' of tourism in Cheshire East was £994 million, supporting 11,812 FTE jobs and welcoming over 16 million visitors. This brings in much-needed revenue to the borough, boosting its economy, supporting the 'Quality of Place' agenda and helping its positioning through place marketing. As we look towards economic recovery, the visitor economy has a strong base from which to further growth, innovation and creativity across the sector.



2021 will benefit from new openings including

- BeWilderwood – family attraction opened in April at Cholmondeley Castle
- First Light – A new visitor experience at Jodrell Bank

The vaccine rollout gives us optimism to plan ahead once more for growth in day visitors and staycations. This document outlines a recovery plan to support the tourism and hospitality sector in Cheshire East while once again looking forward to a longer-term strategy.

The UK Tourism Economy predicted to return to pre-Covid levels by end of 2022 for domestic markets and the end of 2023 for International markets. However, Oxford Economics does not predict tourism in the UK to return in full to 2019 levels of volume and expenditure until 2025. Whichever economic assumptions are correct, we would still need to understand more fully how different parts of the visitor economy may fare. The impact on visitor and lifestyle businesses of prolonged closure and disruption to their markets offers both challenges and opportunities through the period of recovery that need to be considered. Public confidence and market shifts in some offers (such as outdoor attractions, self-catering and camping) may be more responsive in some areas than others (such as business travel, indoor attractions or hotels) and international travel is likely to face disruption for longer than in-country choices.

Because of the 'staycation' factor we might therefore assume that the recovery of the day-visit, 'visiting friends and relatives', local hospitality and self-contained accommodation elements have a potential to recover ground more quickly than other markets, accepting that there are significant losses to make up. Therefore, a working assumption is that over the period of the recovery plan (2021- 22) Cheshire East has the potential to regain a visitor economy value equivalent to a value of over £800m, with potential beyond then to once again aspire to a value of £1bn +.

Destination marketing also supports 'place marketing' as the destination image helps communicate 'quality of place', raises profile and positions the area among wider audiences including prospective residents and investors. Alongside a perceived value-shift in locational priorities and an accelerated shift in working patterns, there is an opportunity to position Cheshire East as an attractive place to live, work and invest as well as visit.

We will continue to engage with industry partners as well as our residents, who we expect will be keen to rediscover everything available on their doorstep. Looking further ahead, we have a fantastic destination offer to develop for the future too, which will allow us to attract more domestic visitors and potentially more international visitors from 2022/23. In addition, we need to consider our position in business tourism in light of the new context from 2022 onwards.

In the context of the disruption of the sector and the trend in economic contribution it is appropriate to focus on a recovery plan rather than a longer-term strategy. Recovery cannot be achieved by Cheshire East Council alone, but relies on business, other agencies and key partners such as Marketing Cheshire working in a coordinated and complementary fashion.

The focus of the recovery plan is therefore to assist the sector to survive and recover through targeted support, against a backdrop of a reduced baseline and to be responsive to changing circumstances. It will also focus on that data necessary to

inform strategic decisions about the future of the sector through gathering research to inform the development of the next Visitor Economy Strategy.

Background: Cheshire East Visitor Economy 2009 – 2020

The Visitor Economy is a broad term that is defined as the part of Cheshire East's economy which is supported by the expenditure of visitors. These are visitors staying overnight and those on day trips. The total value of the visitor economy pre-Covid was £994 million (STEAM 2019), on target to reach over £1bn by 2020. The majority of these are day visitors, contributing £742 million of the total. However, the impact of overnight visitors has grown by 66% over the previous 10 years and contributed over £250 million to the economy. Indications show that Cheshire East is seen as a location with great links to visitor destinations both within and outside of our boundary, whilst having attractions and outdoor space without bustling crowds that visitors are now keen to avoid.

Since 2009 Cheshire East has worked with local and national partners to develop the visitor economy to the benefit of visitors and residents. We have seen increases in the quality of events; increases in quality accommodation; new tourist attractions and a growth in employment within the sector. Cheshire East is seen as a visitor destination for day visits and increasingly for overnight stays and is in a good position to benefit from the anticipated staycation once lockdown ends.

In the most recent visitor economy strategy (2016-2020) the focus was on quality of place; infrastructure; dwell time; skills and investment. These are still highly relevant and will continue to have a strong focus however there is a requirement post-Covid to ensure hospitality & tourism businesses survive to allow for a recovery and subsequent growth in the visitor economy of Cheshire East.

Recent intelligence points to a substantial reduction in the value of the visitor economy for the UK and therefore we anticipate the value of the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East having reduced to around 2009 levels through the Pandemic. We must work closely with business and partners to support the sector and to provide conditions for sustainable growth. This will be achieved through providing the sector with a strong voice to secure financial and business support, ensuring initiatives such as high-profile marketing campaigns and subsequently revisiting our approach to attracting business tourism and conferences to Cheshire East when the market allows.

There is a recognition that the sector can recover a large amount that was lost over the past eighteen months. However, some parts will recover faster than others and priority areas such as conferences and events will require additional stimulus and encouragement to return and even exceed 2019 levels.

Why a Recovery Plan and not a new Visitor Economy Strategy?

The aim of the recovery plan, for the period 2021 and 2022, is to assist the sector to survive and recover through targeted support, whether through the Council or its partners. In addition to the actions of businesses themselves, additional measures and actions may be required to ensure a strong recovery for our visitor economy

sector. Therefore, this initial focus is on encouraging resilience and on recovery as a long-term strategy is not considered the right immediate response. Longer term aspirations and strategic approach to achieve them are still important, but we must first ensure that we have a recovering and growing sector in the short term to enable those aspirations to be met. That will enable work on a new Visitor Economy Strategy to be delivered for 2023 onwards, which will look to the medium and longer-term.

Interventions as part of recovery should still take account of the strategic priorities and themes of the 2016-20 visitor economy strategy which provide a valid context for growth until a new strategy is developed.



COVID – Impact on Hospitality & Tourism

Coronavirus has had a significant impact on the Visitor Economy of Cheshire East with figures for 2020 expected to show the sector falling back to levels not seen since before 2009. Hotel occupancy levels have fallen significantly with many seeing levels around 20% compared to around 80% in summer 2019. Events, weddings and attractions have all been impacted along with the supply-chains. The effects on the hospitality sector also impact on our town centres, affecting footfall and vibrancy.

For a national perspective the Office for National Statistics' latest published GDP estimates for the UK as a whole estimated that UK GDP in the first quarter of 2021 (January to March) was down 1.6% on its 2020 Quarter 4 level (and 8.8% below its 2019 Q4 level), but the Food & Accommodation Services sector's GDP in 2021 Quarter 1 was down 18.6% on the previous quarter.

For Cheshire East, there are no official (Office for National Statistics) estimates yet of the impact of COVID on hospitality sector economic output or on employment, however, we have got estimates of GVA (and employment) by industry for all recent years (and projections up to the 2030s) from the Council's Cheshire & Warrington Econometric Model (CWEM).

According to the estimates from current CWEM model: The GVA of Cheshire East's Accommodation sub-sector in 2020 was 48.0% lower than in 2019, while the GVA of the Borough's Pubs, Restaurants & Other Food and Drink Services sub-sector was 45.6% below its 2019 level. To put this in context, the CWEM estimates suggest that, in 2020, Cheshire East's total GVA (across all industries and services) was only 2.5% lower than in 2019.

There have been many other challenges, including temporary closures of businesses, a loss of in-person conferences and business meetings, loss of wedding business, a lack of high-profile events, a need for businesses to borrow to survive and general uncertainty in the markets. In addition, the pandemic led to a loss of staff from the sector as business reduced, leaving a difficult legacy of staff shortage, poor retention due to uncertainty and a skills gap. However, there will be opportunities including camping, caravanning and glamping for when visitors are ready to explore again, as well as the 'visiting friends and relatives' market. Added to that the high-profile openings of BeWildewood and First Light at Jodrell Bank, give reason for optimism from the second part of 2021 onwards.

During the COVID 19 pandemic we have been liaising with the sector to understand their issues and represent their interests. The Council has also managed and facilitated government business support and grants and to date, the Council has facilitated over £100m of grants to businesses in Cheshire East, including hotels, pubs, restaurants, cafes, B&Bs and other accommodation providers.

We have also ensured that the most up to date economic and industry specific information and research has been disseminated to the sector. Through Marketing Cheshire, we have purchased a User Generated Content platform to re-imagine Cheshire as a visitor destination through the eyes of residents and visitors; this also provides key data to understand target markets for future marketing campaigns.

The visitor economy in Cheshire East outperformed strategic targets for over 10 years and this recovery plan can help it will come back stronger than ever. There are some real opportunities for the sector in Cheshire East and this plan will enable a focus on these emerging trends.

However, plans need to be flexible and responsive enough to deal with the continuing influence of the Pandemic over this period. For example, the impact of a 'third wave' has brought its own challenges and further spikes in Coronavirus may yet continue. Therefore, the Council will keep measures under review and may still have to respond to changing circumstances. For example, a 'task group' including Public Health, Assets, Culture and Visitor Economy is deployed at time of increasing risk to consider, advise on and address the potential health issues related to mass events where necessary.

Wider context

In partnership with the Council, the visitor economy in Cheshire and Warrington is currently supported by the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the local Destination Management Organisation, Marketing Cheshire. The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, and supporting plans for skills development, transport and quality of place all support visitor economy growth. They contain actions that will contribute to improvements in visitor-oriented infrastructure, tourism or cultural product and effective promotion as well as the skills of the people that the sector relies on to deliver a good visitor experience.

While the outcome of a national review by Government of Destination Management Organisations has yet to be concluded, the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the sub-region needs to be supported with tourism strategies (or recovery plans) for all parts of Cheshire including Cheshire East. The recovery plan and longer-term strategy serves a dual purpose; to detail the actions that Cheshire East needs to take to develop or enable a successful visitor economy and to demonstrate how we are contributing to achieving the shared vision, priorities and targets described in the DMP. The supporting strategies will also show how they link to the aspirations and priorities of local tourism associations, sector groups and local plans – economic, rural, cultural, transport, environmental and spatial – to make the most of available capacity and resources.

It is anticipated that initially the value of the visitor economy in Cheshire East will reduce significantly from a 2019 position of £994 million. Medium term there will be a new strategy to ensure the sector returns and increases its value to the Cheshire East economy. However, short-term actions are required now, taking account of the many reasons for optimism and increasing confidence, especially since the fast rollout of the vaccine.

Sector-wide research from ClearSight shows that for only the second time since the pandemic began, those who believe the worst is now behind us outnumber those who fear the worst is still to come. Encouragingly for the economy, those who have been vaccinated are markedly more upbeat about the outlook. While the mood is unquestionably changing for the better, only a minority are anticipating a return to normality in the short term.

Demand for self-catering accommodation is likely to be strong along with visits to see family and friends as people seek to reconnect with loved ones that they have not seen for so long. With little to do during lockdown other than go on walks or cycle rides, many people will embrace a more active outdoor lifestyle, which will translate into holiday preferences. Therefore, it is expected that the staycation demand is set to grow strongly, with research showing that the staycation has been growing for the past 10 years and will grow at a faster pace post-pandemic. The rise will be especially strong around the traditional self-catering proposition and the growing popularity of camping and glamping.

British countryside holidays have seen the greatest rise in popularity with many visitors indicating they are planning to go to a rural destination in 2021/22. This is in sharp contrast from those seeking city breaks, while demand in cultural/historical sightseeing holidays within the UK is growing.

Limited options to travel overseas may boost people's desire to explore sights closer to home or to discover what's on their own doorstep. These areas of growth provide opportunities to combine nature-based holidays with culture, for example, by developing and/or promoting walking and cycling trails or self-drive routes. Official data on air passenger arrivals and visits to the UK by overseas residents shows how badly affected inbound tourism was to the UK in 2020. It is not expected that inbound tourism will return at any level until mid-2022; therefore, a clear plan to target those seeking a staycation is required.

The Office for National Statistics has published a survey of public behaviour over the Christmas period and public perceptions regarding the future. While this survey was undertaken before the new lockdown, the perceptions regarding how soon the UK will get back to normal will have implications for holiday booking patterns this year. In this regard the main findings are:

- A quarter of adults (25%) felt that life will return to normal in six months or less, compared with 22% the week before.
- One in five (20%) adults felt that it will take more than a year for life to return to normal, compared with 23% the week before.

So, while there was some improvement in perceptions, it is concerning in tourism terms that only a quarter of people feel that life will return to normal before July 2021 and this indicates that considerable work will need to be undertaken to increase consumer confidence.

The BDRC VisitBritain tracker also indicates that lack of confidence and uncertainty regarding how travel guidelines will evolve is likely to significantly restrict travel intent until early summer. While reassurance is undoubtedly needed to help encourage people to book, many look destined to wait until the last minute before committing to their trips.

The Visit Britain COVID Consumer Tracker highlights 'countryside/rural' as a destination choice for 2021. The combination of our Market Towns, visitor attractions and our varied hospitality offer set in the expansive Cheshire countryside can appeal to most UK consumers. It is anticipated that as confidence increases there will be many more last-minute trips, especially for weekend breaks or bank holiday getaways. In addition, ongoing restrictions and uncertainty mean that international travel may continue to be difficult this year and as such, there is an opportunity to capitalise on domestic markets and encourage people back to Cheshire and Warrington.

Cheshire East will work with Marketing Cheshire and Visit England to target 'Pre-Nesters' and families in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and North Wales, looking to break into existing markets and new visitors. We will also look to target 'Empty nesters' and visitors from London and the South East. Finally, to support the

footfall and income to businesses, we will target local visitors, (in particular families or 'visiting friends & relatives') and those with a higher disposable income, as we are unlikely to see a return of larger groups any time soon.

Links with wider economic agendas

It is important that the Cheshire East Tourism Recovery Plan links to and complements many other related strategies and plans within the sub-region and wider. For example, the Tourism Recovery Plan is one of the components of a wider Cheshire East economic recovery and will link into the Cheshire & Warrington LEP Recovery Plan. It will also contribute to the Cheshire Destination Management Plan (DMP), prepared by Marketing Cheshire. This ensures that tourism is aligned with wider priorities, including quality of place, town centre vitality, digital inclusion and attracting talent. It will align the area with local, sub-regional and national initiatives to increase the value of the UK visitor economy.

We cannot achieve a sustainable re-start without links to other agendas and strategies including the national Hospitality Strategy and the national High Streets Strategy. The visitor economy is part of a wider economic recovery and will both contribute to and benefit from that wider recovery. It contributes to the re-invigoration of our highstreets and the Night-time Economy, is a key part of our economy in Rural areas and is closely related to our cultural economy. In addition, the visitor economy can both contribute to and benefit from place-marketing activity in Cheshire East and Cheshire as a whole. The visitor economy team will work with economic development, rural economy, cultural economy and other colleagues to help facilitate a sustainable re-start that provides a basis for future growth.

We will work with local partners including Marketing Cheshire, the LEP and our neighbouring authorities as well regional partners such as Marketing Manchester and Visit Peak District. It is clear Cheshire East must align with opportunities as they arise and needs to utilise our current assets to position ourselves to receive available funding and support. Among other things, Cheshire East will work with Marketing Cheshire to establish a 'Destination Cheshire' network to strengthen public-private partnerships to input and shape destination recovery and to influence regional and national strategies. This complements a 'Destination Chester' network and will build on forums and networks that Cheshire East has previously established or supported over the last few years.

Preparing for a Re-start: A national and local priority

There are indications that consumer confidence is beginning to increase especially due to the rapid vaccine rollout. We must be flexible to change when opportunities arise; this could be around business support, being an advocate for the sector and, where possible, seek long term support in the form of grants, training, and marketing. We need to invest in data that shows how the UK visitors are responding in our area to the relaxation of specific COVID rules. We will also have to understand and engage with our new audiences to ensure that they have awareness of the opportunities that await them as visitors, and we can take advantage of to the potential for repeat visits and recommendation.

In the immediate term, removal of legal restrictions along with associated guidance provides a context for the sector to respond to opportunities and to encourage consumer confidence, while maintaining a focus on safety and responsible behaviour. We intend to work with partners to ensure that relevant support is available to assist the recovery potential of the sector beyond the initial roadmap out of the third lockdown.

In June 2021 the Government published a Tourism Strategy recognising that Tourism is an economic, social and cultural asset and a major contributor to jobs and growth. It set out an aspiration to reach 2019 levels at least a year faster than independent forecasts predict and to ensure that the sector's recovery benefits every region, with visitors staying longer, growing accommodation occupancy rates in the off-season and high levels of investment in tourism products.

It also recognises the need to ensure the tourism sector contributes to the enhancement and conservation of our cultural, natural and historic heritage. It also set out the continuation of some short-term measures such as the VAT cut for tourism and hospitality, and business rates relief for eligible properties to help businesses with cash flow, and some new proposals were set out such as the introduction of a domestic tourism rail product and a voucher scheme run by the National Lottery to help stimulate demand. In July 2021, also the Government published a Hospitality Strategy focused on reopening, recovery and resilience alongside a High streets Strategy.

At a more local level this plan complements national objectives to address current recruitment problems, stimulate demand, promote hospitality, encourage visitors to stay longer, and to work with the sector to learn lessons, spreading best practice on investment in future resilience measures. It complements other economic recovery measures at both the Cheshire East and sub-regional level, providing a focus on the visitor economy and promoting collaboration to achieve a re-start for this important part of the Cheshire East economy.

Cheshire East in a re-imagined tourism world

Broadly the Visitor Economy objectives from the 2016-20 strategy remain valid:



However, Cheshire East tourism and hospitality, just like in many other regions in the UK, has been badly hit by the COVID pandemic. Research has clearly shown that there are parts of the sector that will recover quicker than others, so the main focus for the Recovery Plan will be aligned to this data. We will not abandon parts of the sector such as conferences and international travel, but work will be done to ensure Cheshire East is in a strong position to capitalise once these areas begin to recover and grow.

Based on data sources highlighted previously, we will focus the Recovery Plan around a set of priorities that align to consumer and business sentiment and have the potential to position Cheshire East as safe destination to visit once lockdown and other restrictions have fully ceased. 'Wellness' for example is an area where Cheshire East can benefit, and this segment of tourism is growing twice as fast as more 'traditional' visitor activities. Additionally, Expedia data reveals that in 2019 areas of outstanding natural beauty in the UK recorded an increase in tourists of almost 25%.

Its data also revealed an increase in demand for locations appreciated for scenic walks in picturesque countryside and spa retreats and activities. Accommodation providers in the south west of England saw growth of almost 20% and the historic city of Bath saw an increase in demand of almost 15%, compared to 2018.

Expedia said: "Wellness tourism has become increasingly popular with the UK ranking in the top 10 wellness tourism markets globally. As travellers prioritise

wellness in their everyday lives and even while travelling, this market is set to become more valuable."

Cheshire East will connect to place marketing initiatives and push the 'Room to Breathe' marketing campaigns alongside amplifying differentiators that allow us to stand out from the crowd.

In line with a sustainable and green recovery, we will not necessarily target an increase in visitor numbers but will look to engage with visitors to encourage longer stays, return visits and greater awareness of the offer available; leading to an overall increase in spend.

The importance of Cheshire East's outdoor offer, including attractions, wider countryside and events (as these re-start), places the borough in a potentially good position to regain lost ground. There will also be a focus on Cheshire East as a safe destination with a profile on self-catering, glamping, camping and caravanning which are all potential growth areas for Cheshire East, with an increased level of interest in potential new sites.

Within Cheshire East there is also a focus on supporting outdoor attractions and outdoor hospitality in the wake of Covid to encourage extended dwell time for visitors, and to ensure safe spaces in the event of new strains or reintroduced social distancing impacting on indoor areas. The ability of businesses to invest in resilience, including outdoor facilities or improved ventilation, has a particular relevance for many venues and town centre vitality going forward.

A Need for Positioning

Cheshire East is ideally positioned to take advantage of some of the key thematic trends post-Covid. Apart from an excellent geographical position with good connectivity providing access to new markets, the area is well positioned to exploit key themes such as:

- Outdoor experiences
- Friends and family
- Wellness
- Lifestyle and culture
- Sustainable and green

Key areas of activity that support this positioning include:

- **Outdoor events** – Whilst many events will probably re-appear from 2022 there will be some larger scale events that will look to late 2021 to run. Events such as the RHS Show, Rewind festival and the 2021 Tour of Britain are nationally known events that have the potential to attract visitors providing much needed income for business and the hospitality industry.
- **Filming/Film Tourism** – Filming is one of the sectors we are already seeing an increase in and Cheshire East will continue to pursue filming opportunities through our national partner Creative England.

- **Heritage** – During the pandemic many people have discovered the rich history of the UK through on-line initiatives. With the variety of heritage in Cheshire East, from Jodrell Bank's status as a World Heritage site, to Tatton Park's listed Park & Garden, we can reconnect with visitors looking to experience these places in person
- **Culture** – Over the last year new audiences have engaged with Culture through online platforms and social media, as many venues have been closed and events have been cancelled. The challenge is to not only to welcome visitors back into venues but also to translate these new digital engagers into actual physical consumers. The opportunity is to use culture as a means to encourage people back into our town centres through using the towns themselves as open venues where culture can be discovered in the open air, through public art, outdoor events, installations and happenings.
- **Weddings** - Cheshire East usually hosts over 2000 each year; with 74% of couples coming from outside the area. Insight shows that many couples have moved their dates to the second half of 2021 however many venues have reported a large increase in enquiries and additional bookings. There is also the potential for overnight stays and additional spend, plus the supply-chain associated with the sector.
- **Town Centres** – There is a need to link to the Town Centre Recovery Plans and the future Vitality Plans to ensure visitor economy can play its part in the re-animation of the town centres. This will be through plans to grow the night-time economy, al-fresco dining (including pavement licences etc) and events
- **Visiting Friends & Relatives** – A key theme in the staycation market especially with the easing of lockdown measures and disparate families and friends looking to re-connect
- **Green Space** - Cheshire East has an abundance of green space through the rural areas of our borough, to Cheshire's Peak District and through to our Market Towns. We know visitors are looking to avoid bustling crowds and this highlights one of our strengths.
- **Cycling/walking** – Cheshire East is blessed with a host of wonderful cycle and walking routes including the Middlewood Way, The Gritstone and Sandstone Trails, Cheshire's Peak District and the many countryside roads and public rights of way.
- **Glamping/Camping/Caravanning** – Research indicates these are the part of the visitor economy that will come back quicker. Cheshire East has seen a growing number of sites opening in the past few years and marketing campaigns highlighting the offer will begin late spring 2021
- **Historic Estates & Houses** – There are a number of important Historic properties in Cheshire East, including National Trust, Historic Houses and the Council's management of Tatton Park. Cheshire East is well positioned to benefit from attracting visitors to enjoy the open space of these attractions and or to attend their events and wedding venues.
- **Spa's & Retreats** – Cheshire East is blessed to have some of the best Spa's in the Country meaning a clear USP for any promotions
- **Self-Catering** – Seen by consumers as the safest way to visit places and with the range and quality that Cheshire East has to offer, this will be at the forefront of any pro-active work

Recovery interventions

In the first year, as restrictions are removed the focus will be on supporting our towns, tourism & hospitality businesses, and attractions developing resilience through the re-start of the economy. Working with partners we will help to position Cheshire East as a safe outdoor location with world class product for all. This will initially target the local resident, 'visiting friends and relatives' and short break visitors to discover what is on the doorstep, moving to regional and national markets as the relevant re-opening steps are met. Further into the year this will be expanded to those looking for outdoor activities including cycling, walking and hiking.

Cheshire East will partner with Marketing Cheshire and VisitBritain to integrate our tourism product in Marketing Campaigns targeting a national audience and will link in with areas of expertise clearly linked to our 'Green Outdoor' unique selling point (usp).

Visitor Information both physical and on-line will also be key and more people look to understand locations before they book. Once in Cheshire, Visitor Information Centres can continue to play an important role in showcasing the area and giving reasons to stay longer and to return later.

We must make sure that key websites and social media complement the planned marketing campaigns. The Cheshire East visitor offer needs to have a clear profile on Marketing Cheshire and VisitEngland media sites, but we also need to catch the potential visitor at the start of their thinking. For example, we need to have a presence on various camping, caravanning and glamping websites and apps to ensure Cheshire East is part of their decision making when booking trips.

We will maintain contact with business owners to better understand their, utilising this to inform ongoing activity and to be the sector voice in strategic discussions. We need to be flexible to react to changing research and consumer sentiment and ensure that our actions are fair and open. Flexibility also includes changing the messaging when and if relevant.

Where relevant and possible, Cheshire East will support businesses seeking to improve their viability and to enhance town centre vitality, through measures such as creating outdoor hospitality areas or working together on initiatives. Cheshire East Council has already distributed grants to many hospitality businesses and specific grants such as 'The Welcome Back' fund have given support to town centres and hospitality businesses, including:

- Town centre focused communications including press advertising & mini videos for 11 town centres.
- Social distancing communications.
- Highway measures to relieve pinch points and allow social distancing
- Road closures to facilitate events

During the next phase of the grant it is anticipated that there will be an additional range of activities: planning more communications but also looking to support some of the infrastructure that can generate activity.

Recruitment and retention are immediate issues for the sector's recovery and as such requires interventions that will assist Cheshire East businesses to recruit staff, thus ensuring their business can function effectively. Proposals are being developed for a 'Hospitality Sector Academy' to assist local people get into hospitality positions within the borough bringing by together industry, Job Centre Plus and external Training Providers.

Promotional work will initially focus on specific campaign periods and themes, linking in with Marketing Cheshire & Visit England national campaigns. A number of these have already started, including '*Chester & Cheshire is looking up*' - a visual campaign to show the beauty of the destination in Spring 2021. '*Cheshire Day*' was held for the first time on 30th March 2021, generating significant results through a limited social media campaign. Engagement was high amongst businesses, residents and those who knew Cheshire and was focussed on showing a favourite place in Cheshire. The research from this day will be utilised to enable more targeted campaigns moving forward and plans are already in place to make Cheshire Day 2022 bigger and better. National media coverage has already featured Cheshire hotels and spas, reasons to visit and events such as the RHS Flower show.

Further planned campaigns include:

Summer 2021 - Welcome Back – What's New, What's Different, What's on

Spring / Summer promotion to introduce what businesses have opened, changed, new offerings, experiences you did not know about and favourites you have missed. Address the need states of Discovery, Freedom to Explore and Treat Yourself.

Autumn 2021

A campaign to increase visits and stays around the 'shoulder' months and encourage families and locals to explore our destination and enjoy the changing seasons and unique events

Christmas 2021 (November – December)

On the assumption that Covid restrictions are more limited or manageable, Cheshire East can look forward to Christmas Lights Switch on, Christmas events at Country houses and popular Christmas markets. There will be a campaign built around supporting local, the promotion of local products and independent shopping

Priorities going into 2022 will include:

- Ensuring research is clear and relevant to allow campaigns and intelligence to tourism & hospitality businesses is correct and helpful
- Cheshire Day 2022
- Campaign plans around fresh air, open space, 'slow' tourism to bring visitors during the low season of January – April
- Engage with unique event organisers to bring new and relevant content to Cheshire East

- Prepare and design the new Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy for 2023-2027 ensuring the knowledge and intelligence is through local tourism & hospitality businesses, regional partners and national tourism agencies

Recovery Plan Key Actions

The success of the recovery plan requires a multi-disciplinary approach involving other CEC departments, Tourism Agencies, Business, DCMS and research agencies along with neighbouring authorities, the LEP and Marketing Cheshire. We will:

- Deliver 'Visitor Economy Forums' aligned to business needs with relevant presentations from industry experts.
- Work with and support Marketing Cheshire to engage with Cheshire East businesses and organise relevant webinars as appropriate.
- Work with Marketing Cheshire to establish a 'Destination Cheshire' network to strengthen public-private partnerships, to input and shape destination recovery and to influence regional and national strategies.
- Work with Marketing Cheshire and other organisations to develop and promote effective campaigns, media profile and user content.
- Help to realise the value of the visitor economy as part of regeneration plans in Crewe & Macclesfield, such as opportunities around Crewe Lyceum Square - LY2, Lyceum Theatre reopening and the new Crewe Market Hall, as well as further development of a Civic and Cultural quarter.
- Articulate the role of tourism, culture and events in all Cheshire East towns (eg through Town Vitality Plans) with the aim of creating successful town centres and realising the value of the visitor economy to their vibrancy.
- Work with the Rural Strategy Group on how the visitor economy can contribute to growth in jobs, skills and prosperity.
- Seek to increase the numbers and range of people experiencing the arts and culture in local destinations to boost the visitor economy, providing increased income leading to greater sustainability and resilience for culture and tourism businesses.
- Ensure access to new tools to assist in business recovery. For example, User Generated Content platforms have the ability to cut marketing costs, increase visibility and increase relevance in searches.
- Ensure Cheshire East tourism & hospitality businesses have access to the most up to date research from industry professionals. We will also work with partners to access data sources that give an in-depth understanding of who are coming to Cheshire, what they are doing and research around consumer sentiment and forward plans. This will inform campaign planning and visitor economy strategies going forward
- Support the tourism and hospitality sector with initiatives to drive the recruitment, retention and training of staff: Develop plans through a Cheshire East 'Hospitality Skills' group to understand and address training requirements, job retention and employment opportunities.
- Provide sector relevant business support. Cheshire East Council will continue to utilise government grants to further support sectors including visitor economy, town centres and our rural areas.

- Engage with the Cheshire & Warrington LEP especially through the Build Back Better agenda: [CWLEP_BuildingBackBetter-iss01.pdf](#) (871candwep.co.uk). The LEP want to support those sectors and businesses that have been hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, including visitor economy, culture, events, hospitality and leisure. Cheshire East with its important national tourism attractions such as Tatton Park and Jodrell, alongside the Cheshire Peak District and Market Towns are crucial to the economy, especially in rural areas with many large hotels and wedding venues providing anchors to local supply chains.
- Respond to the Government's Destination Management Organisation (DMO) review in 2021. Cheshire East Council will input to the review and help shape future priorities of Marketing Cheshire.
- Research and develop the 'working' holiday trend in Cheshire East; where visitors assist in environmental projects, possibly through Cheshire East Rangers and other environmental organisations.
- Engage with neighbouring authorities to establish best practice in facilitating outdoor hospitality in town centres and other recovery initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation

We will also continue to provide annual data around the value and importance of the visitor economy in Cheshire East through the STEAM Data and monitor trends on hotel occupancy and performance. Cheshire East will additionally seek ways to collect data on the self-catering sector to ensure, along with hotel data, we understand the current position of the market and can inform future strategy. Other business data, town centre footfall, attractions data, consumer sentiment and feedback will be collected where available to inform plans and the development of future strategy.

Conclusion

As part of the Council's wider approach to post-Covid economic recovery, a sector-specific plan for the period 2021 and 2022 will assist the Cheshire East Visitor Economy to recover with support that will supplement and amplify the actions of businesses themselves. Working with partners and businesses, this will assist the sector to recover lost ground and place it in a better position to achieve growth once again. Recovery in the short-term will enable a new Visitor Economy Strategy to be delivered for 2023 onwards, which will look to the medium and longer-term.

The Plan provides a framework for support and promotion that will assist the sector to be resilient in the short-term and to recover. It sets out several actions that will enable the sector to take advantage of opportunities and position Cheshire East as a safe, accessible destination with quality assets and experiences. This includes partnership working, promotional campaigns, a focus on both rural assets and town centres, addressing recruitment and retention issues, business support, networking opportunities and research to inform a future Visitor Economy Strategy. However, plans need to be flexible and responsive enough to deal with the continuing influence of the Pandemic over this period. Therefore, the Council will keep measures under review and may still have to respond to changing circumstances.

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	16 September 2021
Report Title:	Tatton Park Update
Report of:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/08/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report addresses performance at Tatton Park since the start of the pandemic taking account of its role as a significant economic, environmental, and cultural asset for the Borough. The report sets out some of the background to the management of Tatton Park, the impacts of the pandemic, the ensuing restrictions on operations and the arrangements in place to recover its position.
- 1.1. The report provides information to update members, highlighting Tatton Park's contribution to the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 as follows:
 - Open** – Through its contribution to the economy of Cheshire East, Tatton Park is supporting a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation and seeking opportunities to bring more income into the borough
 - Fair** – Tatton Park provides an environment that supports the health, wellbeing and learning of our communities and specifically offers opportunities through its learning programmes for children to have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
 - Green** – Tatton Park contributes to Cheshire East being 'A thriving and sustainable place', particularly in relation to it being a great place for people to live, work and visit, contributing to thriving urban and rural economies, the environment and our quality of place. Tatton Park is one of the region's foremost environmental, cultural and heritage assets, is the largest area of public green space in the borough containing habitats and heritage of

national and local importance and makes a significant contribution to the economy and wellbeing of the area.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. To note the Tatton Park update.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The report provides an update on performance at Tatton Park. This addresses the significant impact of the pandemic and provides information to Members to aid understanding and future decision-making as an open and enabling organisation.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. There are no other options to consider.

5. Background

- 5.1. Tatton Park is owned by the National Trust but managed and financed by Cheshire East Council on a 99-year lease which commenced in 1961, but which transferred from Cheshire County Council because of Local Government Reorganisation on 1 April 2009. It has significant conservation assets and nationally important collections. The joint vision of the Council and the National Trust is to *conserve Tatton Park for the enjoyment of present and future generations*.
- 5.2. Tatton Park is a major destination attraction (normally attracting c.800,000 visits a year in total), regularly in the top 20 paid for attractions in England but ranked number 5 in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic on major indoor attractions and amusement parks. However, Tatton is also a place for recreation for Cheshire East families, an educational facility for schools (c.20,000 school visits) and adult education organisations and a provider of community benefits through the volunteering opportunities (c.18,000 hours in 2019/20), community events and outreach. Tatton Park recently achieved its 9th consecutive national Sandford Award for excellence in heritage education.
- 5.3. Tatton Park is also one of the region's foremost environmental, cultural and heritage assets, being the largest area of public green space in the borough and containing habitats of national or local importance. It is therefore well-placed to maintain and enhance its natural capital, biodiversity and its contribution to the Council's Carbon Action Plan through nature-based inseting, with further scope for decarbonisation.

The importance of Tatton Park as an asset contributing the economy, environment and communities of Cheshire East is evident, but like many

similar venues it has been impacted by the pandemic. The need therefore remains to reinvigorate and nurture its contribution as confidence is rebuilt, based on the regulations or public health guidance that apply at the time.

5.4. Governance – alignment to Economy and Growth Committee.

5.5. Tatton continues to contribute to the wider corporate agenda as part of the 'Rural and Cultural Economy' service within the Council's 'Place' Directorate. The Tatton Park Board, which does not have an executive function, is appointed by the Council to have oversight of the strategic management and business performance of Tatton Park, to advise on business plans and future development of service provision, make recommendation to the Council, as appropriate, regarding the strategic management of Tatton Park.

5.6. Any matter requiring an executive decision by Members will be brought to the Economy and Growth Committee (or other relevant Committee) for approval.

5.7. The Board can also advise the Council in establishing its policies, and priorities to ensure it can realise Tatton Park's potential in contributing to the visitor economy and communities of Cheshire East. Tatton is well positioned in this regard, already being an important contributor to the economy, prosperity and 'quality of place' of Cheshire East as the borough's largest visitor attraction. It is an important rural and environmental asset and the most significant cultural/heritage asset in the area. It makes a significant contribution to the economy, quality of life and image/profile of Cheshire East and is an important contributor to the Council's environmental agenda.

5.8. Visitor Economy - contribution

5.9. In 2017 it was estimated that Tatton Park has a gross contribution of c.£35m to the North West economy and generates c.£5.3m Gross Value Added (GVA) to the local economy. As such, Tatton Park is a major contributor to the Council's recovery plans for tourism and the visitor economy, being a key attractor in its own right, creating economic benefit through its supply chain and events, generating business for local high streets, hotels, transport and hospitality or benefiting other attractions by raising the profile of the area for visitors.

5.10. Tatton Park has been an important driver of growth as part of the Cheshire East Visitor Economy strategy, being one of the most visited paid-for attractions in the North West. It therefore continues to have an important contribution to make as part of the Cheshire East Tourism Recovery Plan with potential to support and stimulate recovery and growth in the future.

5.11. Corporate Plan - Contribution

5.12. Tatton Park is a valuable contributor to the rural, visitor and cultural economies of Cheshire East, and along with its contribution to 'quality of place', it plays an important role in economic well-being. Tatton Park also contributes to other policy areas including the environment, managing and improving biodiversity and the natural habitats of the borough, contributing to nature-based offsetting through the Council's Carbon Action Plan and supporting health and wellbeing, enabling people to exercise and socialise in our parks and open spaces.

5.13. Tatton also supports learning opportunities for our communities. In a 'normal' year Tatton's award-winning learning programme welcomes around 20,000 school visits plus adult programmes. A refreshed education programme supported by Arts Council 'Cultural Recovery' funding, will offer further benefit in future years. with blending learning (a mixture of in person and online education sessions), an increased the number of onsite sessions that can be delivered in line with current guidance and new virtual experiences to support schools which cannot physically attend.

5.14. Responding to the Pandemic

5.15. Covid-19 has has had, (and will continue to have for the immediate future), a significant impact on the assumptions that lie behind Tatton's business plan. Because of Tatton's reliance on income (£4.2m of the £4.8m operating cost), the impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on operations that ensued, had a significant impact on the 2020/21 season.

5.16. In response to the worsening situation regarding COVID-19, Tatton Park introduced restricted opening arrangements in March 2020 and then closed, just as the first national 'lockdown' was announced on 24th March. Tatton Park remained closed as a destination attraction in support of the strategy to stop the spread of Coronavirus, as people were asked to stay home, avoid unnecessary travel and work from home wherever possible.

5.17. During that time, online resources were developed and made available to maintain interest and to provide a 'learning hub' of help to people at home and those in home-learning. Local food projects were also supported with produce from Tatton Park to assist with vulnerable or disadvantaged people.

5.18. The position was kept under regular review taking account of Government guidance, regulations, infection rates, risk assessments, the availability of protective measures for staff, the demands of social distancing and the position of other equivalent destination attractions. Close liaison was maintained with local attractions and national organisations to ensure a

coordinated approach, with Tatton developing Covid-19 risk assessments that were shared with others to help guide detailed plans for reopening. This included close collaboration with the National Trust to ensure a consistent level of response.

- 5.19.** A phased re-opening plan was agreed for the parkland to reopen on 3rd June 2020, followed on a phased basis by the Gardens, Farm and Mansion. New systems had to be developed and introduced to enable safe and socially distanced opening, including PPE and screens, new booking arrangements, online ticketing and time-slotted caps on numbers. A take-away service was developed for the Stables Restaurant and the 'Housekeeper's Store' food shop reopened, followed by other retail once regulations permitted. Except for a 'drive-in' cinema, which was developed specifically in line with regulations at the time, no events were able to take place, weddings were not permitted, and education visits could not take place.
- 5.20.** The remainder of 2020/21 continued to be challenging, requiring continued responses to changes in guidance, regulations, and infection rates, while two more national lockdowns followed. Throughout 2020/21 and since, Tatton staff worked tirelessly in an excellent and professional way, developing responses to new and changing circumstances, seeking to control expenditure and being innovative in income generation within the limitations imposed. With a few initial exceptions, related to the need for social distancing and the pressures on wildlife of visitors, the public response to Tatton's reopening and subsequent management was positive throughout and visitors commented on the safe and welcoming environment that was offered.
- 5.21.** As a result of the restrictions, the Covid pressure at outturn was £375k. However, this was a significant improvement on the position anticipated at mid-year, as measures were introduced to develop and sustain income where possible, some of the extra costs were mitigated and £175k compensation for income loss was received from Central Government. Long periods of closure for main attractions, along with restrictions on events, hire of facilities and impacts on retail/catering, led to a significant reduction in income levels.
- 5.22.** However, since the Parkland reopened at the beginning of June 2020 with subsequent phased reopening of attractions, actual visitor numbers performed well except when impacted by further lockdowns or restrictions. Appendix 1 provides a number of graphs that indicate 2020/21 performance since reopening compared to equivalent 2019 figures, which for Park visitors, exceeded the 2019 equivalent.
- 5.23.** The ongoing impact on events, catering, retail and our ability to operate facilities 'normally' will sustain some of this pressure into 2021/22. Changes

in visiting habits and audience confidence will continue to add an element of uncertainty in the level of business at any given time. However, the corresponding interest in domestic holidays, the importance of the outdoors and a 're-discovered' appreciation of what is 'on-the-doorstep', all offer opportunities for re-engaging with visitors, maintaining their trust and benefiting from a potential 'bounce-back' when the impact of the virus reduces.

5.24. Future Investment

- 5.25.** Investment continues to be important to both maintain Tatton's position and improve performance. Since 2011 Tatton Park has engaged in an investment programme called 'Tatton Vision' which has seen improvements in meeting facilities, catering provision, the 'Field to Fork' project at the Farm and other improvements in the visitor experience.
- 5.26.** Projects currently in development include the second part of the Stableyard and 'Welcome' project. The 'Welcome building' was completed in late 2019 having attracted £245, 676 of Rural Development funding. The Stableyard visitor facilities have been delayed due to Covid but are planned to commence in 2021/22 subject to completing new designs for sustainable energy and a final cost-plan. A new pricing strategy is in place with differential pricing to incentivise bookings and low season visits. A rapid move during the pandemic to more cash-free payments and online booking will require further investment to secure the benefits of improved EPOS and booking systems and ensure their ongoing resilience to take advantage of rapidly changing technologies and a move to cloud based systems.
- 5.27.** Plans are being developed for the Play Area which is a key investment to maintain the family market, and feasibility studies are being planned for other potential future projects. Proposals are also in hand for repair of glasshouses, additional fire safety works in the Mansion and in line with the Council's Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan, proposals are also being developed for decarbonisation.
- 5.28.** A refreshed education programme attracted a £180,000 Arts Council 'Cultural Recovery' grant. This will offer further benefit in future years and provide learning for other similar attractions. It will offer blending learning (a mixture of in person and online education sessions) and increase the number of onsite sessions that can be delivered in line with current guidance and new virtual experiences to support schools which cannot physically attend.
- 5.29.** Ultimately Tatton Vision investments will not only ensure Tatton's conservation, visitor experience and achievement of broader Cheshire East Council objectives, but they also provide an important contribution to the

recovery of Cheshire East's wider rural and visitor economy. If investment continues then Tatton will be well placed to take advantage of the post-Covid thirst for the real experiences and interest in the value of nature, heritage and cultural aspects. Investment proposals are based on business cases developed and submitted through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 5.30.** The cost of managing and operating Tatton Park has significantly reduced since 2011 as a result of the 'Tatton Vision' investment, with the cash income generated by Tatton Park used to directly offset the operating and management costs of the estate. Investment has helped to reduce the operating cost over that period from 26% of turnover to 13%. However, realistically the business plan now must focus on how to get back to that sort of figure in 2021/22 and how to look forward in the changing environment in which we operate.

5.31. Roadmap to Recovery / links to tourism recovery

- 5.32.** There are several key next steps to be decided in 2021 as the 'roadmap' for removing restrictions unfolds. These include plans for 'normalising' a level of business, the return of activity such as weddings, group business and outdoor events, key periods such as Christmas 2021 and the lead-up to the 2022 season. In addition there will be a need for key investment decisions, such as the play area, which will be even more important in current circumstances, changes to pricing strategy to incentivise visits in quieter periods and the continuing move to get more 'bookable' product online. A marketing plan has been prepared to support this activity.

- 5.33.** The Tourism Recovery Plan identifies that Cheshire East is well positioned to exploit key themes such as:

- Outdoor experiences
- Friends and family
- Wellness
- Lifestyle and culture
- Sustainable and green

- 5.34.** These are all themes which Tatton Park can take advantage of and where it can support priorities in the Tourism Action Plan through:

Outdoor events – Events such as the RHS Flower Show, Pop-Up Festival and Foodies have the potential to bring many visitors providing much needed income for business and the hospitality industry.

Filming/Film Tourism – Filming is one of the sectors we are already seeing an increase in and Tatton Park will continue to pursue filming opportunities.

Heritage – During the pandemic many people have discovered the rich history of the UK through on-line initiatives. Working with other attractions, Tatton Park can reconnect with visitors looking to experience these places in person

Culture – Over the last year new audiences have engaged with Culture through online platforms and social media, as many venues have been closed and events have been cancelled. The opportunity is to use culture as a means to encourage people back to venues like Tatton where culture can be discovered in the open air, through public art, outdoor events, installations and happenings.

Weddings – for Cheshire East 74% of couples come from outside the area, bringing income and new business. Tatton Park has reflected the trend for many couples to move their dates to the second half of 2021 and has seen an increase in enquiries and additional bookings. There is also the potential for overnight stays and additional spend, plus the supply-chain associated with the sector.

Visiting Friends & Relatives – A key theme in the staycation market especially with the easing of lockdown measures and disparate families and friends looking to re-connect

Green Space - Cheshire East has an abundance of green space through the rural areas of our borough, and Tatton Park is the largest green asset in the borough. We know visitors are looking to avoid bustling crowds and this highlights one of our strengths.

Cycling/walking – Cheshire East is blessed with a host of wonderful cycle and walking routes. Tatton Park has its own popular routes and has links to the surrounding areas.

Historic Estates & Houses – along with the number of National Trust and Historic Houses properties in Cheshire East, Tatton is well positioned to benefit from attracting visitors to enjoy the open space of these attractions

Self-Catering – Tatton Park already has two ‘Dairy Cottage’ self-catering holiday lets and there are several others in the surrounding area. These are seen by consumers as the safest way to visit places and with the range and quality that Cheshire East has to offer.

- 5.35.** Continued investment in attractions such as Tatton Park also inspires confidence in the sector and generates wider economic impact. For example, a start on-site of the second phase of the Stableyard project is still necessary to generate the activity and vibrancy that will improve the visitor experience and be attractive to audiences. In addition, proposals for upgrading the play area and consideration of options to bring the Farm’s ‘top yard’ into use will be developed. The ‘cultural recovery’ Arts Council funded education project will create new learning experiences and the activity planning developed for ‘Field to Fork’ will be embedded in the farm programme.

- 5.36.** The ‘day to day’ operation is set against a tight fiscal background at the best of times and due to the pandemic is in an increasingly fragile visitor market. This is making it even more challenging to sustain the initial success and momentum of the Vision. Even in a difficult financial position owing to the pandemic, the challenge continues to be the successful delivery of the core business without compromising on values, contribution, quality and delivery of objectives. This sits alongside the initial challenge of recovery before being able to deliver a sustainable position once again through the ‘vision’ programme.
- 5.37.** Beyond this year, the ‘Tatton Vision’ identifies that Tatton Park will provide an even more exciting destination with a high-quality offer that appeals not only to the heritage market but delivers real growth in the family market through its attractions and events, in the business and functions market through its facilities and in cultural tourism. The ambition remains to maintain its important contribution to the economy, culture and environment of Cheshire East, to deliver sufficient additional net income to help reduce reliance on Council revenue support and to provide a sustainable platform from which to secure its current and future leasehold obligations.
- 5.38.** However, the realities of the current visitor market mean that a priority must be to regain and then sustain the position already achieved. The legacy of Covid-19 and fluctuations in the visitor market will impact on success from year to year, but the commitment from the Council’s capital programme is necessary to support these aims through new/additional investment projects as part of the refreshed Tatton Vision Phase 2 programme. This will help guide the next phase of investment. Development of this programme will also require parallel approvals through the National Trust.
- 5.39.** To regain and then maintain the position, Tatton Park will need to rebuild the full range of paying visits as well as improving on the yield from park entry revenues and secondary spend throughout existing and new visitor facilities. This improved economic performance, which underpins the business model, will only be achieved by a programme of targeted investment, continued efficiencies, development in existing visitor product and developing new product including Tatton’s offer in the family market. It will also depend on maintaining and developing the share of markets that have variously been impacted by the pandemic and related restrictions. Some elements will therefore recover at different rates.
- 5.40.** Decisions going forward will need to take account of the lessons of Covid-19 and additional consideration continues to be given to ensuring that the quality, attraction and contribution of existing core elements are maintained. The Vision investment programme will aim to impact on the level of public subsidy required in the longer term, reinforce Tatton as one of the Region’s top visitor attractions, maintain its contribution to the wider economy and

provide the opportunity to sustain or enhance the conservation and care of the historic estate for the remainder of the lease. In addition, Tatton will continue to deliver on the Council's wider agenda, particularly its important economic contribution, its profile as part of place marketing and its environmental importance, including its contribution to the carbon action plan.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** All wards contain residents who will be able to access Tatton's facilities and whose local economy can benefit from increased visitor expenditure. Elected Members from both local wards and other parts of Cheshire East are represented on the Tatton Park Board to provide oversight and engagement through elected representatives.
- 6.2.** Visitor surveys, onsite engagement and online feedback mechanisms all play an important part in understanding the needs of Tatton's audiences and how we are meeting their requirements. These mechanisms have been, and will continue to be used, to consult with visitors and colleagues when developing 'Tatton Vision' investment opportunities. This will ensure residents' and colleagues views are listened to and responded to.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** There are no direct legal implications arising from the report and its recommendations.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1.** There are no direct financial implications arising from the report and its recommendations. Actions outlined in this report will be delivered within existing Tatton Park budgets or subject to the Council's business planning process. Investment plans for proposals or projects referred to in the report will be progressed through the Council's business planning as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1.** Tatton Park is a valuable contributor to the rural, visitor and cultural economies of Cheshire East, and along with its contribution to 'quality of place', it plays an important role in economic well-being. Tatton Park also contributes to other policy areas including the environment, health and wellbeing, and learning.

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1.** Given that the proposal does not represent any change of policy an EIA has not been conducted. There are no direct implications for equalities.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1.** There are no direct implications for human resources.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1.** There are no direct implications for risk management.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1.** Tatton Park is a significant contributor to the rural visitor economy. The conservation of Tatton Park contributes to the protection of the rural environment and its heritage.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1.** Children, young people and their families form a large part of visitors to the estate. Encouraging visitors, to what is largely an outdoor activity venue, will have a positive impact on quality of life, providing social, mental and physical health benefits for all age groups. Additionally, over 20,000 school visits are normally hosted every year and Tatton has an established record, winning eight consecutive Sandford awards for excellence in heritage education as well as adult education, skills training, general life skills and interpretation.

7.9. Public Health

- 7.9.1.** It is expected that encouraging visitors, to what is largely an outdoor activity venue, will have a positive impact on quality of life and delivers the social, mental and physical health benefits of outdoor recreation. Provision of a safe recreational environment has been an important contributor to physical and mental health during the pandemic.

7.10. Climate Change

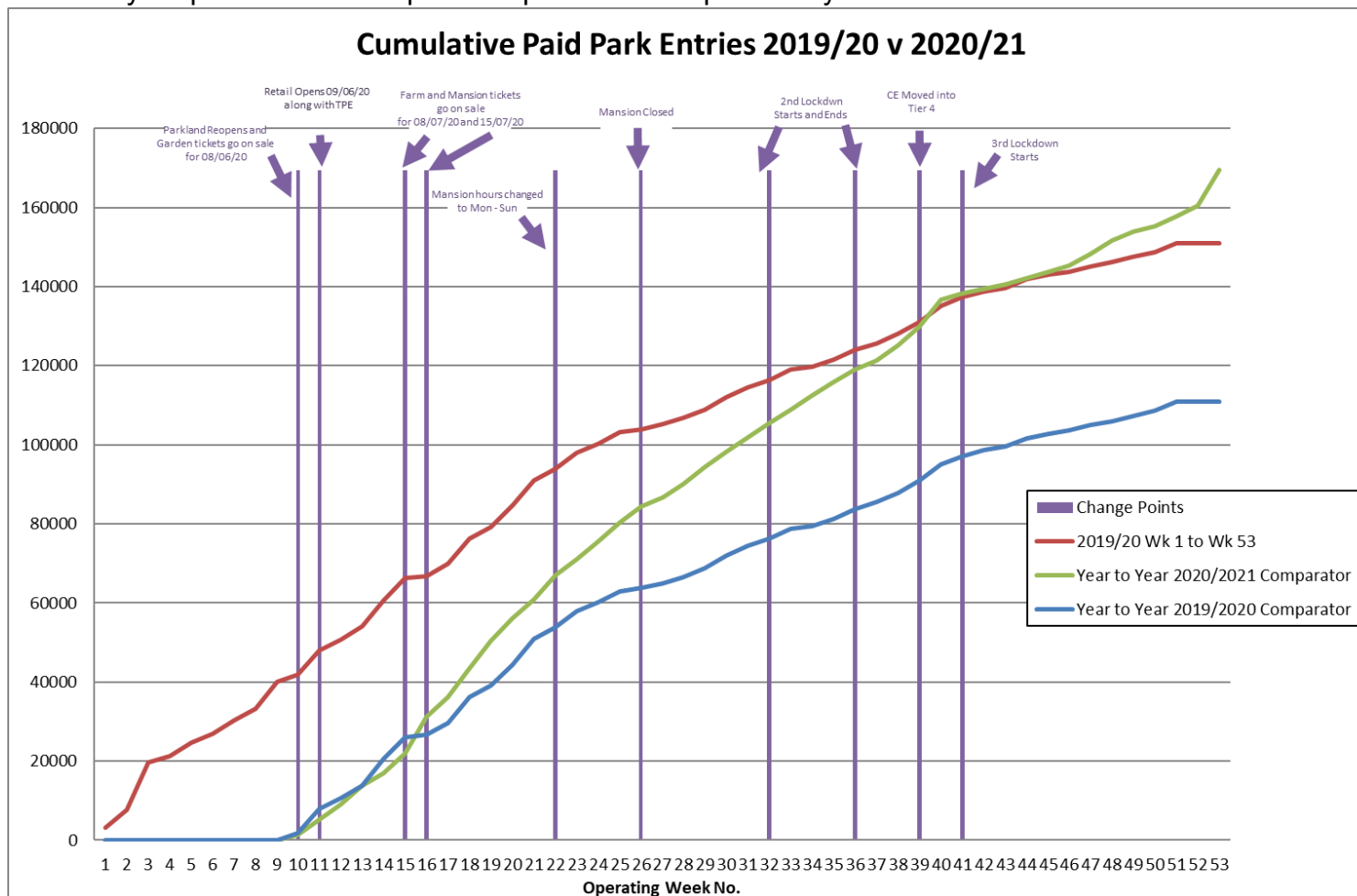
- 7.10.1.** Tatton Park provides a significant environmental asset for Cheshire East and is delivering actions related to environmental sustainability, nature-based sequestration and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brendan Flanagan Head of Rural and Cultural Economy brendan.flanagan@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07802583903
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Tatton Park - Comparative performance graphs
Background Papers:	

Appendix 1 Comparative performance charts 2019/20 and 2020/21

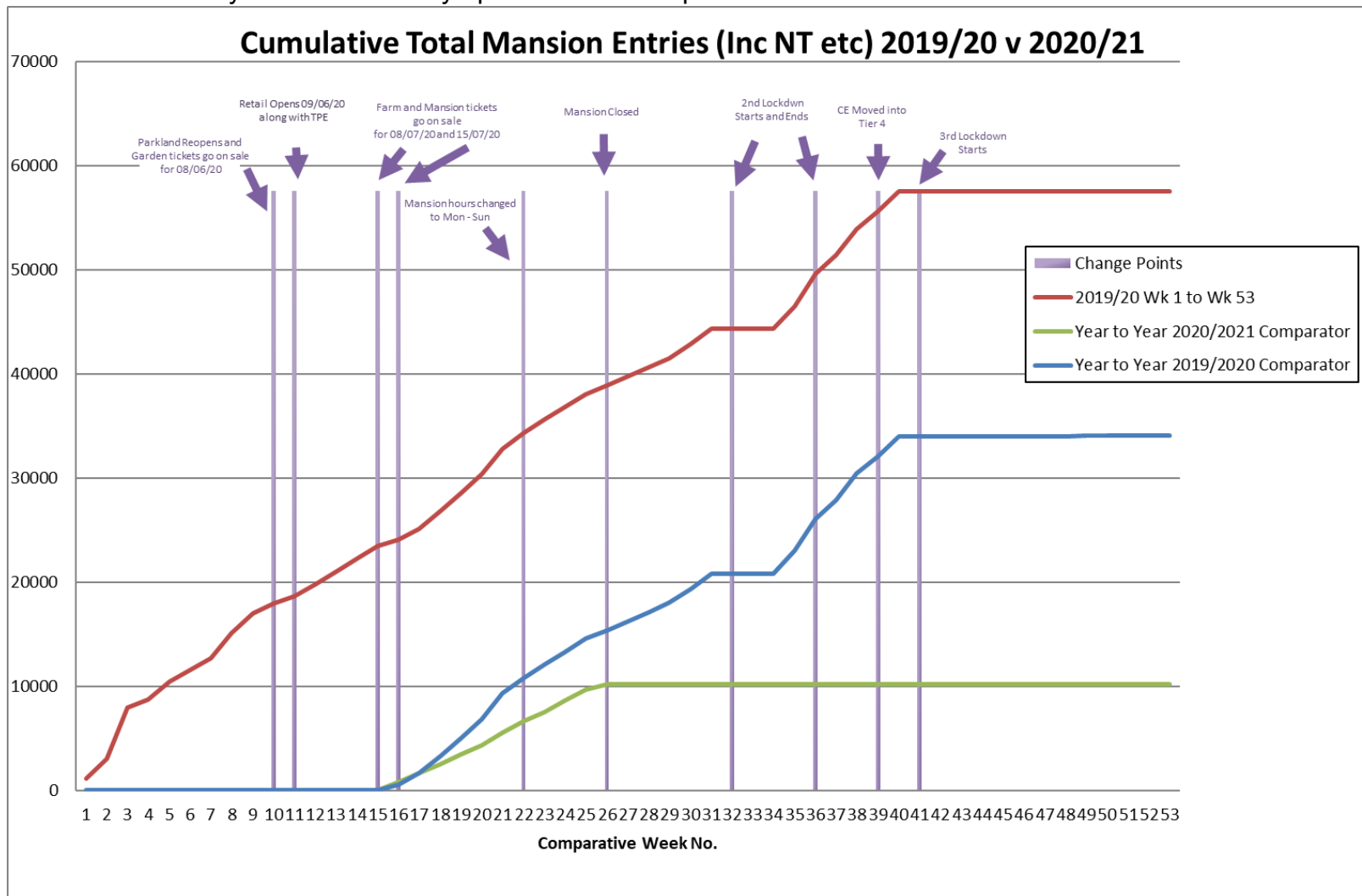
Each graph shows entries for 2019/20 calendar year together with a year-on-year comparison for the same period from the date of reopening the Park in June 2020, comparing June 20 -March 21 with the equivalent for entries June 19 to March 20.

a) Park entry outperformed the equivalent period for the previous year.

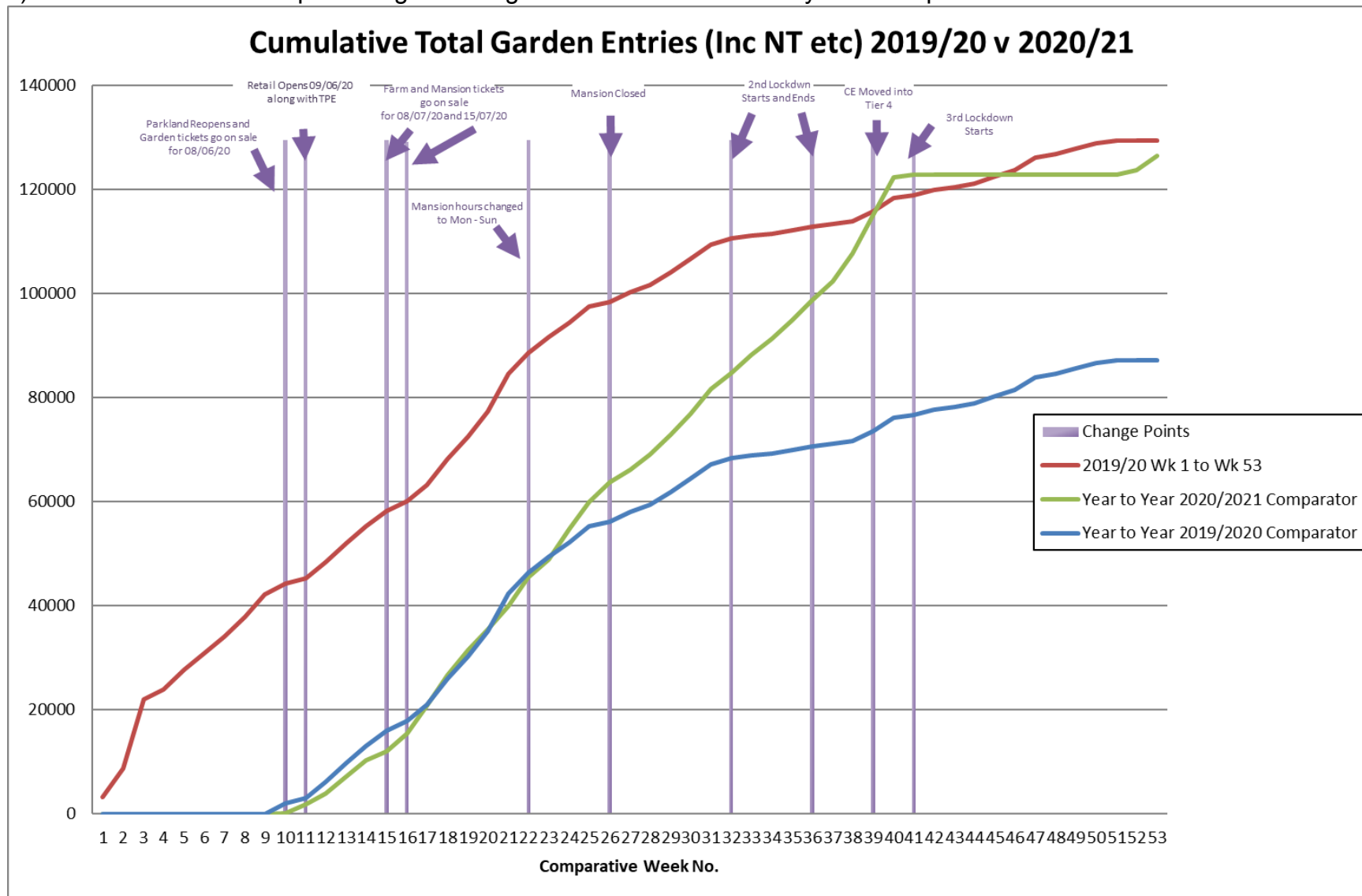


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b) As an indoor facility the Mansion only opened June – September in 2021

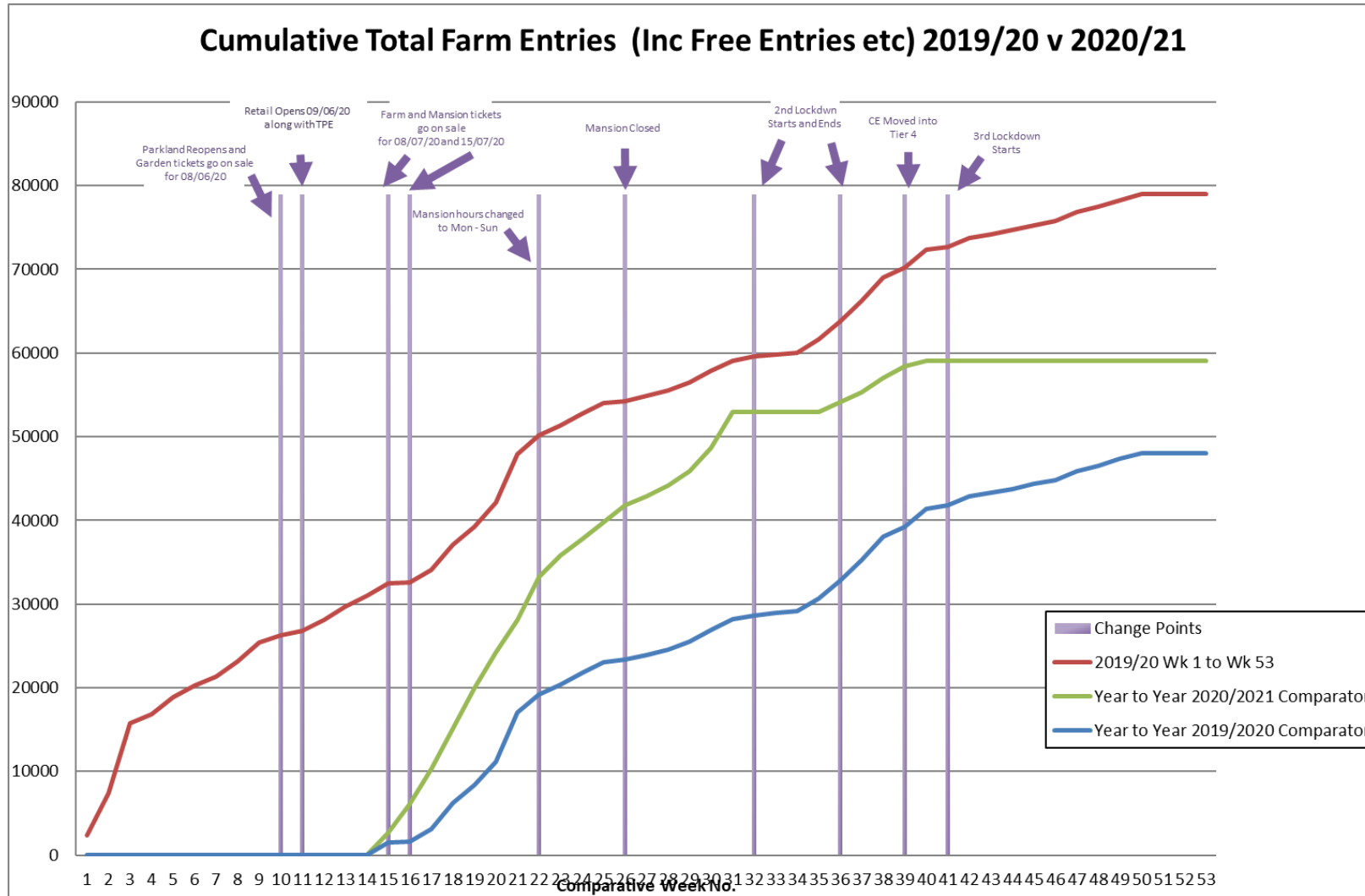


c) Garden entries were impacted again during a third lockdown closure yet almost performed as well as the whole of 2019/20.



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d) The Farm was closed for all three lockdowns and yet still managed to out-perform the equivalent period in 2019/20 on cumulative entries.



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Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	16 September 2021
Report Title:	Rural Action Plan
Report of:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/07/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** The report sets out the background to the Rural Action Plan approved by Cabinet in March 2019, and arrangements to update and refresh the Plan for the period 2022 to 2025. The report provides an opportunity for the committee to discuss the priorities going forward and inform the development of the Plan.
- 1.2.** The Rural Action Plan sets out an approach to building a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. It aligns with the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:
 - **Open** – Through its contribution to the economy of Cheshire East, the rural area supports a sustainable financial future for the council.
 - **Fair** – The economy in rural areas supports the wellbeing of our communities.
 - **Green** – The economy in rural areas contributes to Cheshire East being 'A thriving and sustainable place', particularly in relation to it being a great place for people to live, work and visit, contributing to thriving urban and rural economies, the environment and our quality of place as well as thriving and active rural communities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** To approve the preparation of a Rural Action Plan 2022 -25
- 2.2.** To approve the workstreams identified in paragraph 6.2.
- 2.3.** To approve the setting up of a Member Advisory Panel, to provide guidance on the scope and priorities within the workstreams and drafting of the Rural Action Plan.
- 2.4.** To note that the draft Rural Action Plan 2022 -25 will be brought back to Committee in 2022.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** Cheshire East is defined under the Rural Services Network SPARSE rural classification as 'predominantly rural', while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'.
- 3.2.** The Rural Action Plan (2018/19 - 2021/22) sets out measures that help to achieve the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan in a predominantly rural area. The Plan supports the aim of being a thriving and sustainable place and priorities such as providing a great place for people to live, work and visit, reducing the impact on our environment and supporting thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all. There is a specific action to deliver a Rural Action Plan to support *Thriving and active rural communities*.
- 3.3.** The Rural Action Plan relates to the whole borough and deals with a range of matters. The Plan is due for a refresh for 2022/23 onwards so the opportunity exists to review the current position and set out the priorities going forward. By the nature of rural affairs, the action plan needs to be able to reflect changes in national policies and local priorities.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** There are no other options to consider other than a decision not to proceed in the review and refresh of the Rural Action Plan.

5. Background

- 5.1.** Just under 180,000 people, live in rural communities in Cheshire East, including the rural towns. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meet the needs of rural communities and continue to support Cheshire East's quality of place. Cheshire East is a member of the Rural Services Network defined under its SPARSE rural classification as a Council considered predominantly rural, while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'.

- 5.2.** Cheshire East Council's Rural Action Plan was adopted in January 2019 with the aim of helping to inform strategic choices and identify priorities regarding the rural area, based on the Council's strategies and plans at that time.
- 5.3.** The overall aim of the plan is to help inform strategic choices as part of meeting the Council's strategic outcomes and to identify priorities regarding the rural area. This was based on the Council's existing strategies and plans along with the related evidence base. It does not replace those strategies and plans, but rather provides a rural focus on them to help decision makers ensure that the rural community, economy and environment are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions.
- 5.4.** In 2018/2019, under the guidance of a Cabinet sub-group, a working group representing services across the Council drew on research, external advice and service experience to identify a number of key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic issues. Several Council strategies and plans that relate to rural priorities were identified and their contribution considered against four themes of connectivity, economy, community (life chances and choices) and environment. As stated previously, the intention was to enable Council strategies to have a rural focus to help decision makers ensure that the rural dimensions are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions.
- 5.5.** The focus of the current Plan was aimed at how the Council could help to build a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. Actions related to:
- Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile
 - Access for residents, business and visitors
 - Rural Housing
 - Strong, supportive rural places and communities
 - Neighbourhood planning
 - Planning for a green and sustainable place
 - Visitor and cultural economy
 - Rural based businesses
- 5.6.** The Plan is intended to provide a framework that would allow further consideration of policy and strategic direction with a rural focus. It was recognised that this would be part of an ongoing process that needs to be able to adapt to reflect changes. For example, since its publication, the Council has adopted a new Corporate Plan, committed to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough, and has had to respond to the impact of the Covid pandemic on the economy and communities.
- 5.7. Refreshing the Plan**

- 5.8.** The rural economy does not sit in isolation from other factors: Planning, affordable housing, public transport, access to health facilities, education, older people's services, fuel poverty, viable local services, character/quality of environment and community engagement are all part of an associated matrix.
- 5.9.** Therefore, input will be required across a range of services with the intention of developing a baseline from which the refreshed plan can be developed. It is proposed that the current Action Plan will be reviewed to identify progress against the actions and the identified performance indicators. Based on that review, feedback from the Economy and Growth Committee and identification of any further significant rural issues, opportunities and priorities, it is intended to 'refresh' the Plan to cover the next three-year period of 2022 - 2025.
- 5.10.** It should also be noted that in the 31 months since the Action Plan was approved by Cabinet, 19 months of which have been impacted severely by the presence of the pandemic. The Rural community has seen increased challenges with lockdowns, restrictions, and isolation.
- 5.11.** Having regard to the pandemic, and with actions having been impacted or interrupted by the pandemic, it is currently assumed that the original priorities for action listed in 5.5 will remain valid for the period to 2025. However, it is also assumed that the emphasis and detail of those actions will need to reflect economic recovery from the pandemic, the impact of changes due to Brexit (eg changes to agricultural payments and a move to Environmental Land Management schemes) and climate change policy.
- 5.12.** In addition, since the original Rural Action Plan, the Council has a new Corporate Plan for the period 2021-2025, an Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan. Specifically, the Corporate Plan identifies the need for 'Thriving and active rural communities', and the need for a Rural action plan, digital connectivity programme and, as part of bus review, deliver improved accessibility to services and employment opportunities.
- 5.13. Links to sub-regional and wider work**
- 5.14.** Rural issues and opportunities rarely follow administrative boundaries and there may be common cause with adjoining Authorities on some matters. At sub-regional level, the economic strategies of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) can also have a bearing. The three local authorities and the LEP have also established a Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission to advise on Economic Growth, Health, Sustainability and Inclusivity.

- 5.15.** In order to address the need for a specific rural focus, a Rural Strategy Group was set up in 2020 as an advisory body, providing guidance and support to Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils in developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long-term physical, social and economic development of the rural area. In doing so, the Group can also inform and influence the wider sub-regional agenda, including advising the Local Enterprise Partnership on the economy in rural areas.
- 5.16.** Membership of the Rural Strategy Group, through appointment by the Councils, consists of individuals and representatives of organisations who possess the appropriate skills and knowledge relating to rural matters to provide expertise, guidance, and support. This group offers an opportunity to access additional advice as the Council reviews the current Plan and considers the priorities going forward.
- 5.17.** At a national level, the Council is engaged in a number of networks with interest in the economy in Rural issues. For example, the County Council's Network is addressing the needs of rural and large county areas in the levelling-up agenda through its campaign 'Counties: Leading Recovery, Delivering Renewal'. Meanwhile, 'Revitalising Rural, Realising the Vision' is a campaign run by the RSN, which sets out a number of policy asks in 14 key subject areas to help support rural areas to achieve their full potential, and to 'level-up'. Also, the Countryside Climate Network is a subnetwork of UK100 representing local authorities in predominantly rural areas who pledge to secure the future for their communities by delivering on the promise of the UK's Net Zero goal.

6. Going Forward

- 6.1.** The overriding key priorities identified in the current Action Plan remain relevant and appropriate, and therefore officers consider that these priorities should remain as the key workstreams to form the foundations of the refreshed updated Rural Action Plan.
- 6.2.** These workstreams are:
- Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile
 - Access for residents, business and visitors
 - Rural Housing
 - Strong, supportive rural places and communities
 - Neighbourhood planning
 - Planning for a green and sustainable place
 - Visitor and cultural economy
 - Rural based businesses
- 6.3.** Approval from Members is sought to progress with these workstreams.

7. Member Advisory Panel

- 7.1.** To progress the drafting of the Rural Action Plan 2022-2025 and provide further guidance to officers, it is proposed to set up an informal Members Advisory Panel of three Members drawn from the Economy and Growth Committee. This will be subject to nominations received and appointments approved by the Head of Governance and Democratic Services in line with the relevant protocols in the Constitution, with further terms of reference to be agreed.
- 7.2.** The final draft of the refreshed Rural Action Plan will be brought back to Committee for discussion and endorsement.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1.** No additional consultation is proposed as part of this process as the Rural Action Plan is primarily intended to provide a rural focus for the delivery of plans and strategies, each of which would normally be consulted on separately. It is proposed that a Member Advisory Panel be set up to provide further engagement and guidance in drafting the Plan. The opportunity will also be taken to engage with the Rural Strategy Group where relevant, as this offers an opportunity to engage a range of rural interests. It is there to provide additional guidance and support to Cheshire East and other Councils when developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long-term physical, social and economic development of the rural area.

9. Implications

9.1. Legal

- 9.1.1.** There are no direct legal implications arising from the report and its recommendations.

9.2. Finance

- 9.2.1.** Actions covered by the rural action plan will be delivered within existing service budgets, normally related to the lead service identified in the plan. While the future of funding arrangements for agriculture, the environment and rural development is currently unclear, it is hoped that the plan may continue to provide the Council with an approach to what shapes the character and nature of the rural area, in preparation for any future changes to policy and funding. Although variously defined as Rural (see para. 5.1), the Council is not in receipt of a Government Rural Services Delivery Grant as the grant is allocated on the basis of population super sparsity, which measures the proportion of an authority's population that resides in output areas with fewer than 0.5 persons per hectare.

9.3. Policy

9.3.1. Cheshire East Council's rural action plan is set in the context of how existing strategies deliver on the rural agenda and at the same time, helping to identify those gaps that need to be addressed in the future. A number of Council strategies and plans that relate to rural priorities contribute to delivery of the Plan.

9.3.2. The economy in rural areas and its contribution to 'quality of place' play an important role in Cheshire East, contributing to economic well-being. The Rural Action Plan will provide a framework for consideration of future policy and strategic direction in the context of changes in national policy and related funding.

9.4. Equality

9.4.1. Given that the proposal does not represent any change of policy an EIA has not been conducted. There are no direct implications for equalities.

9.5. Human Resources

9.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources.

9.6. Risk Management

9.6.1. There are no direct implications for risk management.

9.7. Rural Communities

9.7.1. Half of the Cheshire East population live in rural communities including the rural towns. The action plan will help to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meet the needs of rural communities and the economy in rural areas.

9.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

9.8.1. The action plan includes proposals that relate to strong, supportive rural places and communities, including life chances and choices that may relate to children and young people.

9.9. Public Health

- 9.9.1.** The action plan includes proposals that relate to strong, supportive rural places and communities, including life chances and choices that may relate to public health.

9.10. Climate Change

- 9.10.1.** The action plan includes proposals that relate to the environment, with actions related to environmental sustainability and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	
Background Papers:	Cheshire East Rural Action Plan

Cheshire East Rural Action Plan

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Introduction

As part of delivering its Corporate Plan outcomes, the Council has undertaken to build a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. The Rural Action Plan builds upon previous work by the Council to support its Rural area, identifying actions for the period 2019 to 2022. It is intended that this plan will provide a framework that supports consideration of policy and strategic direction for the rural area, positioning the Council to be able to respond to changes at national and local level.



Background and context

Cheshire East is defined by the Rural Services Network SPARSE classification as a council considered 'predominantly rural', while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'. Whatever the definition, the rural aspect of Cheshire East is significant in terms of population, economic impact and its contribution to the borough's Quality of Place. It helps to define the character of the place, but brings with it both the constraints and opportunities that are peculiar to rural areas.

The quality of its natural environment and excellent location, combined with factors such as high educational attainment and employment opportunities, ensure that Cheshire East is a place offering a high quality of life to its residents and is an attractive place to do business; a place where people want to live, work and visit. Cheshire East was traditionally, and remains in many places, a rural area, with agriculture (particularly dairy) and land-based industries, a network of generally prosperous villages and mid-sized market towns serving as important service and functional centres.

Alongside their roles as retail, commercial, educational and leisure focal points, these places historically developed specialisms, including extractive industries, chemicals and silk.

During the decade to 2010 rural areas achieved higher rates of growth in numbers of businesses and jobs than any other category in England. Stewardship of the rural environment is central to achieving this balance between economic growth and environmental and societal wellbeing. Rural economies have demonstrated their potential to provide more growth and employment if given appropriate stimuli and support from national and local business leaders or policy makers.

In general, although rural areas can have lower unemployment than urban areas, rural wages can often be lower, especially those in agriculture and tourism where their seasonal nature can affect earnings. When combined in areas – predominantly rural – with higher house and fuel prices, the result can in some cases lead to instability of income levels or even pockets of deprivation. One of the priorities can therefore be to seek to increase employment opportunities, reduce seasonality and champion the creation of better-paid wages in certain sectors.

English rural areas contributed £211 billion to the UK economy in 2010. It is not surprising that key sectors are focussed on the land and landscape: agriculture, tourism, forestry and renewable energy. However, only 16% of rural businesses are involved in agriculture, forestry or fishing. Creative and digital industries also account for a significant proportion of businesses. Other areas of potential growth include renewable energy generation; advanced manufacturing and engineering; logistics; food and drink manufacturing, agri-tech and bio-renewables; financial and professional services and healthcare technology.

The economy in rural areas plays an important role in Cheshire East. The rural area boasts a diverse industry base and the Council continues to play an important role in taking forward rural economic strategy in the sub-region. As well as traditional large scale dairy and land-based enterprises, there are significant tourism businesses, creative & digital industries, distribution, and technology businesses as just some examples. Traditional land based businesses, the wider countryside, its rural tourism assets and events form an important part of the 'Cheshire' brand.



There is a significant value in the area's natural capital and character, and the contribution of farming and land management should not be underestimated or forgotten. It is after all what underpins our rural character, environment and communities, contributing to **'quality of place'**, which is accepted as an economic attribute, supporting locational decisions and investment in the area. It has been argued that those places with strong **'quality of place'** attributes can stand out from their competitors and therefore stand a better chance of landing new investment and skilled workers. An **'emotional connection'** to a place can become as important as more rational, number-driven determinants, particularly for knowledge workers. Cheshire East's rural character offers these attributes.



The agri-food sector in Cheshire East is well developed and diverse. This sector comprises of a range of companies from large scale food manufacturers and animal feed businesses, to dairy operators, salad producers and small scale operations (including traditional cheese producers, farm shops, breweries and distilleries). Cheshire East's food and drink sector is recognised by Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) being identified through the Northern Independent Economic Review as having growth potential for Cheshire and Warrington. Like the visitor economy, agri-food is an important sector in Cheshire East's economy based in rural areas.



Although representing a relatively small portion of the district's economic output (in terms of GVA), they both employ a high number of people and are important to the character of the area and its **'Quality of Place'**.

The Council has a direct involvement in agricultural land through the Cheshire Farms Service, which was created to manage the agricultural estates of both Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council on their formation as unitary authorities in 2009. Cheshire East Council retains an Estate of approximately 5,000 acres with a range of entry level farm types and sizes, providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture.

Land management industries are important to Cheshire but the economy in rural areas reaches far beyond this in terms of jobs, enterprises and output. The rural areas are now home to a wide range of non-land based businesses that appreciate the rural setting, including professional services and digital/creative. The **'Science Corridor'** in Cheshire East has many businesses based in rural locations with particular strengths in advanced scientific analysis and research, pharmaceuticals R&D, energy and radio-astronautics and astronomy. Alongside strategic employment sites based in a rural setting such as Alderley Park, Radbroke Hall, Waters(Wilmslow) and Jodrell Bank, the rural

area supports a diverse economy of SMEs and micro-businesses. Beyond the strategic sites, agri-food and the visitor economy remain the most visibly significant rural-based sectors, but with the development of high-speed broadband coverage, professional, knowledge based, creative and digital businesses are also important. Self-employment in the rural area (at 14.2%) is higher than in urban areas and higher than the national average.

Furthermore, Cheshire East's Visitor Economy (currently worth circa £921million, supporting over 11,000 fte jobs) is forecast to grow with potential to reach £1bn by 2020. The rural offer (and its related heritage) is a very important component of our visitor economy and there

are opportunities to improve destination management, increase the availability of quality accommodation, develop business tourism and exploit specialist sector based experiences (including filming and events) to allow the sector's contribution to increase and maintain a competitive position.

However, the rural economy does not sit in isolation from other factors: Planning, affordable housing, public transport, access to health facilities, education, older people's services, fuel poverty, viable local services, character/quality of environment and community engagement are all part of an associated matrix. Key areas for consideration in respect to the rural economy are:



- **Planning:** Positive planning allows rural communities to adapt and thrive. This must offer policies that reflect local circumstances and provide a workable planning system, which both engages and gains the trust of rural communities. The use of neighbourhood plans and supplementary planning guidance may be appropriate tools in some circumstances.
- **Quality/character of environment:** quality of place can be a significant factor in locational decisions to live, work or invest, providing an **'emotional connection'** and it is essential to visitor economy success. Prosperous places are supported by their inherent environmental, cultural or heritage characteristics.
- **Affordable Housing:** Rural communities need to be places where people from a range of age groups and backgrounds can live. Housing affordability is therefore a key concern with a need for affordable homes to meet the needs of rural communities, the economy in rural areas and address the issue of key workers. This needs to be addressed within the context of compliance with adopted planning policies.
- **Public transport:** Suitable public transport links are important to helping small businesses access markets or making it practical for employees to seek work in rural communities. Transport can also bring customers and tourists to local rural businesses such as shops, hotels and B&Bs. National research shows that 42% of households in rural areas had a regular bus service close-by compared to 96% of urban households.
- **Tackling fuel poverty:** Rural areas have a high proportion of households in fuel poverty, with many off the mains gas network or living in solid wall homes.
- **Viable village services:** Local services such as village shops, pubs and post offices are at the heart of functioning communities, as well as offering a lifeline to many vulnerable residents. Investment in local services not only benefits communities but also employee recruitment and new business development.
- **Schools:** Small and rural schools are important in functioning rural communities.
- **Broadband and mobile connectivity:** Rural businesses and communities need to share in the opportunities available with fast broadband services.
- **Road Network:** There is a strong interdependence between rural and urban economies. Urban centres are often major markets for rural based businesses and many rural residents work in local urban areas. Therefore, in order to realise the true potential of the rural economy, connectivity needs to be reduced as a barrier to trade and economic growth between urban and rural areas. The added benefit of good transport services is that it will attract visitors and their spending power to rural economies.
- **Climate change:** Cheshire East is a highly rural area and the Council owns or manages a range of agricultural and rural land holdings. This Council therefore has the potential to make a significant contribution to meeting both the Borough's and thus the wider UK's climate change targets.



Developing a Rural Action Plan

Just fewer than 180,000 people, half of the Cheshire East population, live in rural communities including the rural towns. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meets the needs of rural communities. The rural area is also part of Cheshire East's 'quality of place', contributing to economic well-being by offering characteristics that are part of the area's distinctiveness. Studies have shown how quality of place influences locational decisions with innovators and entrepreneurs attracted to creative, cultural and beautiful places.



A draft Rural Strategy Action Plan was produced in 2014 following review and consultation, but was not formally approved. This was superseded by the **'Where Rural Communities Matter'** document in early 2015 which outlined a number of key actions. After reviewing the success of this approach there is a need for a new rural action plan to ensure there is one clear delivery plan with agreed timelines and accountability. This will ensure that Rural Strategy will link to other key strategies and outcomes rather than being separate from them.

Building on this approach, Cheshire East Council's rural action plan is set in the context of how existing strategies deliver on the rural agenda and at the same time, helping to identify those gaps that need to be addressed in the future. There is also a need to consider the role of the rural agenda in informing the Council's Economic Strategy and to look at future funding arrangements in the round, including the Shared Prosperity Fund and any changes to arrangements for agriculture and the environment.

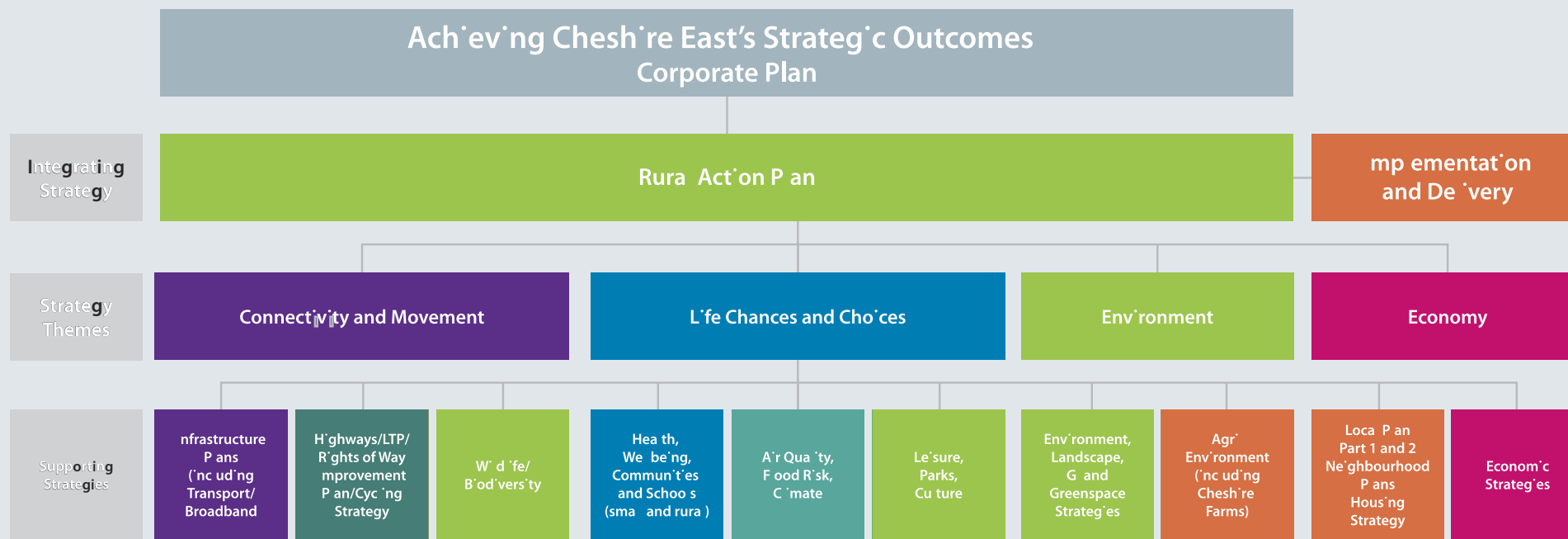
Both national and local Environment Strategies are also of significance in influencing the rural agenda. While future national funding arrangements are currently unclear, it is possible that they may reflect a broader understanding of those aspects that shape the character and nature of the rural area and will be of significance in how the rural action plan is delivered.

In the meantime, a number of Council strategies and plans that relate to the rural principles or priorities have been identified and their contribution audited against four themes of connectivity, life chances and choices, environment and economy. It is hoped that this framework will guide consideration of policy and strategic direction.

The diagram on the next page illustrates how a framework provides a cross-cutting approach to considering and integrating actions from a range of relevant strategies and plans, providing the basis for developing a Rural action plan. It is not intended to replace or take precedence over these strategies, but rather to allow consideration of how these may impact on the rural area or rural affairs.

The overall aim of the plan is to help inform strategic choices as part of meeting the Council's strategic outcomes and identify priorities regarding the rural area. This is based on the Council's existing strategies and plans along with their related evidence base. It does not replace those strategies and plans, but rather provides a rural focus on them to help decision makers ensure that the rural community, economy and environment are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions. This is part of an ongoing process that needs to be able to adapt to reflect changes.





Strategic Actions 2018/19-2021/22

This action plan provides a cross-cutting approach, reflecting the plans and strategies of the Council and the work of partners in delivery. It is aimed at anyone interested in the wellbeing of rural Cheshire East, helping to inform decision makers and policy makers from public, private or voluntary sectors, community groups, wider stakeholders and individuals. The plan is intended to be a flexible resource that reflects the Council's aspirations and enables people and groups to be engaged.

Since **'Where Rural communities matter'** was published, the Council has continued to engage in further research, scoping and consultation. A working group representing services across the Council has drawn on this experience and identified a number of key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic priority issues:

Rural Connectivity

Rural Economy

**Rural Communities:
Life chances and choices**

Rural Environment



'Where rural communities matter'

Here are some of the key actions and progress since 'Where rural communities matter' was published in 2015.

- Successful bids for LEADER funding and Rural Growth Funding, which to date has led to a £868,481.27 investment in rural projects with a total value of £2,173,676.33 overall in just under a three year period. Appendix 1 provides case studies on some of the businesses supported by this programme
- Continued growth in the Visitor economy and a strategic focus on a distinctive rural tourism offer.
- Successful development of a Food Enterprise Zone at Reaseheath College through a Local development Order.
- 31.7% of premises can receive ultrafast broadband above 100Mbps, and 94.3% of premises receive superfast broadband above 30Mbps
- Support for resident led Neighbourhood Plans, with 18 Plans having now been 'made' including 11 in primarily rural parishes.

- Local Plan strategy adopted
- Landscape partnership project developed with National Trust in the northern part of the Borough.
- Regular Town and Parish Council Conferences and engagement with ChALC.
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan adopted.
- Local Transport Plan & Cycling Strategy in place.
- Connected Communities e newsletter, circulated to over 4000 email addresses every 2 months, shares stories and promotes activities and events.
- 'Healthy walks' projects for areas around Crewe, Congleton and Knutsford.
- The Participatory Budgeting initiative in 2016 enabled community groups to bid for funding for innovative local projects. Over 70 local groups and organisations across the Cheshire East area obtained an overall total of £370,000 for projects that addressed health inequalities

No.	Priority Issues (not necessarily in priority order)	Rural Connectivity	Rural Economy	Rural Community	Rural Environment
1	Digital Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile	✓	✓	✓	
2	Access for residents, businesses and visitors	✓	✓	✓	
3	Rural Housing		✓	✓	✓
4	Strong, supportive rural places and communities		✓	✓	
5	Neighbourhood planning	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Planning for a green and sustainable place		✓	✓	✓
7	Visitor & Cultural Economy	✓	✓	✓	
8	Rural Based Businesses	✓	✓	✓	



Rural Action Plan 2018/19-2021/22

1 Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile

Indicative performance indicators:

- Percentage of premises having access to superfast broadband

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
1.1	Deliver the Digital 2020: Digital support programme to support businesses to maximise the benefits of enhanced digital infrastructure	CEC Growth & Enterprise	Up to spring 2020
1.2	Promote access to rural connectivity schemes. Manage the award of vouchers	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
1.3	Contribute to delivery of a sub regional digital strategy (including creative & digital sector business)	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/ LEP	2019 21

2 Access for residents, business and visitors

Indicative performance indicators:

- Percentage of households within 400m of a bus stop served by a scheduled bus service
- Maintain Public Rights of Way so that at least 80% of the network is classed as easy to use
- Secure and deliver new and improved public access routes where funding opportunities arise, including through development proposals, where possible, to improve access for residents, business and visitors

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
2.1	Adoption of the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) which considers all areas of the borough and includes a local area profile	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.2	Development of Town Plans for each key service centre and principal towns, which will also encompass the surrounding rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019-23
2.3	Development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for Wilmslow, Congleton and Macclesfield that look at the towns and surrounding areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.4	Review of Little Bus service to ensure the service works efficiently for the borough as a whole including rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019
2.5	Deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan: 2011-2026 through 4 yearly implementation plans. The current plan expires in 2019. Delivery of a plan after 2019 will be in line with the Local Transport Plan and related strategies (such as Green Infrastructure, Cycling Strategy and Local Plan)	Public Rights of Way/CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019-26



3 Rural Housing

Indicative performance indicators:

- Increase the provision of affordable homes on rural exceptions sites by 10% by 2021

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
3.1	Exploring opportunities to provide affordable housing to enable local residents to remain living within their communities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting and working with rural communities who have identified a need for affordable housing within their Neighbourhood plans • Update our Rural Housing Enabling Guide • Continue to explore opportunities to develop rural exception sites • Explore opportunities for Community Led Housing Projects 	CEC Strategic Housing & Spatial Planning. Parish Councils.	2018 20 2019 2018 21 2019 20
3.2	Put in place up to date planning policy and guidance to support the provision of rural housing, including for essential rural workers, primarily through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020 21

4 Strong, supportive rural places and communities

Indicative performance indicators:

- Monitor through the Public Health Commissioned services scorecard
- Annual review of the 'tartan' rug which will provide an overview of health and wellbeing in all wards including rural.
- Monitor through uptake of the commissions to support resilience and independence eg carers hub, early help framework, emotionally healthy child and young people programme and CVS contracts.

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
4.1	Support local communities to identify assets that are important to them, and promote the Register of Assets of Community Value as a means of recognising their value and potential for sale to community groups	CEC Communities, Legal, & Assets; Parish Councils; VCFS	2019-21
4.2	Improve health and wellbeing in the Borough by building on the distinctive strengths and characteristics of the towns and villages within Cheshire East, by encouraging and supporting Town Partnerships to help meet these outcomes	CEC Communities Team & Public Health Team, Town Partnerships, Parish Councils, VCFS	2019-21
4.3	Develop and support rural neighbourhood partnerships, which bring local people together to address the needs of the community and work collaboratively to improve their shared offer	CEC Communities Team, Parish Councils, VCF Sector Groups, Police, Health, CFRS,	2019-21
4.4	Create a place that supports health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire East, e.g. by increasing the number of people who use outdoor space for exercise/health reasons	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS,	2019-21
4.5	Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people, by assessing the levels of loneliness and social isolation in rural areas across the borough	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2019-21
4.6	Enable more people to Live Well for Longer through collaborative health and wellbeing campaigns that involve rural places	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2019-21
4.7	To progress the structured dialogue with rural schools to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of collaborative working are fully promoted and utilised	CEC Education /Schools	2019
4.8	To work collaboratively with the Regional Schools Commissioner and Diocese to ensure that identified rural schools receive appropriate levels of support and challenge which leads to improved outcomes for learners	CEC Education / Regional Schools Commissioner/ Diocese	2019
4.9	Utilising the knowledge and experience of 6.9 and 6.10 below, the Council will work with the Boroughs' schools, academies, colleges and associated partners to develop appropriate resources, practical educational and volunteering opportunities to ensure that Climate Change is incorporated into the wider curricula for young people and volunteers	CEC Education /Schools	2019 -22

5 Neighbourhood planning

Indicative performance indicators:

- Number of resident-led Neighbourhood Plans 'made' in primarily rural parishes

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
5.1	Continue to support local councils in putting in place Neighbourhood Development Plans that help shape their areas and enhance quality of life in rural communities	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21
5.2	Support communities to review their adopted plans to ensure they continue to align with and inform the boroughs wider rural strategy, ensuring new opportunities are captured	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21

6 Planning for a green and sustainable place

Indicative performance indicators:

- Green Infrastructure plan in place
- Detailed planning policies in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment
- Environment Strategy in place
- Climate change targets on track

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
6.1	Produce an evidence based plan that identifies and guides the approach to local Green Infrastructure (GI) needs and opportunities in Cheshire East	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy, Spatial Planning /LNP/NT/NE/ other partners	2019
6.2	Conserve the Countryside Management estate and Tatton Park's natural features and biodiversity for present and future generations	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
6.3	Seek continuous improvement in standards of estate management, maintenance, husbandry, good environmental practice and stewardship of the Council's farm estate whilst providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22
6.4	Further, detailed planning policies to be put in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment (landscape, heritage and biodiversity) through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020-21
6.5	Neighbourhood plans help to identify locally distinct habitats and landscapes which should be subject to specific protection and/or policies that positively manage the impact of local land use decisions and, where possible, farming practices in particular	CEC Spatial Planning	2019-21
6.6	Prepare a Minerals and Waste Local Plan to ensure the proper planning and management of the Borough's natural resources	CEC Spatial Planning	2020-21
6.7	Review and amend supplementary planning guidance to ensure that the design and appearance of rural areas is maintained. This could include further guidance on the Best & Most Versatile agricultural land, landscape character, green infrastructure and biodiversity	CEC Spatial Planning	2021-22
6.8	Prepare an Environment Strategy that will provide the Council with a framework to help protect and enhance the environment and improve residents' quality of life, related to the natural and built environment of the borough and addressing transport, energy & carbon, waste and minerals	CEC Place Directorate	2019
6.9	Over the period, the Council will review its agricultural land holdings and on-going work with farm tenants to: (1.1) Optimise Opportunities to improve soil and livestock management practices. (1.2) Identify appropriate grassland and rough pasture released by (1.1) for tree and hedge planting. (1.3) Review the terms and conditions of all new tenancies on Cheshire East Farms, as they become available, to facilitate (1.1) and (1.2) above	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22
6.10	The Council will review (either through its own land ownership practice or with appropriate land owners and Natural England) the effective maintenance and restoration of peatland areas in Cheshire East, including the nationally designated Nature Improvement Area (Meres and Mosses) south of Crewe	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2019-22

7 Visitor and cultural economy

Indicative performance indicators:

- Cheshire East visitor economy worth £1bn by 2020
- Number/value of rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme
- Completion of the 'Twin trails' Tourism Growth project

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
7.1	Visitor Economy Strategy 2016-20 includes a focus on developing a distinctive rural tourism offer supported by website and social media activity	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019-20
7.2	Visitor Economy Forum and Cultural Forum support the delivery of visitor economy strategy and Cultural framework with cross-sector groups	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, other partners	2019-20
7.3	Residents Festival - Cheshire East attractions engaged with providing free tickets as promotional incentives	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019-20
7.4	Manage Discover England and other strategic funding projects relevant to rural business such as Gardens & Gourmet, Cultural destinations and Brilliant science	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2019
7.5	Manage and monitor rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy / CWaC/LEP	2019-20
7.6	Delivery of twin trails Tourism Growth project (Sandstone and Gritstone trails)	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, CWaC	2019
7.7	Continued delivery of Rural Touring Network to support cultural priorities as part of Cultural framework	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy , CWaC	2019-21
7.8	Seek further opportunities to support economic benefit to rural areas from events as part of Strategic Events Framework	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
7.9	Seek further opportunities to develop and support rural tourism and cultural/creative businesses including through sector deals	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2019-21
7.10	Liaison and collaborative working with Peak district to identify tourism and other opportunities of joint interest	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy / PDNP/Visit Peak District	2019-21
7.11	Put in place up-to-date planning policy to maintain and enhance the visitor economy in the rural area through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2021-21

8 Rural based businesses

Indicative performance indicators:

- Number of rural businesses engaged
- Number/value of rural tourism projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme

	Key actions	Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
8.1	Engagement programme to understand the challenges and opportunities of the rural business community	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy	2018 21
8.2	Deliver programmes to provide points of contact for rural businesses to maximise government support and finance available	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/LEP	2018 21
8.3	Manage and monitor rural business projects funded through LEADER & Rural Growth Fund programme	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy /CWaC/LEP	2019 20
8.4	Collate and interpret evidence and intelligence on market failure and growth opportunities to inform strategy development	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy	2018 21
8.5	Identify existing and future skills needs of rural businesses and engaging education and skills providers to develop provision to address these needs	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
8.6	Raising the profile of the economy in Cheshire East's rural areas and related career opportunities for residents and young people	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2018 21
8.7	Positive planning policy framework to support a prosperous rural economy including sustainable rural tourism to be reinforced through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Spatial Planning	2020 21



Appendix 1

Support for rural enterprise and the economy in rural areas LEADER Case Studies

Following a successful bid for a LEADER funding programme (2015-2020) and Rural Growth Funding, this led to a £0.9m investment in rural projects with a total value of over £2m in just under a 3 year period.

Cheshire East has supported the sub-regional mechanisms steering this activity and directly provided practical support, developing a tailored packages from first enquiry through to final investment decision and delivery. At a national level the Council has also been proactive providing evidence for Commissions and consultations on matters such as the rural environment, the future of farming. Cheshire East has supported work streams that included broadband connectivity, Agri-Food enterprise, visitor economy development, support for major employers in rural locations, and development of strategies to support the creative & digital sector.

A number of case studies have been developed to demonstrate the diversity of businesses in rural areas in addition to the land-based sector and to highlight the success of those businesses and the support received. Appendix 1 provides case studies on some of the businesses supported by this programme.

Rural Business Case Study: Chestnut Meats



“Farming is very competitive and we certainly didn’t want to be our own best secret, so increasing our business offer seemed like a very positive step to take.”

Tim Dobson, Chestnut Meats.

From dairy farming to meat supplier and from a small farm to wider business enterprise, Chestnut Meats is fast becoming one of our borough’s bigger rural success stories.

Starting as a small but successful dairy farm bought from his parents in 2000, Tim Dobson, along with his wife Marnie, created Chestnut Meats in 2006.

Twelve years on, the company is an award-winning business which sells its produce through its website and farm shop, farmers’ markets, food festivals, and sources its meat through 30 different suppliers.

In that time, the business has diversified beyond its core provision of goat and kid meat to also provide other locally-sourced meats such as beef, pork, lamb and venison.

Tim says: **“Our mission has always been to be the best goat meat retailer in the UK, providing quality, consistency and innovation but we knew that in order for the farm to thrive we had to look beyond the obvious”.**

This is where Tim and Marnie were able to call upon Cheshire East Council to help them realise their plans by securing expert support and rural grant funding through the Cheshire East LEADER Programme.

The programme helped the Dobsons relocate to a purpose-built facility at Longfields Farm. The grant contributed to the renovation of an existing building on the farm to house a butchery, offices, farm shop and café.

Diversifying the business has been important to Tim and Marnie but keeping a strong sense of loyalty in how they go about their work is extremely important too.

“We have built up a good network of local suppliers and we only ever source from welfare-friendly British farms. This is something that is very important to us and to our many loyal customers that know that they can trust in what we do,” said Tim.

Rural Business Case Study: **J S Bailey**



J S Bailey Ltd are a Cheshire East-based cheese manufacturer, established in 1984 in Nantwich, by founder John Bailey. By 2000 the company had outgrown their original home in Nantwich and moved to nearby premises in Calveley.

The business manufactures an extensive range of cheeses that are produced in a state of the art production facility supplying cheese to the catering and food services industry. This includes a range of different brands to meet the varying requirements of a growing customer base both domestically and overseas. Their product range has constantly grown to meet demand with a wide selection of continental cheeses as well as a range of popular and adventurous flavoured cheeses.

A culture of innovation has been achieved by investing in new infrastructure, equipment, processes and IT to support the core business and the local economy; creating new jobs across the business.

Through the Councils Rural Business Support Programme we identified an opportunity for J S Bailey to apply for grant funding from the Manufacturing Growth Fund to support an IT project. The successful application secured a grant of 30% towards the implementation of a back-office process integration system.

Further support has enabled the business to expand its premises to a site across the road, with a £400,000 grant from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Growth Programme.

The scheme will provide an 11,500sq ft purpose-built packing and storage facility on site to enable the business to innovate further and produce a greater volume of cheese for the home and international market this is part of an ambitious £1.5m growth project.

Rural Business Case Study: OverWater Marina

OverWater is an outstanding award winning marina set in the beautiful South Cheshire countryside, close to the popular canal village of Audlem. The business strives to provide a warm, friendly, family run marina that prides itself on excellent customer service and a positive impact on the environment.

The inland marina opened for business in 2010 and features 230 berths, a boat workshop, shop and café, as well as a small certified caravan and motorhome site. The Audlem Lass Boat service (a not for profit volunteer run boat service) is also based at the marina as well as the unique OverWater Wheelyboat service.

In 2016 the marina business identified an increasing need and demand for the number of caravan pitches and holiday accommodation. Further research identified a lack of high quality tourism accommodation in the area.

With the identified gap in the market, OverWater seized the opportunity to expand its tourism offer and with the support of Cheshire East Council, navigated through the planning system and accessed rural grant funding through the Cheshire Leader Programme to bring forward a new tourism project – a new touring caravan site and bespoke holiday lodges.



Rural Business Case Study: **Lynton Lasers**



Lynton Lasers Ltd, based in Holmes Chapel, is the UK's leading Laser & IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) manufacturer that specialises in the manufacture and supply of aesthetic and surgical lasers to private clinics and the NHS as well as a scientific division developing laser technology to clean and preserve ancient artefacts in museums. With over 20 years experience, the business is not just renowned for developing cutting-edge products but is also leading the market in providing outstanding after-sales and customer support.

Lynton holds a confident position in the UK marketplace, the business has invested in developing new technology to expand its product range, developing and launching Excelight & 3JUVE in preparation for accessing the export marketplace.

Cheshire East Council have supported the business with their growth objectives and with securing rural grant funding through the Cheshire Leader Programme. This included expanding into an adjacent unit to increase manufacturing space, create a bespoke clinic for an on site training facility and a new office space. The grant was used to bring the project to fruition by contributing to the renovation of both units and created five highly skilled jobs.

Rural Business Case Study: Forest Gin



The business was set up in 2015 by husband and wife, Karl and Lindsay Bond, a truly family company whose daughter Harriet is an expert in knowing the best spots for foraging wild bilberries and raspberries which along with Peak District spring water, moss and ferns are used to flavour their gin. Their goal is to make the best tasting gin, using the finest locally sourced ingredients where possible. The business has remained true to this aim and does as much as possible by hand – right down to the bottling in batches of 85 at a time into their unique bespoke porcelain bottle handmade in Stoke.

In their early days, production was undertaken at home in Langley with a dream to expand and relocate into the nearby Macclesfield Forest, the source of their key ingredients, relocating to their new Forest Distillery with support of the Council.

Forest Gin is now available in a range of premium retail outlets such as Harvey Nichols stores throughout the country and The Conran Shop in London. Alongside this, Forest Gin is currently the only premium gin served by Virgin Trains' First Class Lounge in Euston, as well being the gin of choice in many of the UK's best Michelin starred restaurants.

The Council also supported the business with their growth and encouraged Karl and Lindsay to look into export opportunities for their gin and referred them to the Department for International Trade's Exporting is GREAT programme. As a result, they are now selling Forest Gin into France, Germany, Switzerland and Japan.

Further support has enabled Forest Gin to secure grant funding through the Cheshire LEADER Programme. The project is to expand the gin distillery business into whisky production with associated visitor centre.







Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting: 16th September 2021

Report Title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025

Report of: Director of Growth & Enterprise – Peter Skates

Report Reference No: EG/05/21-22

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty upon local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy for the future, based on the results of that review. There is also a further requirement to incorporate how the Council intends to assist the Government to end Rough Sleeping by 2027 within the strategy.
- 1.2. On the 13th April 2021, Cabinet provided approval for a period of consultation on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025. This draft strategy was considered by Cabinet and approved for consultation.
- 1.3. Consultation on the draft strategy took place between 21st April 2021 and 14th July 2021 and this report provides a summary of the responses and presents the final version for approval and adoption.
- 1.4. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan as follows:
 - 1.4.1. **Open** – The draft strategy was subject to a period of consultation, providing an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to review and provide comments. These views have been taken into consideration when producing the final version. The strategy clearly articulates the way in which the Council will respond to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping providing a detailed action plan which will be made public once adopted.
 - 1.4.2. **Fair** - Homelessness or the threat of homelessness can have a detrimental impact of the lives of our residents. The strategy outlines

the actions to address homelessness, ensuring that some of our most vulnerable residents have a safe, affordable home, enabling them to have the same life chances as other residents.

- 1.4.3. Green** - There are no direct impacts of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy with regards to the Council's ambition to be 'green'.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Committee are recommended:

- 2.1.1.** Note the consultation responses and amendments made to the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021–2025
- 2.1.2.** To approve and adopt the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025
- 2.1.3.** To note that the funding arrangements are in place to enable the delivery of the strategy
- 2.1.4.** To note that the delivery of the strategy will be overseen by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty upon local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a strategy for the future, including Rough Sleeping.
- 3.2.** As a statutory document, it was important that the Council can demonstrate that they have consulted widely with internal services, external agencies and residents in formulating the final version.
- 3.3.** Following consultation we have ensured that the Council has identified any gaps and issues in the draft strategy and this has led to the formulation of a robust action plan which is appropriately supported and adequately resourced to address any issues and delivery of the service.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** This section is not applicable. It is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy in place, which now incorporates rough sleeping.

5. Background

- 5.1.** In April 2021, the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was presented to the former Cabinet, seeking approval to consult and ascertain the views of residents and stakeholders.
- 5.2.** The aim of the consultation was to seek views on the strategy including:

- Whether the priorities and themes of the strategy accurately reflect the local picture and provide the right amount of detail
- To determine if the evidence base included within the strategy reflects other organisations understanding
- If the proposed action plans for each priority will achieve the aims of the strategy
- Are there other issues relating to homelessness which should be prioritised in 2021?
- Any further observations on the strategy as a whole?
- The contribution other services can provide to support the delivery of the strategy to provide wrap around support to some of our most vulnerable

5.3. The process of consultation and the outcomes and amendments to the draft strategy are detailed below in Section 6.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1. Following approval, the draft strategy was subject to a period of 12-week consultation, which ran from 21st April 2021 to 14th July 2021. Consultation took the form of:

- Online questionnaire and survey seeking views of residents and stakeholders via the Cheshire East Council website
- Presentations to a number of groups including The Adult Safeguarding Board and local registered providers to encourage participation in the consultation
- Correspondence sent to all Members, stakeholders and third sector organisations to advise of the consultation and encourage participation
- Comprehensive social media and website campaign to advise local residents of the consultation

6.2. The responses to the consultation were collated by the Research and Intelligence Team and the results provided to enable the further development of the final strategy.

6.3. In total, there were 28 responses received via the online questionnaire/survey and these have been collated into a Summary, outlined in Appendix 1.

6.4. The responses ranged from general comments about the strategy, positive feedback on the proposed actions and some specific comments regarding key areas. The amendments to the strategy included:

- a) Clarifying the new arrangements for priority banding for persons who present as homeless due to domestic abuse. This is a direct result of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and allows the local authority to prioritise homelessness assistance and accommodation to those who have experienced domestic abuse.
 - b) Generic contact details added to the draft strategy. This is to assist residents in making referrals for homelessness and rough sleepers to be made to the local authority.
 - c) Greater detail added regarding what steps the local authority will take with regards to engagement with the private rented sector and how this will expand the number of housing options available to households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 - d) Additional action added to map the Single Point of Access support services and tenancy sustainment activity, as well as to further promote the support offered by the local authority via the Housing Related Support contracts.
 - e) There were a number of comments with a similar theme, namely the issue of 'rural homelessness'. Whilst the draft strategy already included reference and actions relating to rural homelessness, the number of responses received (14 in total) which mentioned this issue mean that we have committed to exploring this item further during the lifetime of the strategy.
 - f) A small number of responses were submitted regarding the situation with Covid-19. It was felt that the local authority's Homelessness team have managed exceptionally well during this time, and that no Covid-19 specific actions were needed. This is subject to change as the situation progresses and any further national guidance is proposed.
- 6.5.** In summary, the draft strategy was well received with high levels of agreement in relation to the Council's priorities and evidence base. Further details regarding this are outlined in Appendix 1 which sets out the responses to consultation and the Council's responses.
- 6.6.** The actions identified within the strategy will be monitored and taken forward by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group. This is an Advisory group which has been established to include a number of internal and external services who are dedicated to the reduction of homelessness including Probation, Housing Related Support Providers and Public Health.

Implications

6.7. Legal

- 6.7.1.** Adoption of the draft Strategy is not contentious. Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to have a strategy in place to prevent and deal with homelessness and rough sleeping,

aimed at preventing homelessness in the local area and to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless. It is a requirement of the Act that a new Homelessness Strategy must be published every five years.

- 6.7.2.** The draft Strategy does not impose any additional legal duties on the Council toward the homeless over and above what is already required by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
- 6.7.3.** Any additional legal obligations to the homeless arising from adoption and implementation of the draft Strategy are likely to come from action plans involving the sharing of information with partner agencies or the gathering of information for implementation purposes, and the Council's obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. Such information will need to be managed in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations.
- 6.7.4.** The Council as both the local housing authority and social services authority must take their Homelessness Strategy into account in the exercise of their functions. It is likely that increased engagement in homelessness in the area will see a rise in prevention and relief duties which in turn may also lead to an increase in challenges to either the scope of the duty or the discharge of it.

6.8. Finance

- 6.8.1.** There are no additional financial asks of the Council within the draft strategy, and ongoing tasks will be met through existing budgets held within the department, along with Government grants which have been allocated to the department including Rough Sleeping Initiative funding, Next Steps, Flexible Homelessness Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant.
- 6.8.2.** There is a potential risk that strategically important external partners may be unable, through pressures on their service, to meet demand. In this case funding arrangements may be reviewed, or partners may be supported in exploring funding streams or shared services with other partner organisations. Budget holders and decision makers would be made aware of a lack of capacity in strategically relevant services.

6.9. Policy

- 6.9.1.** The strategy will contribute towards the vision of the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 to be an open, fair and green Council and help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.
- 6.9.2.** The Cheshire East Council Housing Strategy 2018-23 details a number of key priorities for the Council's Housing service. One of these priorities focuses on 'Preventing Homelessness' under the remit of 'Health, wellbeing and quality of life'. This draft strategy

seeks to set out the strategic direction of the Council in achieving this priority.

- 6.9.3.** The development of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a statutory requirement under the Homeless Act 2002.

6.10. Equality

- 6.10.1.** An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for the draft strategy and has been approved by the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer. The completed EIA is appended to this report.

6.11. Human Resources

- 6.11.1.** It is not anticipated that there will be any additional staff resources required to enact the actions in the strategy, and any resulting tasks and workgroups will be facilitated and completed within existing staff resources.

6.12. Risk Management

- 6.12.1.** It is not foreseen that the objectives set out within this strategy will cause significant risk to residents or the local authority. Priorities are derived from a strong evidence base which have taken consideration of resident requirements, as well as other local authority departmental ambitions.
- 6.12.2.** A number of actions within the strategy will involve working with external partners, stakeholders and other CEC departments. This may assist in mitigation of risk due to a consistent and approved narrative taking place.
- 6.12.3.** There is a risk that delivery of actions within the strategy may be delayed due to staff resources and availability. This can be mitigated somewhat via a robust action plan for the priorities and use of SMART objectives between projects.

6.13. Rural Communities

- 6.13.1.** Homelessness and rough sleeping can affect all communities, however the implications within rural communities will be subject to an ongoing review throughout the strategy. This will aim to identify and address any specific issues relating to rural homelessness.

6.14. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.14.1.** Homelessness and rough sleeping can have a significantly detrimental effect on children and young people. The draft strategy takes into account the specific needs of these groups and any specific actions within the strategy would result in positive implications and outcomes for children and young people.

6.15. Public Health

- 6.15.1.** A report by Public Health England – Health matters: rough sleeping February 2020 indicates that “those who are rough sleeping or homeless experience some of the most severe health inequalities and report much poorer health than the general population”.
- 6.15.2.** This was also highlighted in the Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 which states that “People who sleep rough regularly over a long period are more likely to die young than the general population. In an international review of all available evidence, homeless populations, along with other excluded groups (including sex workers and prisoners), are ten times more likely to die than those of a similar age in the general population. They are also much more likely to die from injury, poisoning and suicide (eight times greater risk in men, 19 times in women). In another report, the average age of death for a person who dies whilst living on the streets or in homeless accommodation in England was calculated as 47 years old compared to 77 for the general population,³ and it was estimated that around 35% of people who die whilst sleeping rough or living in homeless accommodation died due to alcohol or drugs, compared to 2% in the general population”
- 6.15.3.** The strategic priorities within the draft strategy aim to benefit households and residents who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or those who are currently sleeping rough. These interventions are aimed to have a positive effect on the health of individuals.

6.16. Climate Change

- 6.16.1.** The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents, and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. Whilst it is not the aim or remit of this strategy to address these issues specifically, the proposed strategic priorities aim to assist households who are homeless or facing homelessness to access suitable accommodation options and maintain their health and wellbeing throughout.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Christopher Hutton Christopher.hutton@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 685642
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation responses Appendix 2 – Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-25 Appendix 3 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Equality Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

Cheshire East Council

Report of Consultation: Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025

September 2021

*Working for a **brighter future**  together*



OFFICIAL

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Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Consultation

Between 21 April and 14 July 2021 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation on its recently updated draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Survey promotion and responses

The survey was promoted on the Council's consultation webpage, and a press release was issued, as listed in Appendix 1 of this document. Partner organisations and key stakeholders were contacted via email and invited to respond, as well as a reminder sent out 3 weeks prior to the closing date.

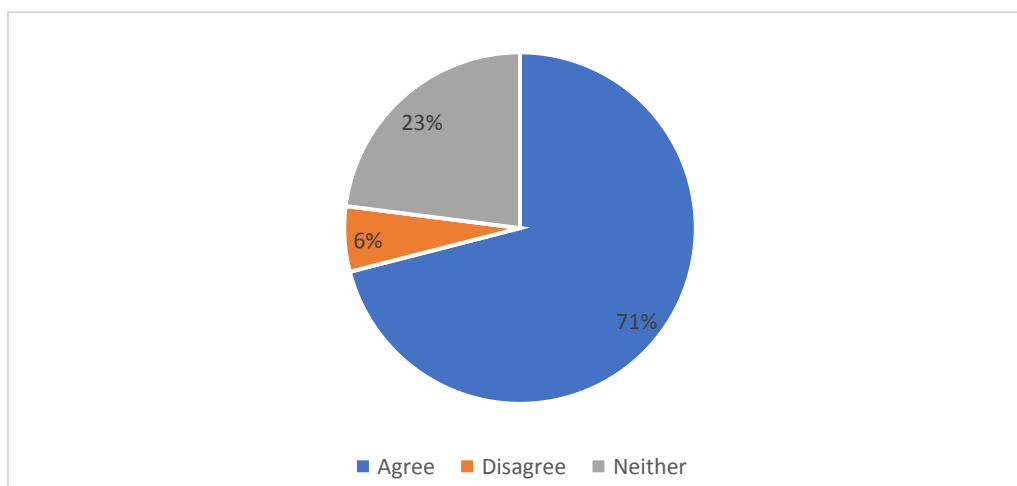
In total, 28 consultation responses were received.

Outlined below are:

- the questions asked during the consultation
- graphs which demonstrate the ratio of agreement or disagreement with regards to each strategy priority
- details where the strategy has been amended
- details where we have responded to the consultation comment but didn't feel the strategy needed to be amended.

It was decided that the consultation would make use of *open comment* questions. Therefore people did not always answer 'agree' or 'disagree'. It has been necessary to go through the responses and to interpret whether people agree or disagree from what they have said in their open comments.

Q1: - How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the 4 strategic priorities as outlined within the draft document?



Q1: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

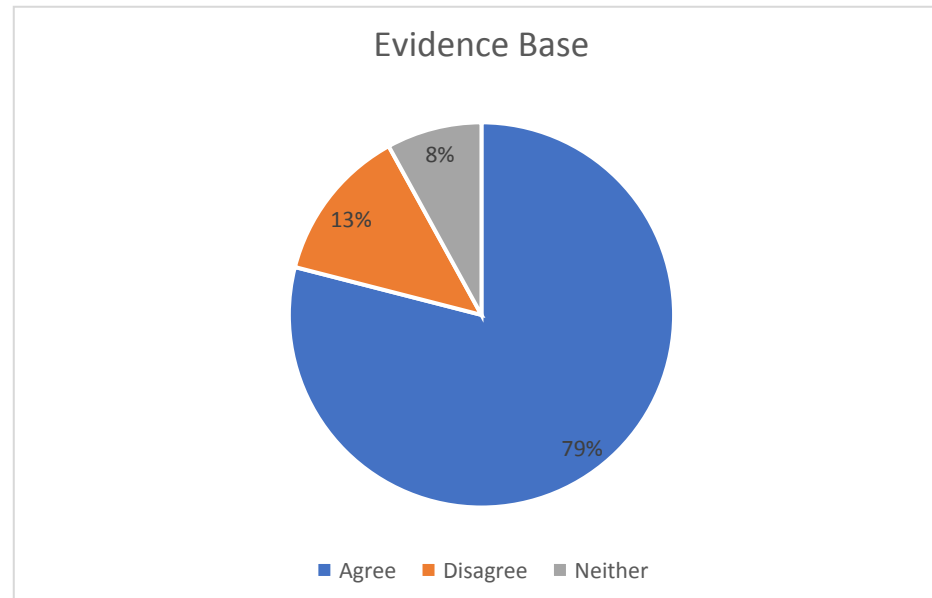
Comment	CEC response	Detail added to strategy
There should be a specific priority in relation to domestic violence. Some of the terminology in this report is challenging - rough sleeping is no longer an appropriate term to use.	<p>Thank you for the comment. Responses to domestic abuse, including housing need, are specifically co-ordinated through the work of the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP). CEDSAP has the prevention of homelessness as a key priority, working to keep people safe in their homes where possible, and only sending people out of the area as a last resort.</p> <p>'Rough sleeping' is a usual description, but some organisations use 'street homeless' as an alternative.</p>	Additional commentary relating to domestic abuse now included on pg. 8 of the strategy.

Q1: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC response
Agree but Priority 3 should read 'eliminate' not 'reduce' rough sleeping.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Government has committed in its Rough Sleeping Strategy to halve rough sleeping in this Parliament and to end it for good by 2027.
Agree with the priorities but given 50% of Cheshire East residents live in rural areas and You have zero information of homelessness in such areas I have NO confidence it will work for all.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Homelessness in rural areas is often hidden homelessness rather than traditional rough sleeping. This does not require a bespoke approach to tackle it as it fits the homelessness prevention and relief model. CEC wants to enable people to live in affordable housing in rural communities and this is addressed by the affordable housing approach, and community connection criteria used in the CEC Allocations Policy.

	Cheshire East addresses this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.
Firstly, prevention of homelessness must be taught at an early age, as its occurrence forms a pattern of how life is tackled.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Such early intervention activities are not technically school programs. Rather, they are community-based strategies that are placed within schools. Young people are being seen through our connections with the YOT, CAMHS, and Care Leavers Services.
on paper this looks good, it will only actions that will ensure good outcome the rural areas need help, they are often forgotten	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. This will be looked at in partnership with parishes and villages.
The current priorities do not seem to address the link between homelessness social dysfunction and substance misuse. Making reference to the 'Report into Homelessness and Drug Misuse' (2019), treatment for drug misuse and housing should be addressed at the same time, otherwise we are treating the symptoms and disregarding the root of the problem. Conversely, the proposed strategy will perpetuate the same vicious circle: funding and housing is provided to individuals accustomed to a lifetime of social dysfunction who will likely continue to prioritise their vices over their day to day, normal life responsibilities (e.g. paying bills / rent, food). Long term, this does not achieve the proposed goal. My suggestion is that the local / central government think about a more comprehensive strategy.	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. There has been a re-commission of the Cheshire East Substance Misuse Service. A core value and key principle is engagement, co-production and co-design with service users.</p> <p>Priorities include the aim of reducing homelessness and the risk of homelessness related to alcohol- related crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.</p> <p>The Housing Related Support service is outcome - focused, allowing people the opportunity to access the support they need to maintain accommodation through tenancy sustainment, and prevent homelessness.</p>

Q2: - How strongly do you agree or disagree that the evidence base is robust?



Q2: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

No amendments made

Q2: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

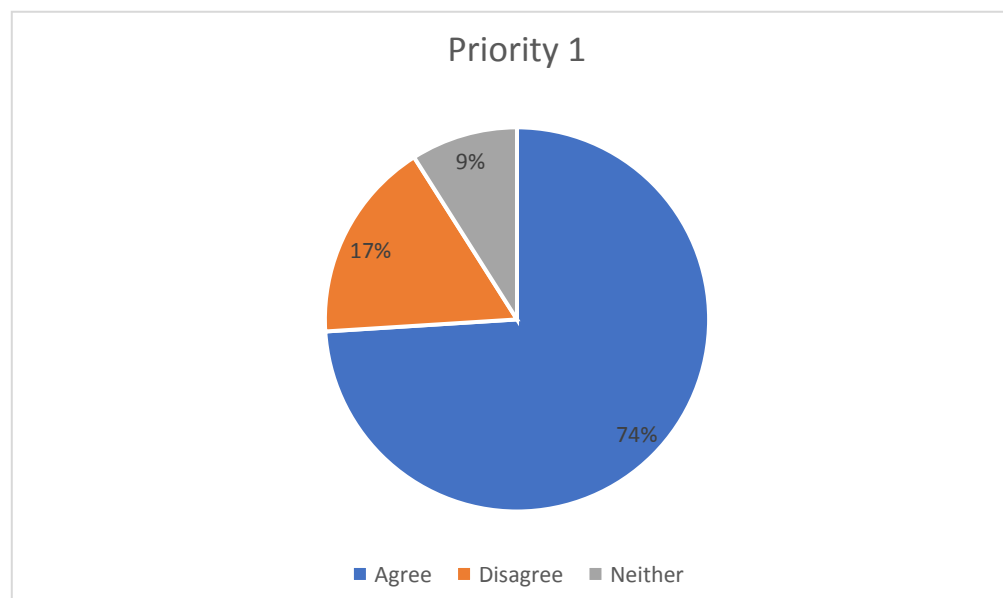
Comment	CEC Response
I agree with the strategy to address the problem, but a backward and forward conversation is needed in education, personally and collectively	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Early intervention initiatives aimed at preventing youth homelessness involve identifying young people who are at risk of homelessness, dropping out of school, or other significant and negative life altering circumstances and then providing them with the

	<p>necessary supports to reduce these risks, strengthen families and keep them in their community.</p> <p>We are presently working with colleagues in Children's Services to develop more robust strategies and assessment tools to tackle youth homelessness.</p> <p>CEC has developed a pathways model for young people, working in partnership with youth agencies (such as Children's Services, other statutory partners, and local 3rd sector agencies).</p> <p>Such early intervention activities are not technically school programs. Rather, they are community-based strategies that are placed within schools.</p> <p>The Strategy will develop different methods of communicating information and giving advice, via social media, advertising, etc. so that stakeholders are more aware of services for those at risk of homelessness.</p>
It's fine. A little old fashioned, doesn't really recognise the gendered nature of homelessness.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Household type by gender is recorded and acknowledged in the Strategy. There are women only housing related support services which recognise the particular needs of women, especially when domestic abuse is an issue.
Lack of data in rural areas in a glaring miss and time would be better served understanding the rural area homelessness situation rather than guessing your actions will help	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. This will be looked at in partnership with parishes and villages.
Page 3 provides a broad description of the local picture. In reality, the Housing / Homelessness Prevention Act caters to the individual who has a 'priority need'. The statutory instrument categorises those	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Being a woman does not make anyone more vulnerable. CEC is not in a position to change the Homelessness legislation concerning 'priority'.

<p>in 'automatic right' to access emergency housing as: 1. pregnant women / those who live with a pregnant woman 2.households with dependent children 3. all 16/17 year olds (with certain exceptions) 4.all 18 to 20 year olds other than students, provided they meet certain statutory criteria 5. all who lost their accommodation due to an emergency 6. a person whom' the Council has 'reason to believe' they are 'vulnerable'. In effect, the Local Authorities have a 'duty to provide interim accommodation where they have reason to believe that an applicant is homeless, eligible, and in PRIORITY NEED'. Problems arise with those who fall under the 'vulnerable' section. In my experience, Cheshire East Council have a tendency to mis-apply s.189 of the Act, 'satisfied that [an individual] is vulnerable' by demanding (and even disregarding) medical evidence prior to taking action under their duty of care which sets the (legal) test at 'reason to believe' (as opposed to 'satisfy'). This means that if a local authority has a 'reason to believe' that someone is vulnerable, they should trigger their duty of care. Unfortunately this is not the case with Cheshire East - to my knowledge, single women and (medically) vulnerable individuals have been declined emergency accommodation because the Council wasn't 'satisfied' they had a priority need. Lastly, I would challenge the Council / Central Government to consider if declining single women emergency accommodation because they are not, statutorily classed as 'vulnerable' is the correct approach? I make reference here to the recent events concerning Sarah Everard.</p>	<p>CEC is confident our vulnerability test is robust and have factored into this conclusion a comparison of neighbouring boroughs. We use a clear and consistent assessment tool that was developed in consultation with independent homelessness advisors, and put into practice, in December 2020.</p> <p>We do think that for those "people" (not all women) who fall short of the vulnerability test generally but continually place themselves (decision made with the capacity to understand the consequences of the action) by means of drink/ drugs in vulnerable situations we do need options. This is something we are exploring as an extension of our duties beyond those imposed on us by the Homelessness Act, by means of commissioning supported accommodation and support services to meet the needs of this client group.</p> <p>As a comparator with other local authorities the funding we have been able to attain to support those people whom are not in priority need or are in priority need but intentionally so means that outside of our legislative assessments we have been able to extend outreach options.</p> <p>We have not received one legal challenge to our priority decisions in the last 2 years, since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.</p> <p>The Housing Related Support Service has commissioned beds in women only accommodation.</p>
<p>The rural areas have been forgotten for too long, hope that what is said will happen does</p>	<p>Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. This will be looked at in partnership with parishes and villages.</p>

<p>The vision is based up on sound knowledge of the policy interventions and a rich source of data. This clearly shows an understanding of the impacts of homelessness and an awareness of the other strategies in play within the nation and at a more local level within the local authority. There is a strong emphasis on prevention and partnership working which we know is key to delivering solutions to prevent or act on homelessness thus producing a strategy that should produce demonstrable outcomes. As a Housing Association with stock in Cheshire East, Onward is keen to support the vision of the local authority to do all we can to prevent homelessness. Onward has a financial inclusion team that works to prevent evictions by exploring options with residents to maximise their income and often sign posts to external organisations that can provide further support to prevent evictions over the past two years. Onward has received 53 internal Financial Inclusion referrals for residents in Cheshire East, where support has been provided to help maintain tenancies. Teams across Onward feel that partnership links are strong and work well however Onward would welcome the opportunity to further strengthen these relationships with the local authority.</p> <p>Onward has recently demonstrated the benefits of strong partnership working to prevent homelessness in Liverpool. Working in partnership with Liverpool City Council, a consortium of registered housing providers, charities, and support providers worked together to provide sustainable tenancies for homeless people. The project team re-housed over 1000 people in appropriate accommodation with support packages and furniture packages to meet their needs and sustain their tenancies.</p>	<p>This is acknowledged and appreciated by CEC, which wants to continue and enhance partnerships with our Registered Provider partners.</p>
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Q3: - Do you agree or disagree that the action plan for Priority 1 will achieve the priorities? If not, why?



Q3: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC response	Detail added to strategy
With respect to 'Support partnerships with the 3rd Sector, voluntary sector, and other local partners to address support, education, employment, and training needs' I would welcome a simple link to refer clients to - although homelessness and rough sleeping is rare in Alsager.	Homelessness is prevalent throughout Cheshire East and the most visible form of homelessness, rough sleeping, can happen anywhere. It is constantly monitored, and people can report rough sleeping to CEC so that outreach work with the person sleeping rough can commence.	Included contact details at the end of the Strategy for Housing Strategy (e-mail) and Street Link details so people can report rough sleepers on page 55.

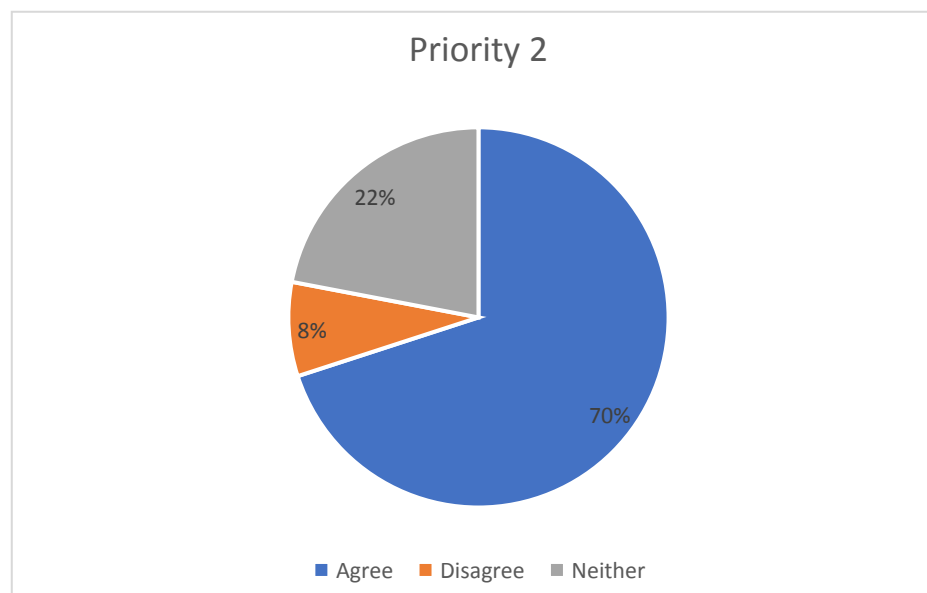
Q3: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC Response
As far as I'm aware we do not know who the Landlords are as landlord licensing isn't mandatory in Cheshire East	Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC works with many landlords in the private sector. CEC offers free advice to help landlords with tenant issues including Anti-Social Behaviour and rent arrears, and can mediate with tenants and help landlords to find a solution to most tenancy issues.
Lack of data in rural areas where 50% of people live No alignment with Cheshire and Warrington recovery plan	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. This will be looked at in partnership with parishes and villages.
<p>Onward agrees that the actions contained within the Priority 1 action plan will enable people to remain in their own home. Onward is keen to further strengthen relationships through partnership working with Cheshire East Council.</p> <p>As well as financial inclusion support Onward has a plan to support local people within Cheshire East to upskill and gain employment through its supply chains and development opportunities. There are plans in place to work with Crewe College to provide apprenticeship opportunities too. Onward is well positioned to share information and best practice to unlock any barriers to provide the best possible opportunities for its tenants and providing them with more money in their pockets to allow them to sustain their tenancies. Over the past 2 years Onward has sent 16 referrals to Cheshire East Duty to Refer, from this 13 were successful, bringing in £7529.50 for customers who were potentially due to be evicted for breach of possession orders and helping them sustain their tenancies.</p> <p>Onward has a Safer Neighbourhoods team that try every available venue including mediation or warning, injunctions before eviction is even</p>	Noted, and thank you for your comment. This is acknowledged and appreciated by CEC, which wants to continue and enhance partnerships with our Registered Provider partners.

<p>contemplated. The Safer Neighbourhood Specialist attends the Multi Agency Action Group (MAAG) North Meetings with the police, Senior Environmental officers and the ASB Team leaders from Cheshire and Peaks to discuss any ongoing ASB cases. The team also support victims of domestic abuse to stay in their homes if they wish. They attend MARAC meetings to discuss cases in the round and deliver the best possible outcome for the victim.</p> <p>The action plan is thorough and covers many different angles to prevent homelessness, Onward are keen to support Cheshire East Council in preventing homelessness in the area.</p>	
<p>totally agree, hard with difficult to engage tenants. There is a need for intensive floating support for people at risk of losing accommodation</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Housing Related Support service provides short - term floating support (re-settlement and sustainment). This could be for re-settlement, for example to help someone settle into their new home after moving out of a hostel or hospital, etc. It could also be to help someone where they may be at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless.</p> <p>There are 70 placements in the South, and 55 in the North.</p>
<p>We agree that the information presented in the plan would go a long way to achieving the priority. However, from experience we could see difficulties with fully realising some elements such as exploring “early identification” triggers and information sharing with external agencies from the authority, such as the DWP, as these have been difficult to engage with and get information from historically. We would perhaps like to see some further information in the strategy on how this might be achieved such as via meetings / working group etc. We also think that there could be a task to push floating support in terms of tenancy sustainment / homeless prevention from the authority to stakeholders. Concrete has already been promoting the services we provide more but we think there should be a general push amongst all partner agencies in this regard on top of our own promotion activities so everyone is giving out the same message.</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC has developed a direct link with the majority of our Registered Providers, with all providers with over 500 units of stock – as well as some of the smaller providers. Our work and links with the DWP will be maintained and sustained. Cheshire East has explored options with the DWP for working on joint local initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness and unemployment, such as improved communication and direct dialling between services to fast track cases to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>There will be a review of partnership working and information sharing between the CAB, Job Centres, DWP, Benefits Section and Housing Options.</p>

	<p>This has seen improved partnership working and preparedness for any increase in evictions, money management and debt problems.</p> <p>The Housing Related Support service provides short - term floating support (re-settlement and sustainment). This could be for re-settlement, for example to help someone settle into their new home after moving out of a hostel or hospital, etc. It could also be to help someone where they may be at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless. There are 70 placements in the South, and 55 in the North.</p>
While some of the actions outlined are measurable generally speaking the actions are aims, aspirational, rather than quantifiable objectives which can be measured. Clear measurable objectives would more accurately identify evidence for supporting the meeting of the action plan. it would help identify actions required to address areas requiring further development.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East knows that it is essential that it works in partnership to achieve the shared vision of preventing homelessness and has produced delivery plans with tasks clustered under the 4 key priorities. The Delivery Plans are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed (SMART).
Who could disagree? Very broad - could encompass anything from grab rails to tenancy support for households placed in the private rented sector (PRS). The biggest driver from the limited data you provide would suggest that repressions from social landlords is a significant issue - this requires some work to ensure that social landlords also take appropriate steps to prevent rent arrears and other issues that might lead to eviction and homelessness.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. An action to be carried out is to explore 'early identification' triggers and information sharing with key agencies such as DWP, Benefits Section, supported accommodation, and Registered Providers. The aim is a reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears. This is something that is under discussion with Registered Providers and was an agenda item at a recent Steering Group meeting.
Yes, but please note the issues I've raised concerning 'rehabilitation' and 'vulnerable' individuals.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC works with residents that have barriers to accessing housing, due to prison release, or substance misuse issues. Accommodation and floating support is available through the Housing Related Support services.

Q4: - Do you agree or disagree that the action plan for Priority 2 will achieve the priorities? If not, why?



Q4: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC response	Detail added to the strategy
Council must also work on reducing the length of time applicants are often faced with when trying to secure accommodation via Homechoice. Currently, many individuals have to wait a minimum of 6 months, but more likely closer to a year prior to being shortlisted for new accommodation.	The number of people on Cheshire Homechoice exceeds the number of affordable housing properties available. The number is high each year, with the number of people on Homechoice varying year to year based on annual reviews of applicants, applicants' circumstances changing, and on affordable housing stock availability (the number of lets available).	Included in the strategy on page 18.

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<p>Additionally, private landlords (outside Homechoice) request a 'guarantor' or flatly refuse to consider an applicant who relies on social welfare payments because their 'insurance doesn't cover them'. Perhaps the government could find a manner of putting private landlords at ease, so that they wouldn't decline applicants from a social welfare background? I suggest some form of financial incentive offered to private landlords perhaps? Furthermore, I note that applicants from non-commissioned supported accommodation services (hostels) are not prioritised by the Council on Homechoice, by not changing their banding to a higher priority, simply because they are not from Council commissioned services. This is a typical case of 'false economy' - supported accommodation services are likely to incur weekly charges of over £700 paid by the taxpayer for a minimum of 6 months. Surely it is in the taxpayer's interest to expedite the rehousing of all individuals currently housed in hostels? Therefore, I stress these matters need to be addressed if the Council is to reach their goal of 'securing affordable accommodation' within a reasonable timeframe.</p> <p>For those experiencing multiple and severe disadvantage homelessness, access to accommodation should not be contingent</p>	<p>People in higher bands wait considerably less time than people in lower bands. Applicants are made aware of the average length of time they can expect to wait.</p> <p>The Cheshire East Allocations Policy gives 'reasonable preference' to those households threatened with homelessness.</p> <p>CEC has a 5-year land supply, using a standard formula of build rates and lead-in times which are applied to all housing sites. The delivery of affordable housing units only goes some of the way to meeting housing need.</p> <p>A range of incentives, some of them financial, are being explored to increase the number of private landlords willing to work with CEC.</p> <p>CEC gives priority to applicants who are ready to move on from non-commissioned supported housing. We have in-reach officers working on evictions, and a planned move-on process for all supported accommodation providers, not just our commissioned services.</p> <p>We are currently delivering a private rented sector access scheme for those who have / are experiencing street homelessness. This was funded through Next Steps and Rough Sleeper Initiatives 20/21 and 21/22. As of July 2021 we have approval to recruit a Link Worker role to liaise with private rented sector landlords to encourage and facilitate people who are homeless or in emergency accommodation into their own tenancy. Funding is available including rent in advance payments, deposits and Emergency</p>	
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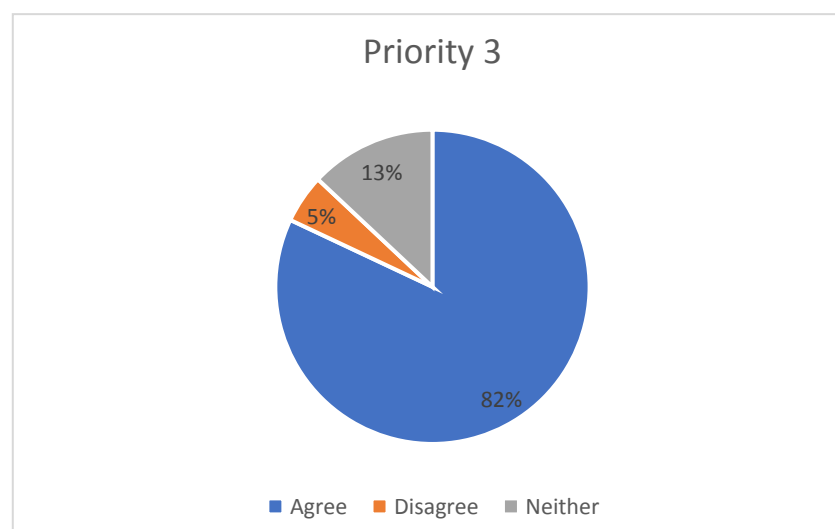
on abstinence or behaviour targets, and appropriate should not be limited to Housing First but include a range of supported and supportive accommodation	<p>Assistance funds for setting up home through our partner services in Benefits.</p> <p>We are dedicating £20,000 in 2021/2022 towards those who have moved into the private rented sector who at risk of homelessness, which can enable payments to reduce rent arrears.</p> <p>Easy access on the CEC website to free information when it is needed may help some people to find their own housing solutions.</p>	
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Q4: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC Response
As far as I'm aware we do not know who the Landlords are as landlord licensing isn't mandatory in Cheshire East and there is no licensing of small HMOs up to 5 individuals.	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. This in line with current legislation, which states that a landlord must have a licence for a privately rented HMO if the property being rented out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •is occupied by five or more people; •those people form two or more households; •tenants share some amenities like kitchen, bathroom or laundry.
Onward agrees that the actions in the Priority 2 action plan will enable people who are homeless to secure appropriate accommodation. It may however be worthwhile considering how the council can support mechanisms to utilise two-bedroom properties for single applicants. Onward has responded to a number of	Noted, and thank you for your comment. This is acknowledged and appreciated by CEC, which wants to continue and enhance partnerships with our Registered Provider partners.

<p>homelessness strategies in the recent months. A lack of one-bedroom properties as identified in this Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is a trend across the region. Onward are working hard to deliver more affordable housing in the area investing £93m in the Basford East development, which will build 449 homes for affordable sale and rent.</p>	
<p>We are pleased to see that there are tasks to specifically looking at single homelessness and separately looking into accessing the private rented sector but we think perhaps these should be a singular task particularly given the rise in single homelessness over the last few years, especially amongst under 35's, to try to develop initiatives to open up the private rented sector focusing in the areas where homelessness approaches are higher such as Crewe and Macclesfield areas.</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Government has announced that, from October 2023, it will be extending the age thresholds for Care Leavers and homeless hostel exemptions so that they both apply to under 25 year olds. For Care Leavers, this means extending the qualifying age from 22 up to 25 years old and for those who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel, the lower age limit will be removed to include all claimants aged under 35.</p>

Q5: - Do you agree or disagree that the action plan for Priority 3 will achieve the priorities? If not, why?



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Q5: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

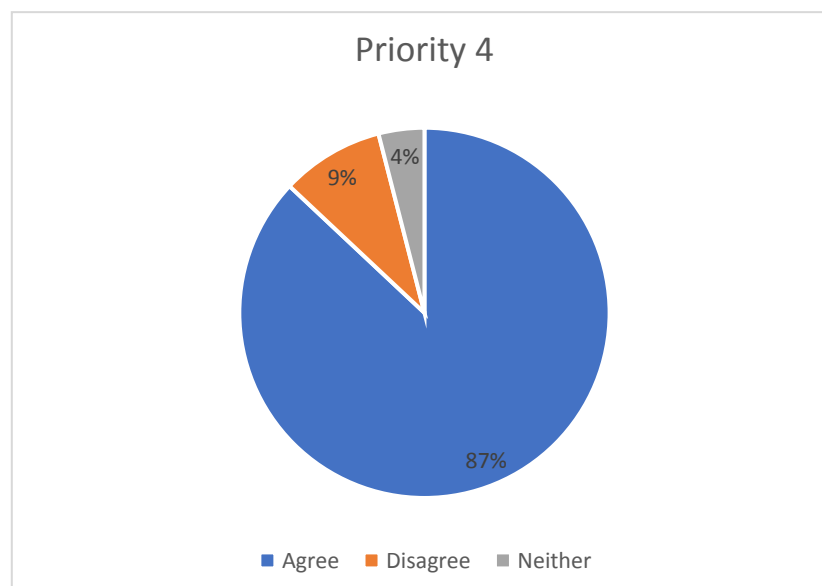
No amendments made

Q5: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC Response
I welcome 'Develop links with partners and local churches / faith groups to provide services to rough sleepers'	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. Fundamental to the Government's 2027 elimination of rough sleeping vision is that all parts of society, including the general public, business, faith and voluntary groups and communities come together to support people at risk of rough sleeping.</p> <p>CEC wants to ensure the voices of small charities, including faith groups, are heard and form part of our future work. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. Membership will be reviewed in 2021 to ensure that it is as inclusive as necessary, with a wider role for voluntary, third sector, and Faith groups.</p>
'Rough sleeping' is a particularly problematic term. The strategy needs to be linked to other key areas within the council including CAMHS and leaving care services.	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. 'Rough sleeping' is an accepted description, but some organisations use 'street homeless' as an alternative.</p> <p>The Strategy highlights links to other key areas. A task in the Strategy is to examine options for joint meetings, profile raising, and joint training with the Care Leaver Service leading to improved outputs for care leavers.</p>
We agree with the tasks / measures being considered for reducing and preventing rough sleeping in the borough and think the key to that is going to come from enhanced partnership working but we'd be keen to see how the voluntary and statutory	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. Membership will be reviewed in 2021 to ensure that it is as inclusive as necessary, with a wider role for voluntary, third sector, and Faith groups.</p>

sectors can be brought closer together to work towards the overall aims and whether this can be done in a multi-agency meeting / forum.	
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Q6: - Do you agree or disagree that the action plan for Priority 4 will achieve the priorities? If not, why?



Q6: - Comments received where amendments have been made to the strategy:

Comment	CEC response	Detail added to the strategy
Although we agree that the tasks set out are beneficial, we think there could perhaps be a task or alteration of a task around	An improved understanding and awareness of the Single Point of Access needs to be developed. Increased awareness of the SPA amongst partners is also required to ensure that clients are aware of where to go to access	Included in the Strategy on page 28.

<p>promotion of the services commissioned and non-commissioned who are providing floating support to maintain and sustain accommodation as well. We also think that there could be specific task in this section to explore greater involvement in the role Housing Associations can play in tenancy sustainment especially as social housing makes up a substantial portion of the housing market in the borough.</p>	<p>services. An exercise to promote the SPA to partners and stakeholders will be carried out. This can highlight the role of non-commissioned services which can contribute to a menu of options for vulnerable people.</p> <p>Registered Providers have their own tenancy sustainment policies and want tenancies to succeed. However, CEC is aware that many fail.</p> <p>One of the actions of the Strategy is to create a working group to review the provision of tenancy sustainment and life skills training for service - users before moving into settled accommodation. This will improve tenancy sustainment for service -users coming from supported accommodation in commissioned and non-commissioned providers, and reduced repeat homelessness.</p> <p>Sustainment of registered provider tenancies especially in the first 12 months will be on the agenda of the CEC Housing Delivery Group, and the Choice Based Lettings Partnership.</p>	
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Q6: - Comments received where amendments have *not* been made to the strategy:

Response	CEC Response
<p>For households placed in the private rented sector, there needs to be better tenancy sustainment support and work with landlords</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Strategy highlights private landlords who operate good management practices and maintain good property standards. Cheshire East Private Landlord Liaison Officers provide support and advice to private landlords and tenants.</p>

	Housing Related Support commissioned floating support units are specifically commission support for this purpose.
Onward agrees that the actions in the Priority 4 action plan will help to ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation. The plan identifies appropriate measures to support residents to sustain their tenancies. Interventions such as Housing First and the LCC homelessness project are successful because a tailored approach to service design is a key factor in successfully maintaining and sustaining a tenancy. Onward is well placed to support this objective through partnership working and a commitment to make a positive difference in the communities we serve.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. This is acknowledged and appreciated by CEC, which wants to continue and enhance partnerships with our Registered Provider partners.

Q7: - Are there any additional issues that need to be added, and if so against which Priority?

Responses to consultation included within strategy:

Comment	CEC Response	Detail added to the strategy
Definition of 'affordable' housing, both owned and rented, needed.	<p>The most commonly referred to definition of affordable housing is set out in Annex 2 to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is the definition that local planning authorities apply when making provision within their areas to meet local demand/need for affordable housing. The most recent version of the NPPF was published in July 2021.</p> <p>Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:</p>	Included in the Strategy page 6.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing for rent • Discounted market sales housing • Other affordable routes to home ownership <p>An Affordable Rent is set at up to 80% of the market rent, the average rent for local private lettings).</p>	
Needs to be more on the gendered nature of homelessness - 80% of people experiencing street homelessness are men, but most people experiencing homelessness are women. Women experiencing street homelessness have a particularly tough time. Interventions targeted at DV need to focus on men who commit DV not on the expectation that women should leave the home.	<p>Household type by gender is recorded and acknowledged in the Strategy. There are women only housing related support services which recognise the particular needs of women especially when domestic abuse is an issue.</p> <p>Cheshire Without Abuse offers Behavioural Change programmes for those who harm or who are concerned about their behaviour. There is also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for victims to remain in their accommodation, where it is safe to do so - Target hardening of properties, such as provision of alarms, or a panic room - Support for victims to use Council services to get help with accommodation problems. <p>The Government is extending homelessness priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>This legal change will come into force through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which contains a clause amending the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness (Priority need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002. The aim of the policy is to give those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse priority need for homelessness assistance and accommodation secured by the local authority.</p>	Included in the Strategy on page 8.

Responses to consultation *not* included within strategy:

<p>Priority 2 look at how CEC Homechoice weighs priority banding. For example recently a veteran in housing need who has been released from Prison early for good behaviour was put in band E due to their conviction not taking into account they were released early for good behaviour and they are a veteran which should have put them in band B.</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The CEC Allocations Policy is clear on behaviour that would make someone an unsuitable tenant, and the Strategy does not propose a review of the Allocations Policy at this stage.</p> <p>The Policy is written in partnership with our Registered Provider partners, and is geared towards creating sustainable communities, and anti-social behaviour can be a problem.</p> <p>There are other housing options that would be open to a veteran with a housing need and these could be explored through advice from the CEC Housing Options Service.</p> <p>Once having passed a period of 12 months with improved behaviour a veteran will be given an enhanced priority in accordance with CEC's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>
<p>Priority one, sometimes it isn't safe to keep individuals in their homes due to different factors, such as, domestic abuse and health and safety.</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. There is support for victims to remain in their accommodation, where it is safe to do so.</p> <p>CEC uses Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 to assess the health and safety risks in housing. If we identify hazards we will consider what is the best way to bring about improvements, which could result in formal enforcement action against the landlord. We will have regard to the severity of the hazard(s) when deciding the course of action to be taken, and wherever possible will liaise with the owner and / or the person having control of the property to resolve the issues amicably.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, the hazard is too severe, or there is a high risk of imminent harm, we will serve a notice requiring action to be taken, and the household will be moved out into temporary accommodation.</p>

<p>putting into practice and ensuring homeless are looked after and given education and job if needed</p>	<p>CEC is supporting partnerships with the 3rd Sector, voluntary sector, and other local partners to address support, education, employment, and training needs. People in Housing Related Support schemes are helped to access training, education, and employment.</p> <p>One of the priorities of the Rough Sleeping Initiative is recovery. Work is carried out with our Housing Related Support partners around education / training/ employment and other life improvements, such as mental health recovery and substance misuse reduction.</p>
<p>To be added against the priority around preventative measures to reduce rough sleeping: steps should be taken to ensure that people experiencing homelessness who have companion animals with them (usually but not always dogs) are not excluded from accommodation due to having their companion animal(s) with them. The work done by the St Mungo's charity (see www.mungos.org) on this issue has been very successful, and it recognizes that for some people experiencing homelessness, companion animals are vital allies, and sometimes representing the only meaningful relationship in the person's life. When shelters and other accommodation options exclude companion animals, it can lead to people choosing to sleep rough instead.</p>	<p>Agreed, and thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Research has shown that human–animal bonds have well-being consequences and that people benefit from the presence of animals, and in particular companion animals. Benefits can be physical, psychological, and psychosocial.</p> <p>One of the providers of Housing Related Support accommodation is willing to consider service – users with their companion animals.</p> <p>We are happy to review this within future commissioning processes in the lifespan of the Strategy. The factors leading to, or keeping, people on the streets is closely monitored and reported on – so any influencing factors can be addressed through our strategic and commissioning work.</p>
<p>We think that with regards to tasks in priority 1, there could be a task linked to relationships with landlords and “call before you serve” initiatives etc, which includes enhanced links between</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Strategy highlights private landlords who operate good management practices. Cheshire East Private Landlord Liaison Officers provide support and advice to private landlords and tenants. Landlords can contact Officers for eviction notice advice.</p>

housing options and private sector teams, particularly where landlords are operating HMO's which have been licenced by the authority as the links have already been partially established in that regard. Whether there could be something written into the licencing process to the effect that landlords should call before they service notices to tenants in licenced HMO's for example or for this to be explored?	A range of incentives for private landlords are being explored aimed at tenancy sustainment.
You must get the base data right not knowing the homelessness situation in 50% of Cheshire East any investment will be wasted, we need to look after the many not the few	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring. Homelessness is most prevalent in urban areas, and this is where services are currently provided.

Q8: - Are there other issues which should be prioritised in 2021 / 2022?

Responses to consultation *not* included within strategy:

Comment	CEC Response
As well as meeting affordable housing on new developments, the compulsory purchase and improvement of empty properties should be looked at.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. It may be possible for some empty properties to be brought back into use which may accommodate homeless households via leasing schemes or nominations. Work is carried out with owners to incentivise them to bring the property into use. We are looking at good practice models, such as the CWAC nominations scheme for properties supported via improvement loans grants from the Council. A 5 year 'nomination agreement' is in place and has had some success in considering single homelessness referrals.
CEC has been very successful in this field in recent years can we transfer that success story to rural	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if

<p>areas? The Strategy identifies the shortfall in knowledge of rural communities. Given that 50% of CEC area is made up of rural communities an obvious priority is to address this issue. the nature of rural communities could well hide many issues relating to homelessness or security of accommodation. The lack of rural transport could well increase isolation of those struggling and possibly cut off from access to services. The pandemic could well have increased the levels of homelessness or threat of homelessness in rural areas with the loss of employment and difficult access to alternative employment. in order to assist CEC make progress quickly is there a contribution that the third tier of elected representatives might make ie parish councils? Local knowledge could well help inform the picture in rural communities. Are there grounds for providing some basic awareness training for parish councils on homelessness so that they might guide people in the right direction in the event of their help being sought? Given transport and mobility issues is there scope for rural hubs or popup advice centres to deal with housing and money management issues?</p>	<p>evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring. Local parishes have access to local data and will be asked to assist CEC.</p> <p>Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring. Local parishes have access to local data and will be asked to assist CEC.</p>
<p>Cheshire East needs a good consistent approach to floating support across the county</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Floating Support is available in the north and south: 55 units in the North 70 units in the South</p>
<p>Consider adding single women to the 'vulnerable' category and train homelessness staff on the legal requiem to which trigger the Council's duty of care.</p>	<p>Noted, and thank you for your comment. Being a woman does not make one 'vulnerable'. CEC is not in a position to change the Homelessness legislation which specifies 'priority'.</p>

	CEC Housing and Homelessness staff receive regular training on legislation and good practise in delivery of our homelessness functions.
do not forget the rural areas ,ensure people have follow on support	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.
Homelessness and the availability of Homes must be linked	Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Cheshire East Allocations Policy underpins the ability to move people who are in housing need to appropriate social housing. With an average of 8,600 registered for housing on Homechoice each year, and an average of 1,300 properties available annually, the Policy strikes a balance between supporting sustainable, settled neighbourhoods, whilst giving priority to those people who are in urgent housing need.
More data needed on Rural Homelessness situation. Research into why properties are vacant long-term. Review of long-term vacant commercial premises and assessment of potential for redevelopment for residential use - which is what happened to old warehouses in central Manchester.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. New models of partnership working, and improved monitoring are to be explored. Council Tax records show why properties are empty, with the majority short term transactional empties. Commercial properties are not suitable for accommodation and the cost is prohibitive. Manchester redevelopments were carried out by private developers.
Potential impacts of pandemic - in the intro but perhaps add as specifics in the priorities & continuing impact on later years as recovery won't be a one-year recovery	Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC recognises the positive effect government policies have had on levels of homelessness during the pandemic, particularly Everyone In, the pause in evictions, and temporary uplift in local housing allowance. However, CEC is monitoring the temporary nature of these changes and the impact these may have on homelessness in the future, especially the newly emerging need for

	services as we start to see the impacts of the wider economic context and the cumulation of rent arrears in the local area.
Reach out to PC in local areas we will help supporting you with homelessness in our rural areas	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring. Local parish councils have access to local data and will be asked to assist CEC.
There could be more of an emphasis in terms of the impact the pandemic has already had on homelessness and is likely going to continue to have with eviction bans being lifted and the potential increase in presentations which that may bring especially in 2021/22 financial year	Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC recognises the positive effect government policies have had on levels of homelessness during the pandemic, particularly Everyone In, the pause in evictions, and temporary uplift in local housing allowance. However, CEC is monitoring the temporary nature of these changes and the impact these may have on homelessness in the future, especially the newly emerging need for services as we start to see the impacts of the wider economic context and the cumulation of rent arrears in the local area.
We would suggest strategy includes pre tenancy support for single males and care leavers and links/referrals can be made to post tenancy support where needed	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Tenancy sustainment as a key part of homeless prevention is highlighted in the Strategy, and this includes life skills training for service - users before moving into settled accommodation. Housing Related Support contracts also have an emphasis on preparing service - users for independent living.
Yes, you haven't mentioned issues that affect people of ethnic minority community in Cheshire East who may be faced with homelessness but are invisible due to barriers, e.g. language, cultural background, immigration status and so on.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. In evaluating who would be affected, account has been taken in relation to existing service - users of Homelessness services. This includes residents who are vulnerable and require accommodation, supported accommodation, or floating support to enable them to remain in their home, or help moving into alternative housing. Quarterly data and household flow information shows

	successful outcomes and why some failures occur. The Strategy is expected to have a positive impact as strategic actions will ensure that the diversity of the local population is reflected based on Census data, Homechoice data, and other local research.
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Q9: - Do you have any further observations on the Strategy as a whole?

Responses to consultation included within strategy:

Comment	CEC response	Detail added to strategy
It would be beneficial to ensure that contact details of key personnel are shared with partner organisations. Onward would welcome a conversation to ensure Cheshire East has all the information it needs to access its services and vice versa. Please contact Sam Haslam samantha.hasalm@onward.co.uk if you would like to receive and up to date contact list.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Contact details are normally circulated such as the SPA, Housing Options, etc. Contact details will be included at the end of the Strategy.	Contact details included at the end of the document.

Responses to consultation *not* included within strategy:

Comment	CEC Response
Am happy you have plan, at some point you need to stop consulting and get on with implementation, regular reviews should tweak the strategy as needed and you need to make sure this is built in.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Council is every day already working towards reduced homelessness, which is reflected in this Strategy. The Strategy will be monitored in partnership, with accountability for delivery resting with identified leads to support performance management of the Strategy. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority, and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. The Strategy will be reviewed annually.

Community education should be linked to the education system as a whole	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Educational attainment and reform is outside the remit of this Strategy.
No but please do not ignore the please to help, we have ideas such as rural outreach initiatives and can build on your achievements thus far to help understanding of rural homelessness	Noted, and thank you for your comment. The offer of help is noted and appreciated. Cheshire East will address this issue through things such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring. Local parishes have access to local data and will be asked to assist CEC.
The lack of involvement of lay members of the public. There is not much accessible information on this topic, for example, how do people with no access to internet or cannot read get hold of this information and if they don't have the information, how can they have a say?	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Housing contact details are made available at CEC offices, where a copy of the Homelessness Strategy is available for free consultation by members of the public.
The success thus far in addressing homelessness is very welcome. initiatives to identify and accredited responsible landlords is crucial given the shortfall in affordable housing both for rent and for purchase. Particularly at risk are young care leavers who need good safe accommodation and ongoing support to make a successful transition to independence. Similar principles might apply to ex-service persons and ex-offenders and it is encouraging to see mention of these groups in the draft strategy. The plight of care leavers is a particular challenge the strategy hopefully will address with a sense of priority.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Borough Councils have launched the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme. The Scheme aims to recognise private landlords who operate good management practices and maintain good property standards. There are homeless pathways working alongside pathways agreed by the Care Leavers Service aimed at a reduction in care leavers facing homelessness.
To improve employment opportunities, I hope CEC also invests in Green Economy sector. To aid personal financial management skills, I hope CEC supports education in this area and develops sense of responsibility for self and one's home. The Everyone In intervention success proves what can be done when people are taken off the streets and engaged with.	Noted, and thank you for your comment. CEC is leading our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency, reduce the carbon footprint, and drive sustainable development. A working group will be set up to review the provision of tenancy sustainment and life skills training for service - users before moving into settled accommodation. This includes money management, paying rent and bills, etc.
We have noted that the pandemic is only mentioned on 7 occasions throughout the whole strategy, 5 of those	Noted, and thank you for your comment. The Strategy states that delivering a first-class service to those requiring assistance is CEC's

are within the introduction page alone, the only other two mentions are on page 4 when discussing about the national context and what nationwide efforts have been undertaken in terms of the “Everyone in” and “Protect Programme”. The strategy does not really seem to have much acknowledgement on a local level around the impact that the pandemic is highly likely to have on homelessness over the lifetime of the strategy or at least a significant part of it. For example, it could lead to a rise in rough sleeping and general presentations if individuals who have previously been amongst the “hidden homeless” and staying with friends / extended family are no longer able to do this due to concerns around spreading the virus going forward, which was the case during the summer of 2020 especially. Another task perhaps might be something around working with housing associations to try to map the likely impact the eviction ban has had over the last year and therefore what can be done to manage it going forward, and if any initiatives need to be created for housing associations who have been under financial pressure because of people not paying their rent etc. Finally, there is discussion in the strategy (page 6) about looking into any potential homelessness in rural locations as roughly 50% of the CE population live in that kind of setting, but there aren’t any specific tasks within the actions plans toward that aim. We are also aware from experience that a portion of those who have been rough sleeping over the last year or so have been located in rural settings.

priority, and any person who is homeless or facing homelessness will receive all the advice and support they need, when they need it. CEC has continued to fulfil homelessness prevention and relief work 7 days a week.

CEC is aware that impacting on this work has been the impact of the pandemic, in putting already vulnerable groups at extra risk, such as rough sleepers, hidden homeless such as ‘sofa surfers’, young people who have fallen out with family members, couples facing relationship breakdown, and victims of domestic abuse.

The ban on evictions applied to private, not social, landlords.

Cheshire East will explore new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.

Local parishes have access to local data and will be asked to assist CEC.

Previously when parish councils were consulted there was no indication of rural rough sleeping at that time, however this can be monitored throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

Appendix 1:

[Home](#) / [Council and Democracy](#) / [Council Information](#) / [Media Hub](#) / [Media releases](#) / 21/04/2021 - Council to consult on homelessness strategy



Council to consult on homelessness strategy

21 April 2021

Cheshire East Council is putting together a clear plan for preventing homelessness in the borough and is asking its residents for their views via a consultation.

The council's housing team has developed a draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy for the next four years. At its heart is a vision to prevent homelessness and give residents the ability to access and sustain affordable housing with an improved quality of life.

The draft strategy is based on feedback collected from partners about progress made during the last three years and looks at areas that the council may focus on going forward.

This initial review found that the council could:

- Identify the main reasons for the present and potential future levels of homelessness and housing need;
- Look at services in place to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation and support to those in need;
- Identify resources available to provide support for homeless people through prevention activity diverting people away from becoming homeless
- Check for any gaps in provision

The council recognises that a mix of both generic and specialist services are required to address homelessness in Cheshire East and means the approach is more likely to fit the person rather than the person needing to fit the offer.

Many homeless people have had difficult lives, which are often complex and chaotic, however homelessness can happen to anyone. The council urges residents to seek support and advice as early as possible – it is not the case that only those with complex needs can ask for assistance.

Frank Jordan, Cheshire East Council executive director of place, said: "Our normal homelessness prevention and relief work is taking place seven days a week but of course the pandemic has made this task more challenging.

"This draft strategy sets out what we intend to do and what ambitions we have to achieve between now and 2025.

"We are working with a range of external organisations, stakeholders, and voluntary groups, which will help meet the strategy's priorities. I am very grateful to all of them for their assistance and contributions in tackling homelessness, and I look forward to the continuation of that work to deliver the commitments of this new strategy.

"The strategy is out for consultation for 12 weeks up to Wednesday 14 July. I would encourage you to respond and tell us what you think."

You can [read the draft strategy, and comment on it on our website](#).



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025

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Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been written in unprecedented times during the Covid – 19 global pandemic. The economic outlook is uncertain as the pandemic continues to cause huge disruption to normal life. Cheshire East Council has kept essential services open for our residents and customers as the pandemic continues.

Delivering a first-class service to those requiring assistance is Cheshire East Council's priority, and any person who is homeless or facing homelessness will receive all the advice and support they need, when they need it.

We have continued to fulfil our homelessness prevention and relief work 7 days a week but impacting on this work has been the impact of the pandemic, in putting already vulnerable groups at extra risk. They may be rough sleepers, young people who have fallen out with family members, couples facing relationship breakdown, and victims of domestic abuse.

Nationally since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic over 15,000 people have been housed in emergency accommodation, such as hotels, student accommodation and B&Bs under the **Everyone In** scheme. Cheshire East has seen 117 individuals moving into accommodation through Everyone In.

The **Next Steps Accommodation Programme** made available the resources needed to support local

authorities and their partners to ensure that the current provision that has been set up to safeguard people who were taken safely from the streets is able to continue for an appropriate length of time. Cheshire East received £56,000 from the Government to provide assistance to move those accommodated in emergency provision into the private rented sector, ensuring they have support, to help address immediate need, and £450,000 to deliver long-term accommodation in the form of supported move-on homes for people recovering from rough sleeping, which was procured in partnership with Plus Dane.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the **Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI)** in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020-21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support. This has seen Cheshire East experience a reduction in the recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. 178 individuals have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, and Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer - term outcomes for individuals into accommodation which is for 6 months or more.

Key Achievements and Strategy Review

Cheshire East's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021 has been reviewed to:

- Identify the main reasons for homelessness, and present future levels of homelessness and housing need
- Look at services in place to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation and support to those in need
- Identify resources available to provide support for homeless people through prevention activity, and to divert people away from becoming homeless
- Identify gaps in provision

Engagement with a range of partners has increased our understanding around local pressures, and how services could work better together to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Since 2018 the Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. Our key achievements are listed below:

Preventing Homelessness:

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been embedded into services
- 83% successful preventions (national target 65%)
- No-one homeless as a result of welfare reform
- We have recruited a Welfare Advice Officer to support with prevention in addition to the Money Advice Officer
- Joint working with the Benefits Section with regards to Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Emergency Assistance

Access to secure, affordable accommodation:

- Reduced homelessness from hospital
- Health and housing link worker in place to see people on the wards and is working with health colleagues to ensure more successful discharges
- Reduced B&B use

Supporting people to maintain and sustain accommodation:

- Duty to refer is working well
- Duty to refer leaflet is in circulation
- Our staff attend multi-disciplinary meetings to raise the profile of the resident
- Reviewed our literature and ensured it was provided in appropriate formats

Our vision

Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness takes many forms. Rough Sleeping is the sharp end of homelessness, however within Cheshire East those sleeping on our streets make up a small proportion of the total number of those who are homelessness. Homelessness can be:

- Statutory homeless households in priority need in temporary accommodation such as hostels or Bed and Breakfast
- Single homeless living in supported housing or in a hostel
- 'Hidden homeless', in insecure arrangements with friends or others, known as 'sofa surfing'
- Households in fear of losing their home, or on the verge of actually losing their home

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force from 1st April 2018. The Act places new duties on Local Authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The services provided to residents will be determined by the individual's situation, if they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days, if they are homeless tonight or within 7 days, or if they are rough sleeping.

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out what we intend to do over the lifespan of the strategy and what priorities we are focusing on between 2021 and 2025.

It is a strategy to enable us to:

- prevent homelessness
- secure sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) that is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless
- provide satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Our Vision: To prevent homelessness, giving residents the ability to access and sustain affordable housing and an improved quality of life.

National and local context

National Context

There have been several Government interventions aimed at assisting those who are homeless and sleeping rough.

Everyone In

The Government aim is to ensure that the 37,000 vulnerable people and rough sleepers have somewhere to stay during the Pandemic. About 26,000 of those supported by the programme are now in long term accommodation.

Next Steps

Funding has been allocated for 3,300 new homes for rough sleepers. Over £150 million is to be made available across England to provide a permanent place to live for some those who are the most vulnerable.

Protect Programme

A new scheme to help protect vulnerable people in our communities

from COVID-19. which provides extra support to areas that need it most. £15 million has been allocated to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This scheme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter.

Housing First

Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Midlands are supporting around 800 vulnerable people off the streets and into secure homes. 600 are now in permanent accommodation. Over 2,000 other Housing First places have been created, many funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

Rough Sleeper Initiative fund is for short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping. MHCLG have announced funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme.

Local Context

MHCLG statistics suggest that homelessness levels nationally are going up. Increasing numbers of people are unable to find a home and the loss of a private sector tenancy is now the most common cause of homelessness nationally.

However, the scale of homelessness is greater than that captured in the

statistics. The scale of hidden homelessness is unknown, and people are homeless but have not approached local authorities for help, and some who do seek help but are turned away before a formal application is made are still homeless and should be taken into account in national statistics. The MHCLG is considering how these groups can be

captured effectively in the data it collects.

The Cheshire East position

Homelessness prevention and relief cases during 2018–2020 have increased by 15.4%, with the main causes of homelessness including eviction by family and friends, domestic abuse, and the end of assured shorthold tenancy. This data¹ contains statistics on statutory homelessness and rough sleeping. The MHCLG has changed the way it collects data from local authorities on statutory homelessness. H-CLIC contains information on more people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, rather than only those who are considered to be in priority need. National statistics attempt to outline whether councils are taking action to stop someone becoming homeless (Prevention) or stepping in to offer assistance afterwards (Relief). This can be recorded in different ways.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Prevention – this refers to positive actions taken by Cheshire East (or partner organisations funded by us) to provide assistance to households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness. Prevention enables households to remain in their existing accommodation or obtain an alternative for at least the next 6 months

Relief – this refers to positive actions to secure accommodation for households that have already become homeless.

This data is broken down by Prevention or Relief in the next table. Prevention cases account for 66.2%, with Relief recorded at 33.7%.

Table 1: Cheshire East total Homelessness Prevention and Relief April 2018 – March 2020

	April 2018 - March 2019	April 2019 - March 2020	Total
Prevention	808	1,044	1,838
Relief	488	452	938
Total	1,296	1,496	2,776

Appendix 2 details the reason for the loss of the home of those owed a Prevention or a Relief duty, the accommodation at the time of homeless application, household type, referral sources, and ethnicity.

Current activity

The Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. There are many examples of:

- Effective early interventions
- Management of complex needs and crisis situations
- Increased levels of support, and
- Provision of additional affordable accommodation

A study of the likely impact of Welfare Reform on eligible cohorts has been carried out. The new Tenancy Strategy 2021 has the aim of making the best use of affordable housing to meet local housing need.

The Council has an annual target of delivering 355 affordable housing units

across the whole borough. This target has been exceeded since the adoption of the Cheshire East Local Plan, due to the activity of our registered housing partners.

The most commonly referred to definition of affordable housing is set out in Annex 2 to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is the definition that local planning authorities apply when making provision within their areas to meet local demand/need for affordable housing.

Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies

with one or more of the following definitions:

- Affordable housing for rent
- Discounted market sales housing
- Other affordable routes to home ownership

An Affordable Rent is set at up to 80% of the market rent, the average rent for local private lettings).

Data does not capture those people helped by more informal methods by Cheshire East or by family members before they are classed as homeless.

Homelessness applications and acceptance figures may misrepresent the amount of demand Cheshire East is facing at a local level.

Rural homelessness

About 50% of Cheshire East residents live in rural locations. There are significant levels of inequality and deprivation to which rural communities are vulnerable. Often there are limited transport options. Circumstances in rural areas can make delivering services to prevent and relieve homelessness particularly difficult.

Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has said that central to addressing homelessness in rural areas is making sure rural housing markets work for their resident

populations by providing affordable accommodation across a range of tenures and types of home.

Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.

Future intentions

The Housing Service will explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home. This will be done through an efficient process to pick up homelessness triggers from contact via the new Homechoice and Single Point of Access, and an understanding of the triggers of

homelessness through the new 56 days run in through the HRA. More details about these and other issues, and what Cheshire East is doing and will do to prevent homelessness is covered next under the 4 Strategic Priorities.

Welfare Reform

Cheshire East Council is proud to not have any homelessness presentations

as a result of welfare reform. However, there are still ongoing issues which we need to be aware of.

Benefit issues can be complex. Financial issues can impact a range of areas including employment, family and social life and the ability to sustain a tenancy.

Cheshire East's ambition for economic growth continues to present employment opportunities in the borough, although impacts from Covid-19 have the potential to affect this.

We will work together with local partners to address employment and training needs, which will ensure that households have the opportunity to obtain higher value employment opportunities.

The provision of employment, financial and housing advice will:

- (1) Increase the number of adults moving off 'out of work' benefits

and into continuous employment, and

- (2) Increase the number of individuals not claiming unemployment benefit over 6 months and who are on a pathway to work.

Cheshire East will positively support partnerships with voluntary sector stakeholders and other local partners to address the support, education, employment, and training needs (including bespoke training around partnerships and operational working).

Cheshire East has explored options with the DWP for working on joint local initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness and unemployment, such as improved communication and direct dialling between services to fast track cases to prevent homelessness.

Repossession

Repossession can affect all housing tenures and households. In 2019/20, 411 households were subject to repossession and have therefore lost their home.

Homelessness presentations to Cheshire East show there were 41 households (3.9% of all presentations) recorded as owner-occupiers or shared owners who required a Prevention duty in 2019/20.

The table below outlines the repossession data across a number of housing tenures in Cheshire East.

Table 2: Repossession data

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Mortgage claims	117	121	146	384
Mortgage possessions	24	26	21	71
Private landlord claims	72	86	92	250
Private landlord possessions	15	25	22	62
Social landlord claims	357	375	353	1,085

Social landlord possessions	97	92	89	278
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Locally, up to 20% of new tenancies are failing within the first 12 months. The CAB provides debt advice to households facing financial hardships. Money advice is a key homelessness prevention tool.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse accounts for over 20% of all homeless cases over the last 3 years. The majority of referrals are made to local specialist domestic abuse services, and also referrals to the commissioned sexual violence support provider.

Responses to domestic abuse, including housing need, are specifically co-ordinated through the work of the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP). CEDSAP has the prevention of homelessness as a key priority, working to keep people safe in their homes where possible, and only sending people out of the area as a last resort. This is done by, amongst other things:

- Support for victims to remain in their accommodation where it is safe to do so
- Target hardening of properties
- Support for victims to use Council services to get help with accommodation problems

The CEDSAP hub service receives people seeking support including accommodation, and provides quality services to respond to need, including housing.

The CEDSAP Strategy aims at strengthening joint working with recently commissioned providers of 14 units of local accommodation for those

with additional needs across Cheshire East.

The Government is extending homelessness priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse. This legal change will come into force through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which contains a clause amending the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness (Priority need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

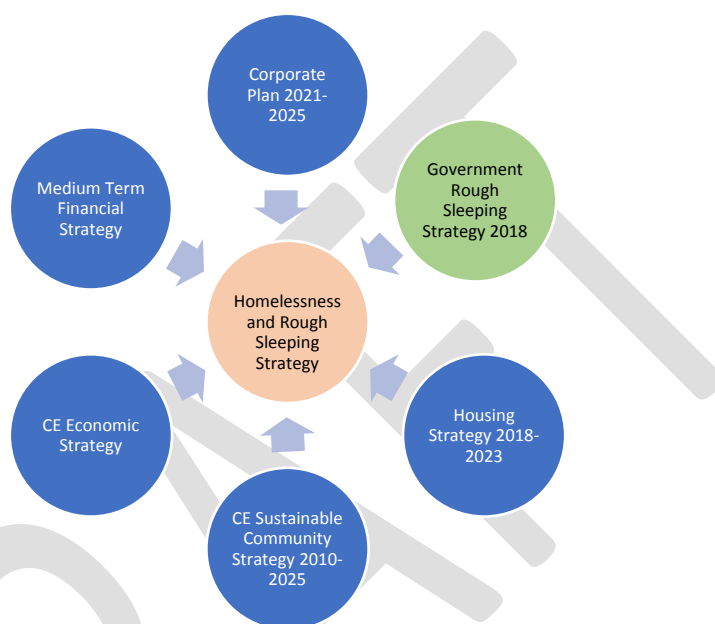
The aim of the policy is to give those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse priority need for homelessness assistance and accommodation secured by the local authority.

As a result of the Domestic Abuse Act, CEC has been successful in securing MHCLG funding for a dedicated domestic abuse role within Housing Options for 12 months, with the hope that this will improve and embed good practice across the Service, and continue to work in close partnership with colleagues in domestic abuse services.

Strategic Housing is a key contributor to the current Domestic Abuse Strategy, including work with Board and Priority Workstream groups. This includes 'those who harm' workstreams, and the dedicated member of the team who is a domestic abuse housing specialist will assist

perpetrators of domestic abuse with their housing options.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy links into other key documents and is shaped by them. This can be illustrated as follows:



The Corporate Plan 2021-2025 vision is to be an open, fair, and greener Council and this strategy will help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.

One of the priorities of the Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2025 is to ‘articulate the aspirations, needs and priorities of the people of Cheshire East and the places they live in’ through:

- Planning for a range of housing to meet the needs of older people, families, and young people, and developing suitable types of housing and tenures to ensure that residents have a choice of accommodation to meet their current and future needs, and
- Working in partnership to provide specialist accommodation and housing support for those residents who have complex needs and requirements

The Cheshire East Housing Strategy’s aim is “that all residents in Cheshire East are able to access affordable, appropriate and decent accommodation.” The key priorities are:

- Growth and Quality of Place and Health, and
- Wellbeing and Quality of Life

The Housing Strategy contains identified actions aimed at stimulating the housing market and preventing homelessness.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy section called ‘Strategic Priorities’ details the strategic context of each Priority then sets out:

- The issue
- The Cheshire East position
- Current activity, and
- Future intentions

The aim is to set out a broad rationale for the Priorities, and to enable discussion and development of new ideas as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is implemented. The ambition is to prevent homelessness, and deliver homelessness prevention services which are more efficient, and provide better value for money.

During the lifespan of the last Homelessness Strategy, the Council reviewed strategic outputs through consultations with service providers, commissioners of services, and with service users.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group has played a major role in monitoring the Strategy’s action plan. The Steering Group is made up of people from a range of partner organisations and meets quarterly.

The four Strategic Priorities outline how homelessness will be prevented, as shown below. The Priorities incorporate tasks from the 2018-2021 Homelessness Strategy which have been



carried forward.

To achieve our ambition to prevent homelessness, we will focus on the following priorities



Strategic Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless

The issue

The MHCLG collects data on prevention and relief efforts by local authorities, which are now included in the same statistical release as statutory homeless figures.

Homelessness Prevention involves councils helping people to avoid homelessness through measures such as helping them to secure alternative accommodation or to stay in their current home. Homelessness Relief is when an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but has helped someone to secure accommodation,

even though it was not under a legal obligation to do so.

According to a 2020 data release, 304,290 cases were assessed, with 288,470 owed a duty. Of these, 148,670 (48.9%) had a Prevention duty, and 139,800 (45.9%) had a Relief duty.

More is needed to prevent homelessness by supporting households at risk before they reach crisis point, as well as reducing rough sleeping.

The Cheshire East position

The number of successful prevention and relief cases has increased year on year, with 2,776 households assisted between 2018 and 2020.

Good levels of prevention have been recorded which shows a preference for prevention. Between 2018 – 2020, 1,838 (66.2%) were assisted to find alternative accommodation, rather than remain in their own home (406). A priority for this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home.

Early intervention can help prevent households from losing their homes. Almost 50% of cases had homelessness prevented through a resolution of rent or service charge issues.

Homelessness prevention involves providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

Homelessness prevention data accounts for cases previously at risk of homelessness, for which homelessness was prevented through positive action (either allowing the household to remain in their existing home or assisting the household to obtain alternative accommodation).

Homelessness relief data accounts for cases that had become homeless (but were not accepted as owed a main duty), for which homelessness was

relieved through positive action.

Homelessness relief occurs when an authority has made a negative homeless decision, that is, that a household is either intentionally homeless or is non-priority as defined within part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002), but helps someone to secure alternative accommodation, even though it is under no statutory obligation to do so.

Prevention and Relief work are carried out with partner agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, floating support providers, etc.

The number of successful prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 3 years, with an increase from 808 to 1,044 (+29.2%). The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice, evidence that the Cheshire East Allocations Policy gives 'reasonable preference' to those households threatened with homelessness.

The number of people on Cheshire Homechoice exceeds the number of affordable housing properties available. The number is high each year, with the number of people on Homechoice varying year to year based on annual reviews of applicants, applicants' circumstances changing, and on affordable housing stock availability (the number of lets available).

Table 3: Total households on Homechoice on the 1st April 2018 - 2020

Year	Total
2018	7,931
2019	9,212
2020	8,691

This includes ex - members of HM Armed Forces who are awarded the appropriate banding and local connection.

Current activity

Successful interventions are carried out, through means such as mortgage arrears interventions, family mediation, the Emergency Assistance Fund, and support at Court via the Money Advisor.

Over 60% of preventions have involved resolving money problems with 50% rent or service charge problems, and 13% Housing Benefit problems.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used to prevent homelessness to assist people who have been affected by welfare reforms including the benefit cap, the removal of the spare room subsidy in the social rented sector and changes to Local Housing Allowance rates. They can also be used to cover rent in advance and rent deposits.

The DHP fund is administered by the Benefits Section. Private sector liaison officers work closely with Benefits Officers to maximise the chance of successful outcomes. Payments from the Discretionary Housing Payments and the Emergency Assistance Fund may be offered to eligible households.

The largest single prevention action (almost 50%) concerns rent or service charge arrears in social housing,

followed by Housing benefit problems and mortgage arrears.

Mortgage arrears and rent arrears in Cheshire East have remained at low levels as the causes of loss of accommodation. The Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol (MPAP) has led to a reduction in the number of repossessions. These findings suggest that steps taken by Cheshire East to reduce homelessness have been effective, such as:

- Participating in and funding court desks in Macclesfield and Crewe which assists in representing the resident in court in cases of mortgage and rent arrears
- Promoting the work of the money advice officer and monitoring referrals to the service to assessing the impact of any increases in mortgage interest rates on owner-occupiers

The data for Cheshire East is static, although the repossession activity by social landlords is something which will need specific work in order to establish why this is the case, and what can be done to produce reductions to match those seen in the private landlord and mortgage sectors.

Future intentions

Prevention work has seen an increase with the Homeless Reduction Act with people assisted 56 days before they are likely to become homeless. A new Section 195 inserted into the 1996 Act

requires Cheshire East to take steps to help prevent homelessness for any eligible households threatened with homelessness.

Steps to be taken will be informed by the assessment set out in the Personalised Housing Plan. This will include things such as mediation to help keep families together, or financial payments. There will be a demonstrable focus on delivering proactive advice and support to enable clients to sustain their existing accommodation wherever practicable and appropriate, or, to access alternative accommodation.

A pathways model has been devised to connect young people with appropriate services such as supported accommodation leading to self-contained sustainable

accommodation via Housing Related Support.

A reduction in homelessness has been achieved from mental health hospital through a discharge protocol signed up to by Cheshire East and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership / NHS, which outlines key roles and responsibilities of each service and what each can expect from the others. A Link Worker assists people leaving hospital, with no home to go to, into appropriate commissioned bed spaces, for a short duration, as the Link Worker finds a more permanent housing solution.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 1 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless		
Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Map the prevention and relief options and develop a menu of support options which are available to anyone, and identify any gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Floating support - Mediation - Access to the PRS - Access to Social housing - Access pathways to supported housing 	Improved partnership working and data sharing	April 2022
Review partnership working and information sharing between the CAB, Job Centres, DWP, Benefits Section and Housing	Improved partnership working and preparedness for any increase in evictions, money management and debt problems	August 2021
Support partnerships with the 3rd Sector, voluntary sector, and other local partners to address support, education, employment, and training needs	More vulnerable residents in non-benefit reliant households	April 2022
'Duty to Refer' processes are in place, reviewed and developed across all key services	Improved partnership working and data sharing	August 2021
Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that support is available to those clients affected by welfare reform issues, such as Universal Credit.	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Explore 'early identification' triggers and information sharing with key agencies such as DWP, Benefits Section, supported accommodation and Registered Providers	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Review evictions from RP properties for rent arrears, and UC problems, and work with providers in identifying causes.	Provision of timely advice for people in rent arrears in the social sector	April 2022
Develop our private landlord relationships and encourage landlords to pre-notify Housing Options about 'notices to quit' given to tenants	Improved engagement with landlords and developing an early-warning system	October 2021
Work collaboratively with key partners to review the use of financial payments to reduce arrears	Prevention of homelessness for people with affordability issues	October 2021
Review the effectiveness and develop our prevention tools for homeowners at risk of mortgage repossession and respond to economic conditions	Reduction in the number of households evicted from owner-occupied properties	April 2022

Use appropriate prevention tools to reduce evictions from family and friend's	Reduction in eviction from family and friend's accommodation	October 2021
Youth Homelessness - Map the prevention and support options and develop a menu of prevention and support	Developed pathways model for young people, working in partnership with youth agencies (such as Children's Services, other statutory partners, and local 3rd sector agencies)	October 2021
Ensure that homeless pathways work alongside pathways agreed by Care Leavers Service	Reduction in care leavers facing homelessness	June 2022
Ensure services for complex domestic abuse cases are adequately delivered in housing services	Domestic abuse cases are	October 2021
Increase links with services addressing domestic abuse, for e.g. MARAC	Reduction in homeless domestic abuse victim households	October 2021
Create a DA Safer Families or MARAC champion within Housing Options	Identification of where people may face barriers in accessing help	October 2021
Establish strategic and operational links with drug and alcohol services, developing and coordinating our services jointly, particularly with commissioned providers.	Reduction in substance misuse related anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance, and domestic abuse particularly connected to the risk of homelessness	April 2022
Create a working group to review the provision of tenancy sustainment and life skills training for service users before moving into settled accommodation	Improve tenancy sustainment for service users coming from supported accommodation in commissioned and non-commissioned providers and reduced repeat homelessness	October 2022

Strategic Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation

The issue

Homeless households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need are owed the full housing duty. Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 requires that where it is 'reasonably practicable', local authorities should secure accommodation within their

administrative boundary. However, the combination of a limited supply of social housing and rising costs in many areas means that some authorities are increasingly struggling to accommodate homeless households in their locality.

The Cheshire East position

Detailed and clear advice is given, with a particular focus on affordability and support, to access the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Cheshire East is developing a private sector landlord offer. Accreditation of landlords is ongoing; however it will be reviewed to ensure it is working effectively.

The Scheme aims to recognise private landlords who operate good management practices and maintain good property standards. Cheshire East Private Landlord Liaison Officers provide support and advice to private landlords. The Cheshire East scheme works well and has been seen as an example of good practice.

Current activity

The number of successful Prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 2 years. The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice.

No homeless households have had their homelessness addressed through the use of low-cost home ownership housing products (at the point of homelessness relief, although as household circumstances improved some may have entered shared ownership, for example).

A new housing-related support contract began in Cheshire East in April 2020. It has split services into 2 areas: Cheshire East North, and South. There is a requirement to link

this into tenancy sustainment as a key element of prevention work.

The Single Point of Access (SPA) receives referrals, almost half made by the Housing Options team, of which, 80% come from the Homelessness Team, with the remainder from enhanced housing options or Homechoice. Referrals to the SPA are high, but often services available are not always appropriate for those with complex needs. It is necessary to improve use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst partners and stakeholders.

Typically, clients who left services in a negative or an unplanned way are more likely to return, needing more

support than clients that leave services in a positive or a planned way.

Priority is given to applicants ready to move on from non-commissioned supported housing. In-reach officers work on evictions and a planned move process for all supported accommodation providers, not just CEC commissioned services.

We are currently delivering a private rented access scheme for those who are experiencing street homelessness. This was funded through Next Steps and Rough Sleeping Initiatives in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. From the summer of 2021 we will have a Link

Worker to liaise with private landlords to encourage and facilitate people who are homeless or in emergency accommodation into their own tenancy. Funding is available for rent in advance payments, deposits, and Emergency Assistance funds for setting up home through our partner Benefits Service.

During 2021/2022 £20,000 is available to assist those who have moved into private rented accommodation who are at risk of homelessness, which can enable payments to reduce rent arrears.

Future intentions

The design of the new Housing Related Support service is outcome-focused, allowing families and single people the opportunity to access the support they need. This approach will ensure that those with complex needs, such as substance misuse and mental health, will be supported into independence where this is achievable, or will have a suitable service in place to support them to maintain accommodation and prevent homelessness.

The service providers are bringing innovative approaches to the programme of early intervention and prevention, which will provide significant value for money to Cheshire East, with a reduction in demand to front line services.

Work is being done to develop an enhanced PRS offer. This will see increased access to the PRS, especially for homeless and vulnerable households. It may also include incentives offered to private landlords

to rent out their properties to nominated households.

There has been a re-commission of the Cheshire East Substance Misuse Service. A core value and key principle is engagement, co-production and co-design with service users. Priorities include the aim of reducing homelessness and the risk of homelessness related to alcohol-related crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. One aim is to examine what levels of homelessness originate from social and private rented accommodation as a result of substance misuse and clarify if households were known to services.

Younger people have difficulty finding rented accommodation as a substantial proportion of private landlords have actively cut back on renting to under-35s. Although nearly all landlords are willing to rent to under-35s, nearly a third have changed their letting strategy, mostly

to ensure that they have security of rent payment.

National Research by the Residential Landlord Association (RLA) stated there are particular sub-groups to whom landlords say they are less willing to let to. Two-thirds of landlords (68%) are not willing to let to under-35s on Housing Benefit / Universal Credit (HB / UC). More than two-fifths of landlords (44%) are not willing to let to students. The most common reasons why landlords were not willing to let to particular groups of under-35s tend to fall into two categories –

difficulty in managing the accommodation, and fears about financial loss.

This supports evidence that HB / UC claimants are viewed as relatively distinct sub-markets which some landlords specialise in and others avoid. There was some regional variation in the willingness to let to both these groups. Recently migrants represented the third largest group that landlords were not willing to rent to.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 2 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation		
Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Develop different methods of communicating information and giving advice, via social media, advertising, etc.	Stakeholders are more aware of services for those at risk of homelessness	December 2022
Explore prevention and housing options for single males	Increased accommodation options and support given to single males	June 2022
Map the options available for people with complex needs and the demand, and identify gaps in provision and services	Housing pathways in place or in development with each key partner for each client group	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop our client engagement and involvement in reflective reviews of service offers for single homelessness.	Services are reviewed and developed in relation to clients own lived-experience, comments and opinions	June 2022
Promote and implement the Hospital Discharge Protocol and increase understanding of Mental Health Capacity	Increased knowledge and understanding of pathways for Mental Health clients reaching different thresholds	March 2023
Work with health services to reduce the number of unplanned discharges, especially from mental health units, through use of the discharge protocol and effective use of the Link Workers and commissioned emergency beds.	Reduction in the number of people homeless after leaving hospital	June 2022
Develop our knowledge base and relationships with private landlords of shared and HMO accommodation	Easier access to the Private Rented Sector	March 2023
Review the effectiveness of the Common Allocations Policy in awarding priority to prevent or relieve homelessness.	Households are receiving appropriate offers of accommodation	June 2022
Examine options for joint meetings, profile raising, and joint training with Care Leaver Service	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022
Review of the Corporate parenting strategy in line with Homelessness Reduction Act	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022

Ensure care leavers / young people are appropriately represented within the Cheshire East allocations policy	Earlier identification of those vulnerable Children in Care and Looked After Children, in line with the Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Responsibility	June 2022
Identify private landlords with rented properties of a suitable standard willing to accept nominations for Housing Options	Development of an enhanced private sector offer	May 2022
Limit the use of B and B accommodation for all client groups, justified by a 'spend to save' approach	Resourcing of the local prevention model using cost benefit analysis of alternatives / reduction in B&B use	May 2023

Strategic Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping

The issue

Rough sleeping is the most visible face of homelessness. According to the latest figures, collected in the Autumn of 2019, there were 4,266 individuals

sleeping rough on a single night across England. This represents a decrease of 8.7% from the 2018 levels of 4,677.

National Rough Sleepers Strategy

In August 2018 the MHCLG published its Strategy for providing long term reductions to the numbers of individuals sleeping rough, and to work towards preventing individuals having to sleep on the streets. This was to further support the Government's pledge to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027.

The Strategy and 2027 vision are built around 3 principles of Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery:

Prevention

- Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- £20 million of targeted funding for 48 projects providing prevention and early intervention for at risk clients
- £20 million fund for establishment of Homeless Prevention Trailblazers

Intervention

- Rough Sleeping Initiative - Working with 83 LAs in 2018/19 - £30 million
- Somewhere Safe to Stay Pilots - Builds on the NSNO principles
- Rough Sleeping Navigators - ensuring rough sleepers have support to access support
- Hostels - providing supported placements

Recovery

- Working to boost supply of affordable housing
- Supported Lettings
- Supporting individuals to overcome and issues / needs they have
- Housing First models - £28 million for 3 pilots across England
- Move on Fund - £100 million to provide further affordable housing

The Government believes that the above approach will provide the necessary support to individuals who are currently sleeping rough, as well as preventing those individuals at risk of rough sleeping from going onto the streets.

The Cheshire East position

The number of rough sleepers is continuously monitored by the Council, through information from partners and a new dedicated outreach worker team, who provide an estimate of rough sleeping on one night each year

chosen between 1st October and 30th November. This is a snapshot on a single night, and not an assessment of the total number of rough sleepers over the whole year.

Table 4: Rough sleeping recorded on a single night each year in Cheshire East

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4	21	10	8	6

The above figures reveal that Cheshire East experienced a reduction in recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. However, the 2017 figure showed a substantial increase and rough sleeping became a much more visible problem in the borough for the first time.

The Housing Options Team is committed to tackling rough sleeping and has a range of solutions available to people who find themselves sleeping on the streets.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020/21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support.

In April 2020, Cheshire East commissioned a new housing related support service, providing supported accommodation, emergency accommodation and support. Emerging Futures were awarded the contract for emergency accommodation and 24-hour access provisions across the Borough. As part of this service, Emerging Futures delivers 36 units of emergency accommodation, and provides interventions to support the health and wellbeing of service-users, preventing them from falling into further crisis, and reducing potential demand on expensive social care, health and homelessness services. More detail on Housing Related Support is provided in Strategic Priority 4.

Current activity

The aim of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) was to establish a cross-Governmental plan of action to

significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough across England. The initiative was supported with an

additional £30 million funding to be used in 2018 - 2019 for authorities which had experienced high numbers of people sleeping rough, or those where rough sleeping numbers had increased substantially from the 2017 formal count figures compared to previous years.

Cheshire East was one such area with the number of rough sleepers encountered on our “typical” night in 2017 increasing to 21 from 4 the year before.

In October 2018 Cheshire East, using RSI funding, created 4 interventions to tackle rough sleeping in the Borough which were co-produced with the new Rough Sleepers Team at MHCLG.

The interventions were designed to address key challenges which the Housing Options Team has

experienced concerning rough sleepers in recent years:

- 1) Ability to adequately **respond to reports** of people sleeping rough and have the ability to engage with those individuals on their terms,
- 2) To enhance the **levels and types of emergency accommodation available** – (additional to the commissioned No Second Night Out provision existing in Cheshire East to cater for more complex needs presented by rough sleepers.
- 3) To create a **more accurate database of intelligence** with regards to the demographics of those sleeping rough as well as locations (hot-spot areas) and the needs those individuals have, to better deliver services to them.

To reflect these areas the interventions were created to run from October 2018 until March 2019:

1	Creation of an Outreach Team
2	Enhancing Emergency Accommodation
3	Housing - Led Provision
4	Rough Sleepers' Co – Ordinator (changing to Rough Sleepers' Monitoring Officer in Year 2)

The ultimate aim of each of the interventions was to enable a substantial reduction in the number of people currently sleeping rough, as well as working to prevent people from ending up on the streets in the future, in line with MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Future Intentions

MHCLG have announced that there will be a further year's funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme. In 2020/21, MHCLG awarded £438,339 to Cheshire East Council through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) fund, to continue short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 3 is outlined on the next page.

A further £450,000 RSI capital grant was secured to purchase 8 new properties to accommodate individuals with complex issues and provide intensive floating support, in partnership with Plus Dane Housing. The cost for intensive support will be funded via the Flexible Homelessness Grant.

Funding was secured from RSI in 2020/21 to deliver a 'Fresh Start' programme that aims to deliver 6 units of self-contained accommodation with intensive support for service-users with multiple barriers to housing, including those released from prison with complex needs. This contract was recently awarded to P3 with the aim of moving service-users in from March 2021.

The Homelessness Service has embedded the RSI interventions within its core services through the re-commissioning of the Housing Related Support service, in April 2020.

Cheshire East will continue to implement and support the RSI. Furthermore, Cheshire East is exploring opportunities for partnership working with voluntary groups to reduce rough sleeping in Macclesfield.

Action Plan for Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping		
Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Use service data and in consultation with commissioned services, explore funding opportunities under the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative to address gaps in service or opportunities to reduce rough sleeping	Reduction in rough sleeping numbers	June 2024
Explore funding options to assist in periods of cold weather SWEP provision (SWEP will primarily cover the months of November to March)	Successful implementation of SWEP each winter	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options via a multi-agency approach to ensure that progress is made in providing a pathway for clients with a poor housing history.	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop links with partners and local churches / faith groups to provide services to rough sleepers	An expanded voluntary sector offer is in place	June 2022
Develop a profile of local rough sleepers to enable effective targeting of pathways and resources	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Identify people at risk of rough sleeping at an early stage through information sharing, partnership networks and development screening tools and Duty to Refer.	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Develop a joint protocol with Adults and Mental Health teams in the assessment, support and treatment for rough sleepers who have Care Act eligible needs, long-standing Mental Health issues and self-neglect concerns.	Clear pathways for the assessment and engagement of rough sleepers to receive necessary support and treatment for long-standing issues, including dual diagnosis.	October 2021

Strategic Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation

The issue

Supported housing is housing for vulnerable people to maintain their dignity and be part of a community.

Schemes provide both housing and support to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible in their community and maintain their tenancies, so preventing homelessness and poverty. These schemes are designed for client groups such as people with mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, substance misuse issues, victims of, or at risk of domestic violence, teenage parents, ex-offenders, or older people.

More than 700,000 people in the UK benefit from the support and supervision provided within the supported housing sector. The vast majority of provision is sheltered accommodation for older people.

The Cheshire East position

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence.

In 2019 Strategic Housing carried out a re-modelling and delivery of services to enable a sustainable Housing Related Support service for 2020 – 2023. The new service commenced in April 2020 This will be linked into tenancy sustainment as a key part of homeless prevention.

Table 5: breakdown of the Housing Related Support Service

PROVIDER	SERVICE	UNITS
Concrete	Floating Support North and South	55 units North 70 units South
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health North	30 units
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Statutory Beds South	27 Units
Plus Dane	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North	20 Units
Concrete	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South	18 Units (can be flexible to provide more)

Emerging Futures	Emergency, NFNO, 24/7 access North and South including SWEP	12 Units North 24 Units South
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The services work individually with people to provide support to:

- Gain skills to maintain a tenancy
- Manage finances, such as addressing debts and help to maximise income
- Gain access to other services (e.g. Mental Health, Substance Misuse)
- Access education, training and employment
- Address drug or alcohol problems.

All these services provide support to:

- Residents facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days
- Residents who would be in need of short - term housing related support to enable them to move to a sustainable long - term tenancy
- Residents that need support to maintain a tenancy
- Residents that have barriers to accessing housing.

Floating Support

Service Provider: Concrete

This service provides short term floating support (resettlement and sustainment). Floating support services can work with clients wherever they are in Cheshire East. This could be for resettlement, for example to help someone settle into their new home after moving out of a hostel or hospital etc. It could also be to help someone where they may be at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless. There are 70 placements in the South and 55 in the North.

Short-term Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South

Service Provider: Concrete

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 18 placements in the South.

Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North

Service Provider: Plus Dane

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 20 placements in the North.

Supported Housing: Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health

Service Provider: Emerging Futures

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people experiencing homelessness with complex needs, mental health issues, and people over the age of 25. Complex needs clients have multiple, interconnecting needs, which affect their

ability to access temporary accommodation and / or living independently. This service provides 27 placements in the South, and 30 placements in the North.

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Single Point of Access

Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing - related support needs.

The SPA links clients to services to help clients to live independently and manage their own tenancy, and if appropriate prevent a return to needing further support.

The Cheshire East Allocations Policy underpins the ability to move people who are in housing need to appropriate social housing. With an average of 8,611 registered for housing on Homechoice each year, and an average of 1,300 properties available annually, it is vital the Policy strikes the balance between supporting sustainable, settled neighbourhoods whilst giving priority to those people who are in urgent housing need.

The Policy has been reviewed to:

- ensure that the Policy is Homelessness Reduction Act compliant
- respond to customers' comments
- respond to Elected Members' comments
- tackle under-occupation to make best use of housing stock

An improved understanding and awareness of the SPA needs to be developed, as some providers are making referrals via the SPA for clients with welfare reform issues and rent arrears. This may lead to evictions from social housing. Increased awareness of the SPA amongst partners such as the Prison Service and Young Offender's Institutions is also required to ensure that clients are aware of where to go to access services. An exercise to promote the SPA to partners and stakeholders will be carried out.

A mapping of SPA support services / tenancy sustainment will be carried out, as well as a promotion of Housing Related Support services. An understanding of the existing tenancy support services of Registered Providers is beneficial, as some are more advanced than others, and invest heavily in the support of their tenants.

Current activity

Emergency AssistanCE scheme

Emergency AssistanCE is a scheme introduced by Cheshire East following the changes to the Social Fund by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from April 2013. Following the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, the Council has developed this policy to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

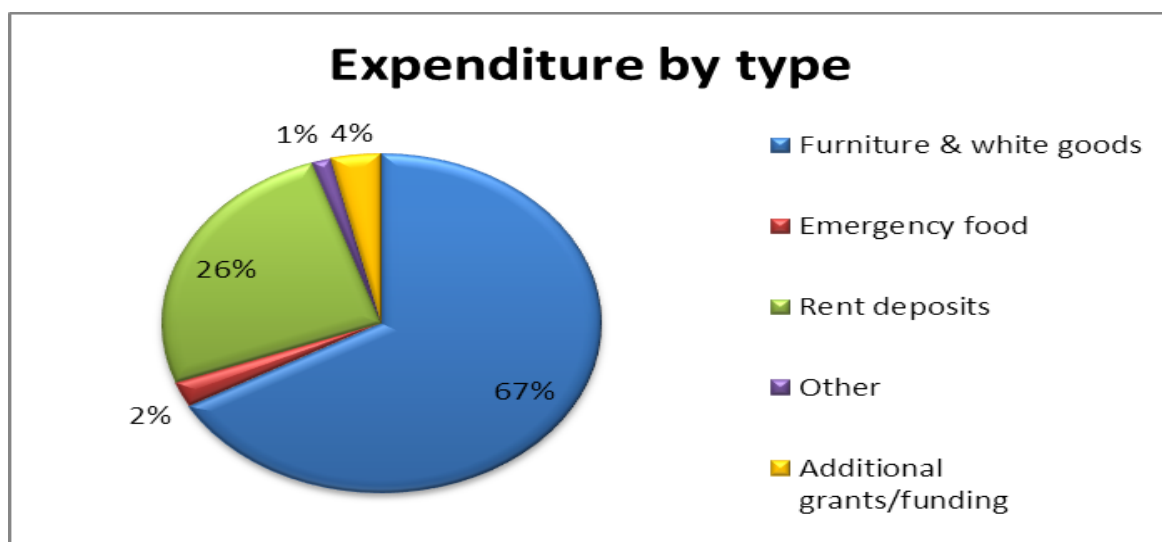
Any award is intended to:

- support vulnerable people facing immediate hardship, following a crisis or disaster
- prevent homelessness, in conjunction with support from the Housing Options Team
- keep families together and safeguard vulnerable people

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The Emergency Assistance scheme is available to vulnerable people who are in receipt of state benefits. In exceptional circumstances awards may be allowed to those on a low wage.

The majority of funding has helped households to purchase essential items for the home such as fridges and washing machines, and furniture. The next largest funding allocation was for rent deposits.



The Homeless Prevention Fund

The Homeless Prevention Fund is used for anything that would stop someone from being homeless and this can be adapted to be a personalised approach for someone who is sleeping rough. Rough sleepers have a variety of needs to get them back into accommodation and for some financial support is needed to start a new tenancy or to clear off debts which make it difficult to be able to move into a property.

This scheme has limits, but the approach of the service attempts to be open minded and flexible so that applications can be received to cover individual and exceptional circumstances. The Fund is retained fully within the Housing Options Service, with a case for its retention based on the quality of the service and the value for money it provides, especially in 'spend to save' scenarios.

Financial assistance and advice are also available at the Citizens' Advice.

Website and information

Cheshire East meets the standard for public websites. There is a good range of information which is easy to locate. The information is clear on the main areas required, with a good range of links. There is also a good range of telephone numbers for customers to contact for help. It also makes best use of the template available.

The website offers effective and relevant housing advice and information at the earliest possible stage which enables a customer to make choices about which option is best for them. It enables an exploration of possible tenure options and a tailoring to their individual circumstances, such as information about social rented housing from housing associations, or the private rented sector.

The website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links. Information sharing and drop-in sessions, newsletters and increased understanding of roles and responsibilities of organisations and agencies will be developed.

Future intentions

The Housing Options Team during a recent Diagnostic Peer Review was assessed as being sympathetic to the customer's needs with a clear methodical approach in one to one contact with clients. The Team was assessed as having excellent levels of engagement with customers, with detailed and clear advice being given. There was a focus on affordability and support with accessing the Private Renter Sector. Clear and appropriate next steps were discussed with the customer.

However, information sharing was been identified as an issue. Third sector (voluntary sector, the economic sector consisting of non-governmental organisations and other non-profit organisations) services are used by Housing Options but information is sometimes erratic.

Under the HRA there are opportunities for applicants to request a Section 202 review (concerning the decision about someone's eligibility for assistance or the offer of accommodation). More cases are likely to be reviewed due to the number of clients that this new duty will affect. There will also be increased legal costs.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 4 is outlined on the next page.

Action Plan for Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation		
Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Engage with third sector and voluntary Initiatives to develop closer working arrangements with the Housing Options team to identify homeless triggers, develop awareness and support people to come in off the streets	Rough sleepers are provided with an enhanced offer of support and assistance to resolve homelessness	June 2022
Examine how promotion and marketing of housing, homelessness and Homechoice services can be carried out	The Housing Options Team is better promoted, including hard to reach groups and those with accessibility issues	Dec 2021
Provide briefings and training for Elected Members, and joint training for teams and partners on the local response to homelessness	All departments are signed up to the Homelessness Strategy to deliver the aims, and understand the importance of, preventing homelessness	June 2022
Homelessness support and assessment teams are well-trained, knowledgeable, and empathetic to current issues affecting the street homeless populations	Increased knowledge of Mental Health and substance misuse issues across all services	June 2022
Carry out periodic quality checks by customer feedback review and ensure case management is to a high standard	Improvement in the quality of service received by the client and senior officer review	Dec 2021
Liaise with providers and promote the SPA and Homechoice, and promote any training opportunities	Improved use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst stakeholders	Dec 2021
Complete an analysis of the type of issues that are referred to SPA but which are not able to be placed	Increased understanding of referrals to the SPA	June 2022
Use HRS outcomes to measure progress towards increased wellbeing and move on rates into long-term tenancies	Better understanding of the reasons for clients' housing need	June 2023
Ensure that the website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links (ensuring accessibility features, such as different font sizes, audio/visual, and translation)	Faith	Dec 2021
Provide a range of relevant policy, performance, and strategic documents on the Housing Service webpages	Local policy and strategy documents are monitored, reviewed, and adapted to reflect local priorities and good practice	Dec 2022
Clearly set out on the HO website what a customer may expect when getting in contact, such as service standards and procedures for dealing with clients (appointments, drop-in, telephone calls, etc.)	The customer has clear expectations of service levels	Dec 2021
Correct and updated Housing information is provided on the CE and 'Live Well Cheshire East' websites and regularly reviewed	There is easy access to free information when it is needed to help people find their own housing solutions	Jan 2022

How will we deliver this strategy and who will be involved?

This Strategy outlines a series of homeless interventions which will reduce homelessness levels in Cheshire East. The problem of homelessness is multi-faceted, requiring a range of co-ordinated activity. Each of these interventions will have short-term resource implications for the Council, either directly or indirectly.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025 sets the framework for activity to deliver homelessness reductions in the short to medium term, and will both support, and be supported, by strategic documents such as the Housing Strategy and Tenancy Strategy, and work on an enhanced private rented sector interface.

The Council is working towards reduced homelessness through this Strategy, as it ties together the strategic priorities for improving services to communities. We consulted with partners in 2019 – 2020 who said that the strategic priorities were still relevant, with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group identifying key priorities for the new Strategy.

Strategic approach

Improved partnership working will help to deliver identified outcomes for service users. With limited resources and reductions in funding, innovation and good practice will deliver improvements and savings. It is essential to avoid duplication of work and of services within, and between, services.

Cheshire East has already adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy - in across all Cheshire East services. However, strategically important external partners may be unable, through pressures on their service, to meet demand. In this case funding arrangements may be reviewed, or the partners may be supported in exploring funding streams or shared services with other partner organisations. Budget holders and decision makers would be made aware of a lack of capacity in strategically relevant services.

Monitoring

The Strategy will be monitored in partnership, with accountability for delivery resting with identified leads to support performance management of the Strategy. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. It is intended that the Steering Group will be a strong and effective partnership. Membership will be reviewed to ensure that it is as inclusive as necessary, with a wider role for voluntary, third sector, and Faith groups.

Task and Finish groups will support the work of the Steering Group, focusing on specific projects and will report back to the Steering Group on progress and on any areas of concern.

The Delivery Plans

Cheshire East knows our priority areas to focus on and the Council has identified the major gaps that need to be addressed. Cheshire East knows that it is essential that it works in partnership to achieve the shared vision of preventing homelessness and have produced delivery plans with tasks clustered under the 4 key priorities.

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Appendix 1: Local Data

Housing delivery in Cheshire East

The housing market needs to diversify, opening up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient ways of working. Housing associations are supported to build more, and the Self Build Register assists people who want to build their own homes. Cheshire East can evidence a 5-year land supply, using a standard formula of build rates and lead-in times which are applied to all housing sites. The next table shows how the delivery of affordable housing units only goes some of the way to meeting housing need.

Table 1: Housing completions 2015 – 2020

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Net completions	1,473	1,762	2,321	3,062	3,065
Affordable completions	360	398	613	727	482
Additional social rented	29	36	81	98	49
Additional affordable rented	253	162	294	320	222
Additional intermediate	78	200	238	309	211

Human Trafficking / Human Slavery

Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty for Adult Safeguarding under the Care Act. The types of abuse include categories for human trafficking, and therefore, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to identify, report, and support victims of human trafficking as well as the duty as first responders.

Given the seriousness of trafficking there is a need for joined up working between departments and local agencies, to promote a strategic response and good practice in supporting people in need. The Council's Emergency Response Plan will assist with the management of an incident, and Housing Services in attendance will establish how much temporary accommodation will be needed.

Local context

There are 178,158 homes in Cheshire East². There are more social rented than private rented properties.

Table 2: Housing tenures

Tenure	Number of properties
Owner –occupied	134,430
Private rented or living rent free	21,755 ³
Social rented	21,973 ⁴

Table 3: Private Rental Market rents⁵

The next tables show a Private Rental Market Summary of monthly rents recorded in 2019 / 2020 in Cheshire East:

	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Summary	3,840	784	550	650	850

and a Private Rental Market summary of monthly rents by number of bedrooms recorded between 2018/2019 in Cheshire East:

Table 4: Private rented monthly rent in £'s⁶

Number of beds	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
One bed	500	516	425	495	590
Two bed	1,900	672	550	625	750
Three bed	990	853	650	795	950
Four bed	350	1,670	995	1,395	1,950

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2019-in-england>

³ Tenure by household size by number of bedrooms, Source: Small Areas; Office for National Statistics

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2018-to-2019>

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland>

⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland/april2019tomarch2020#local-authority-analysis>

Local Housing Allowance

Welfare reform has affected LHA rates, which were frozen until 2020. The Council pays out the following in LHA monthly figures in Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) (£s).

Table 5: LHA by BRMA monthly figures April 2021 – March 2022

	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
East Cheshire	360.00	495.01	599.99	824.99	1,300.01
West Cheshire	318.29	449.99	550.02	650.00	894.99
South Cheshire	260.71	394.98	495.01	594.99	824.99
South Manchester	359.83	524.99	650.00	749.99	1,100.00
Staffordshire North	264.84	374.99	425.01	550.02	744.99

There are implications of LHA levels for the major towns and settlements. Properties are above the LHA level, resulting in a shortfall which means households are going to struggle to pay their rent and fall into arrears. See **Appendix 2**.

Required income levels to meet housing costs

Traditionally households have needed at least the average income to purchase a property. Those on less than average have been encouraged to take up sub-prime mortgage offers. The level of debt caused by households being overstretched can lead to extreme hardship for households, in many cases resulting in repossession. Similarly, working households have needed an average income which enabled access to private rented homes.

Required household income to purchase lower quartile housing (x3.5 times income)	Required income to rent lower quartile housing (third of monthly earnings)
£41,428	£1,670 (or £20,040 per year)

The average household income in Crewe, for example, is £20,960, which gives a lower quartile house price to earnings ratio of 6.4.

Many tenants on benefit in the private rented sector encounter 3 main difficulties: (i) LHA which doesn't cover all the rental costs, (ii) a shortage of affordable properties, and (iii) landlords unwilling to rent to benefit-reliant households.

The Cheshire East 'Local Welfare Safety Net' report says that there are currently just 26,000 households in Cheshire East in receipt of one or more welfare benefit.

Table 6: Universal Credit - reliant households

Total households	Universal Credit - reliant households	% of households
169,460	17,773	10.4

Housing Related Support

Housing Related Support has been re-commissioned, and the new services commenced in April 2020.

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence. This is covered in Strategic Priority 4.

Empty properties in Cheshire East

The number of empty residential properties in Cheshire East has increased by 6.9% between 2017 and 2019.

Table 7: The next table shows the number of empty properties in Cheshire East⁷

	2017	2018	2019
All vacant dwellings	4,166	4,332	4,635
Empty for 6 months or more	1,396	1,685	1,781
Private registered provider vacant	111	186	230
Private registered provider vacant for 6 months or more	49	74	118

Although empty properties are not the solution to homelessness, they may help to reduce it.

As properties are bought and sold, or re-let, there will be a period of vacancy in between the changes in occupation. Such 'transactional vacancies' are not usually the cause of problems but are a normal part of the operation of the housing market. Household flows exist which affect both the number of households in an area and the number of properties which are occupied, as seen in the next table:

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

Table 8: The impact of household movement on the number of households and properties in Cheshire East

Household flow		Number of			
		Households		Properties occupied	
1	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an empty property	Increases	↑	Increases	↑
2	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an occupied property	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
3	HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering empty	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
4	Whole HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering occupied	Decreases	↓	Unchanged	■
5	Whole HH leaves Cheshire East	Decreases	↓	Decreases	↓
6	Splitting HH, person leaving enters vacant	Increases	↑	Increases	↑
7	Splitting HH, person leaving enters occupied	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
8	Splitting HH, person leaving leaves Cheshire East	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
9	Household Dissolution	Decreases	↓	Decreases	↓

A number of empty properties are necessary for a healthy housing market and to allow household flows 1, 3, and 6 above. It may be possible for some empty properties to be brought back into use which may accommodate homeless households via leasing schemes or nominations.

Commercial properties are typically unsuitable for habitation.

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Appendix 2: Assessments of statutory homelessness duties

Table 9: Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed April 2019 – March 2020⁸

	Number of households	Number as %
Total number of households assessed	1,514	
Total households assessed as owed a duty	1,496	
Households assessed and duty owed:		
Threatened with homelessness - Prevention duty owed	1,044	69.0%
<i>Of which:</i> due to service of valid Section 21 Notice	102	6.7%
Homeless - Relief duty owed	452	29.9%
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	18	1.2%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	188	18.0%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	271	26.0%
Domestic abuse	22	2.1%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	82	7.9%
End of social rented tenancy	210	20.1%
Eviction from supported housing	16	1.5%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	16	1.5%
Other violence or harassment	9	0.9%
Left institution with no accommodation available	8	0.8%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	0.5%
Other reasons / not known	217	20.8%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	124	27.4%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	37	8.2%
Domestic abuse	37	8.2%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	55	12.2%
End of social rented tenancy	19	4.2%
Eviction from supported housing	69	15.3%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	17	3.8%
Other violence or harassment	17	3.8%

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2019-20>

Left institution with no accommodation available	10	2.2%
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Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	1.1%
Other reasons / not known	62	13.7%
Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty:		
Private rented sector	289	27.7%
Living with family	216	20.7%
No fixed abode	0	0.0%
Social rented sector	240	23.0%
Living with friends	113	10.8%
Homeless on departure from institution	16	1.5%
Rough sleeping	0	0.0%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	41	3.9%
Temporary accommodation	88	8.4%
National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) accommodation	4	0.4%
Refuge	2	0.2%
Other / not known	35	3.4%
Household type of households owed a prevention duty:		
Single parent with dependent children - Male	23	2.2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	288	27.6%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	1	0.1%
Single adult - Male	290	27.8%
Single adult - Female	234	22.4%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1	0.1%
Couple with dependent children	108	10.3%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	73	7.0%
Three or more adults with dependent children	7	0.7%
Three or more adults without dependent children	19	1.8%
Not known ⁸	0	0.0%
Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer		
Total households assessed as a result of a referral	118	100.0%
Total households referred under the Duty to Refer	77	65.3%
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	9	7.6%
Youth Secure Estate	0	0.0%
National Probation Service	8	6.8%
Community Rehabilitation Company	2	1.7%
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	1	0.8%
Mental Health in-patient care	13	11.0%

Jobcentre Plus	10	8.5%
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Adult Social Services	9	7.6%
Children's Social Services	5	4.2%
Nil Recourse Team	0	0.0%
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	0	0.0%
Other / not known	20	16.9%
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	40	33.9%
Households referred by another local authority	1	0.8%
Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:		
White	1,387	92.7%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	17	1.1%
Asian / Asian British	18	1.2%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	9	0.6%
Other ethnic groups	10	0.7%
Not known ⁸	55	3.7%

Appendix 3 – Rough Sleeping Initiative Outcomes

Intelligence & Outcomes

Since Cheshire East began the RSI it has:

- secured a substantial number of successful longer - term accommodation placements for individuals who were sleeping rough
- reduced the number of visible rough sleepers across the Borough
- built new and enhanced agency partnerships
- gathered a large amount of intelligence to give a much clearer picture of who has been accessing the services
- Recently secured capital grant funding to purchase new properties to provide sustainable accommodation with intensive support
- Embedded emergency accommodation, such as No First Night Out and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, into accommodation services provided by our commissioned partners.

Also, as part of the funding from MHCLG, Cheshire East has been required to undertake bi-monthly rough sleeper counts, in addition to the formal count required by Government to be carried out between October and the end of November each year.

The approach to these counts has been to utilise the new services / interventions to create a dedicated database of where individuals have been sleeping rough in each of the main towns of the Borough, and then use of that data to inform where and when to search areas for individuals sleeping rough.

Table 10: Cheshire East counts

Bi-Monthly Counts	Informal / Formal	Rough Sleepers Located	Known to services
September 2018	Informal	4	3
November 2018	Formal	10	7
January 2019	Informal	11	11
March 2019	Informal	6	6
July 2019	Informal	2	2
September 2019	Informal	2	2
November 2019	Formal	8	8
January 2020	Informal	6	6

As the RSI services were implemented, the numbers of rough sleepers located increased but the number of those individuals who were known to, and engaging with, services

to assist them off the streets increased. Throughout the interventions, the RSI teams have been engaging with 100% of those sleeping rough in the Borough.

Referrals

Since the introduction of the RSI in Cheshire East and the promotion of the service there has been a substantial increase in the number of individuals being referred to the services. Referrals are received from sources such as Streetlink, and other partner agencies.

There was an increase in the number of referrals in 2018 - 2019, which was welcomed as it proved that the approach of promoting the service with agencies and the wider public had been successful. Each referral is an opportunity to gather more information, but also to engage with those

individuals sleeping rough and to create a successful outcome for them.

During the course of the initial RSI period the service successfully engaged with 260 individuals. There was an expected peak in October as the services began, and then decreased and stabilised over the remaining winter months.

There was a split of engagements between Crewe, which has become a "hot spot" for rough sleeping, and the rest of the Borough. There were 135 individuals involved with services within the Crewe area, compared to 125 for the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

People classed or likely be classed as not in priority need under homelessness legislation were provided with emergency accommodation. This was either in the No Second Night Out (NSNO) or Extended Winter Provision (EWP) provisions (over the winter months only). As expected, the number of EWP placements were lower than NSNO placements in this area to reflect the fact that EWP is an extended provision, and not the main accommodation.

Another element of the enhanced accommodation offer is in relation to the creation of dedicated, complex needs statutory temporary accommodation, in both North and South of the Borough. This was done to reflect the needs of clients who are in priority need under homelessness legislation, but also have a substance misuse issue which would normally place them at a higher risk of losing statutory temporary accommodation.

The model adopted enabled the team to place individuals with a partner agency operating the service in Macclesfield and Crewe, who were able to provide bespoke substance misuse - related support to individuals accessing those accommodation units. The service has been able to keep people in those units at times when individuals would have been evicted from other types of accommodation due to their support needs / behaviour.

The complex statutory accommodation model has also been recognised by MHCLG within the national Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan as good practice.

This shows that during October 2018 – March 2019 a total of 29 individuals accessed the complex needs temporary accommodation units. The lower numbers are to be expected due to there being less beds compared to

other types of accommodation, and to the complex nature of the individuals

accessing the services generally and requiring placements.

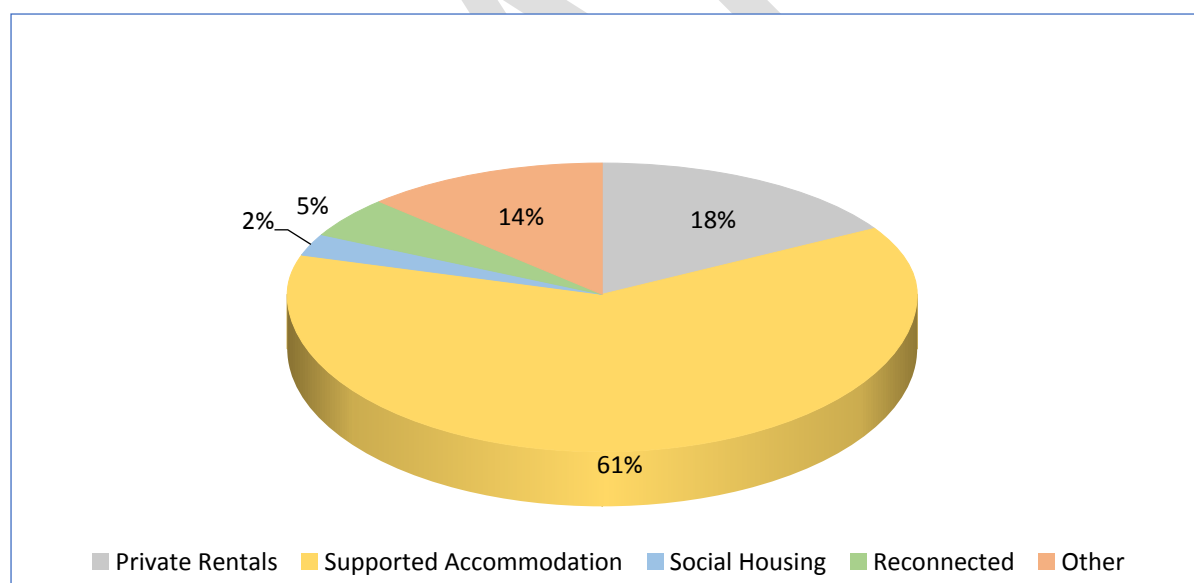
Outcomes

The Cheshire East RSI has achieved a high number of successful move - on resolutions for individuals, both those accommodated, and those managed in the community, into accommodation which is available to them for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 61% of all placements being within current commissioned Housing Related

Support (HRS) services in the Borough. Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (18%). The “other” category accounts for around 14% of all resolutions across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals moving back with family members, for example.

Successful move on Year 1



A further area of successful progress has been in relation to the gathering and collation of intelligence on the rough sleeping cohort, and of a dedicated database monitoring the individuals through the service, and which are reviewed frequently. A large amount of intelligence on the locations of where individuals have been sleeping has also been collated and

plotted, and this has been used to inform the bi-monthly counts undertaken as part of MHCLG funding.

RSI Intervention Reflection

Cheshire East Council has been continually evaluating the interventions in place to ensure they remain fit for purpose, particularly with regards to meeting the needs of the rough sleeping cohort.

As part of that reflection, several elements were identified as requiring modification to our approach. These were:

- Broadening the spectrum of longer - term outcomes

Although the number of outcomes is good, it is clear that the private rented and especially social housing sectors need to be targeted more effectively to engage with the RSI process. Work has been ongoing with the private rented sector and new relationships are being sought between Housing Options and individual landlords in particular. Further exploration of those relationships and work with local registered social landlords forms a key area of work in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

- Providing accommodation on a 24 / 7 basis

When some elements of the enhanced accommodation interventions were established, they were designed to build on already commissioned services.

However, as the project was evolving and more intelligence was gathered about the cohort in Cheshire East, it became clear that the way NSNO provision was operating in the north and south of the Borough could be seen as contributing to the day-time visibility of rough sleepers and in particular, street drinking. This was due to individuals being required to leave the accommodation during the day and going back onto the streets.

It also provided less opportunity to effectively engage with individuals who were being accommodated.

These two main issues were highlighted to be addressed in the second year of RSI funding.

Rough Sleepers Initiative – Cheshire East – Year 2

Due to the successes of the RSI Nationally between October 2018 and March 2019 MHCLG announced further funding to be made available to continue the good work already started and to build on it across England.

A further funding bid was made by Cheshire East and was successful in securing an additional **£388,303** of funding to be used in 2019 - 2020 financial year.

A process of co-production was again undertaken between Cheshire East and MHCLG with interventions used in year 1 reviewed to see if they were still relevant and fit for purpose. As the funding provided was lower than had originally been requested, especially in regard to the accommodation interventions, the numbers of

units needed was re-visited whilst addressing the challenges identified during the initial 6 month period.

Changes were also made to the Rough Sleepers' Co-ordinator role which altered that role to become a contract monitoring position. We were successful in embedding this role, as well as two Rough Sleeper Outreach posts, as permanent posts within the Housing Options and Homelessness Service in 2020-21.

Intelligence & Outcomes

Building on the work which was commenced during the first phase of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to deliver successful outcomes for individuals sleeping rough and has begun to move towards a more preventative approach in line with the principles in the Government's national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The general number of engagements has been lower than the first year, as many individuals have already been assisted. In terms of the split of engagements between North and South of the Borough, 60% have been engaged with in the south, compared to 40% in the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

The lower number of clients is to be expected due to the lower level of provision generally compared to other types of accommodation, and the complex nature of individuals accessing the services.

However, this number is higher than the initial period of the RSI which may indicate that there are greater numbers of rough sleepers with complex needs coming through the system.

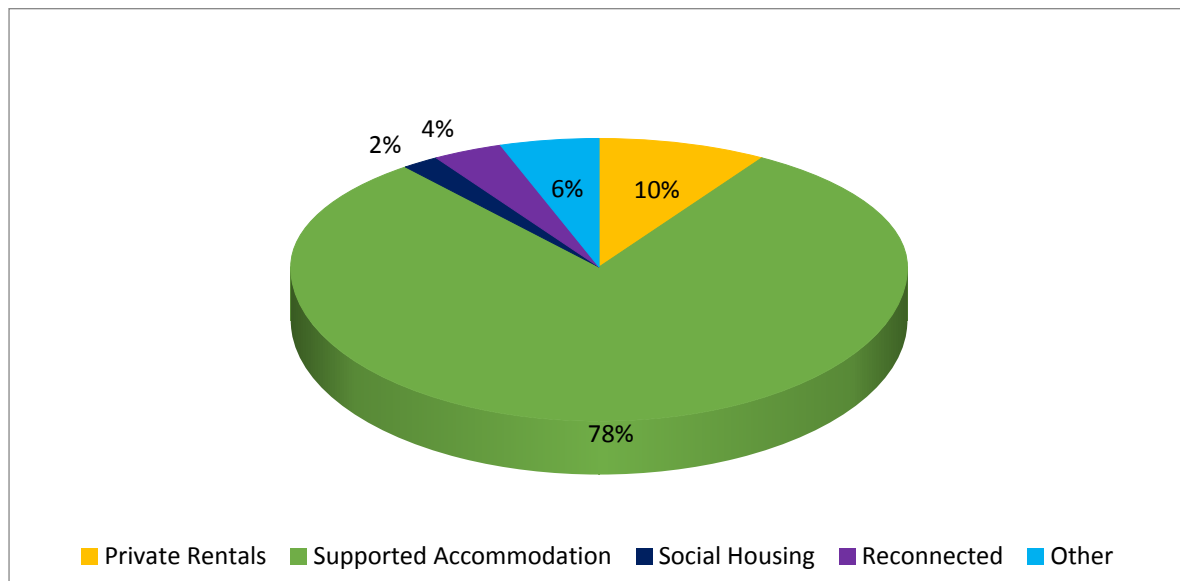
Outcomes

As well as **178 individuals** who have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer term outcomes for individuals into accommodation, which is for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 78% of all placements being within the currently commissioned HRS services in the Borough.

Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (10%). The "other" category accounts for around 6% of all outcomes across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals back with family members, for example.

Successful move on year 2



More work needs to be undertaken with private landlords in order to increase the numbers of placements into that tenure, although accessing this type of accommodation is proving increasingly difficult.

Glossary

Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) Black And Minority Ethnic, term used to describe minority groups recognised as falling under the Race Relations Act 1976.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is an extra amount of money that the Council can give someone already receiving some Housing Benefit or housing costs in Universal Credit, to help them pay their rent (it cannot be awarded to help pay for non-rent charges like water rates and service charges). It is not a benefit, and there is no automatic right to it. It is awarded at the discretion of Cheshire East. There is no fixed amount and the amount to be paid is assessed. This is a limited fund and cases are considered individually in line with the policy.

Emergency Assistance This policy has been created to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, or to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Extended Winter Provision Accommodation and support provided to rough sleepers throughout the winter months and not just during the coldest periods.

Homechoice Cheshire East does not have any council housing of its own and does not operate its own council housing waiting list. However, it is partnered with Guinness, Plus Dane, Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trusts, and over 20 other social landlords, who advertise affordable, rented properties (referred to as 'social housing') via a website called Cheshire Homechoice. Housing applications can be made through the Homechoice website.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) The Homelessness Reduction Act makes changes to legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act of 1996. The HRA places a duty on Cheshire East to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness, and to take reasonable steps to help homeless people to find accommodation. It also requires Cheshire East to expand the category of people who we have to help to find accommodation.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements are a way of working out Housing Benefit (HB) or housing costs in Universal Credit for people who rent from a private landlord. Local authorities use LHA rates based on the size of household and the area in which a person lives to work out the amount of rent which can be met with HB. HB paid under the LHA arrangements is normally paid to the tenant, who will then pay the landlord.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) The Government department that sets policy on supporting local government: communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning, building and the environment, and fire.

No First Night Out (NFNO) is an innovative approach to preventing people from sleeping rough for the first time in London, which enhances the No Second Night Out (NSNO) with a more preventative approach.

No Second Night Out (NSNO) NSNO helps to identify where rough sleepers are coming from and improve prevention and recovery services so that they don't have to sleep rough.

Registered Provider (RP) A registered provider is defined as providing social housing. Social housing includes low cost rental (such as affordable rent properties) and low-cost home ownership. Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers (such as not-for-profit housing associations and for-profit organisations).

Rough sleepers / street homeless Households who find themselves with no support networks such as friends or family who are able to offer short term accommodation will likely end up street homeless (rough sleeping). Anyone who is sleeping rough or street homeless is the most visible sign of homelessness.

Single Point of Access (SPA) Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing related support needs

Shared accommodation rate: Changes to exemptions

The shared accommodation rate of the LHA applies to those who are under the age of 35, living alone and renting privately. The market cost of sharing accommodation is cheaper than renting a self-contained property and this is reflected in how the shared accommodation rate is set.

Exemptions from the shared accommodation rate

There are a number of exemptions which enable claimants to receive the higher one-bedroom LHA rate in certain circumstances, such as for those in receipt of the SDP, Care leavers up to the age of 22 and those aged 25 and over who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel.

Changes to the exemptions

In March 2020, the government announced that, from October 2023, it would be extending the age thresholds for the Care Leavers and homeless hostels exemptions so that they both applied to under 25 year olds. For Care Leavers, this means extending the qualifying age from 22 up to 25 years old and for those who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel, the lower age limit will be removed to include all claimants aged under 35.

At the Spring Budget 2021 it was confirmed that due to the impact of COVID-19 on young people, the implementation date has been brought forward by over two years to the 31 May 2021. Affected claimants will be entitled to claim the exemption from that date.

While Local Authorities may choose to identify and contact claimants they believe to be in scope of the updated exemptions, there is no expectation of this. Claimants will be expected to self-identify to claim an exemption.

Streetlink is a website that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about people sleeping rough in their area. This service offers the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and is the first step someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. The service is funded by Government as part of its commitment to end rough sleeping.

SWEP Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) aims to prevent rough sleeping during extreme cold weather. When night-time temperatures are predicted to fall below zero for 3 nights in a row SWEP provides emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. During periods of extreme cold housing authorities must provide facilities for rough sleepers to prevent deaths as a result of weather conditions. Cheshire East activates SWEP also based on wind chill and extreme weather conditions.

Universal Credit A monthly payment for people who are on low income or who are unemployed. It is being rolled out in stages across the UK and is replacing other benefits. How much is paid depends on the customer's circumstances, including their income, how many children they have and also the Local Housing Allowance Rate.

Please contact us if you require any further information:

housingpolicycec@cheshireeast.gov.uk

You can send Streetlink an alert about someone sleeping rough via their:

Website: www.streetlink.org.uk

Mobile app: 'Streetlink' from Apple iTunes / Google Play store

Phone: 0300 500 0914



Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	16 th September 2021
Report Title:	First Homes and Affordable Housing
Report of:	Director of Growth and Enterprise – Peter Skates
Report Reference No:	To be provided by Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** Ensuring the delivery of affordable homes is a priority within the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 which states “enable access to well designed, affordable and safe homes for all our residents”. Increasing the provision of affordable homes contributes to the overall Vision for the Council to be:

Open – Cheshire East has a transparent policy to ensure the delivery of affordable homes on housing sites above a certain threshold.

Fair – The provision of affordable housing enables our residents to access appropriate housing, enabling them to continue to reside within Cheshire East and be close to support networks.

Green – Providing affordable homes contributes to the reduction of the carbon footprint, ensuring that residents can reside close to employment opportunities.

- 1.2.** Furthermore, the Local Plan provides a framework for the delivery of housing including affordable housing.
- 1.3.** Affordable housing in Cheshire East plays a fundamental role in realising this ambition. Affordable housing creates balanced, sustainable communities whilst helping to reduce health inequalities for some of our modest-income households. Moreover, it provides the vital impetus for economic activity and aspiration. The provision of affordable housing can

stimulate spending, and crucially equips an area with the long-term capacity for labour and economic fluidity that will attract and develop business.

- 1.4.** This report provides an update on the types of affordable housing which are delivered in Cheshire East, as well as introducing the Government's new affordable housing product – First Homes. This report also outlines the mechanisms in which the Council secures affordable housing on site or as a financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing.
- 1.5.** This report outlines a revised approach in relation to the financial contributions from developers for affordable housing to enable the Strategic Housing team to take forward a more proactive approach to administer this funding.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** That the Economy and Growth Committee:

- 2.1.1.** Notes that a Housing Supplementary Planning Document ("SPD") is currently being developed and will be considered by the Environment and Communities Committee at a future meeting
 - 2.1.2.** Approves the process outlined within Appendix 1 for the allocation of financial contributions for the provision of affordable housing

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** Affordable housing plays a vital role in the creation of sustainable and mixed communities. It is a fundamental part of everyone's life and is essential to positive health outcomes, supporting economic wellbeing and promoting social inclusion in Cheshire East communities.
- 3.2.** The Government is committed to supporting people into home ownership and have introduced a new type of affordable housing known as "First Homes". There are transitional arrangements in place for local planning authorities to incorporate First Homes and these are outlined in this report. Members need to be fully aware of these changes and the impact and implications on existing policies.
- 3.3.** Current Local Plan policy is to secure affordable housing on site. However, where this is not possible, as a first alternative, off-site provision will be accepted and then, as a second alternative, a financial contribution may be accepted, where justified, in lieu of on-site provision. Where financial contributions are obtained the Council needs to clearly set out how these funds will be utilised and the process which will be undertaken in order to

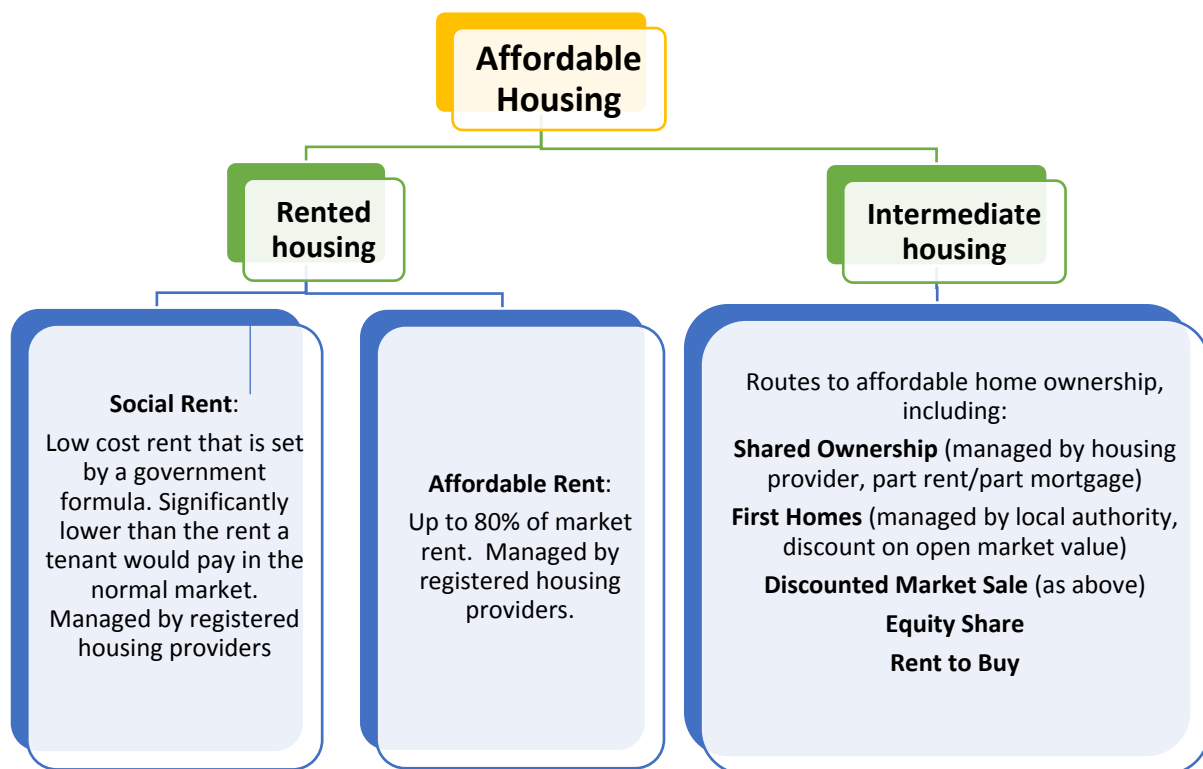
deliver affordable housing. The process needs to be updated to reflect any required changes.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Government have introduced First Homes through a written ministerial statement and National Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”). The date from which this is required is affected by transitional arrangements as set out in this report. The Council could deter developers from providing First Homes, however this could be detrimental to first time buyer’s ability to access the housing market.
- 4.2. The Council must have a clear and transparent policy in relation to the utilisation of financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing.

5. Background

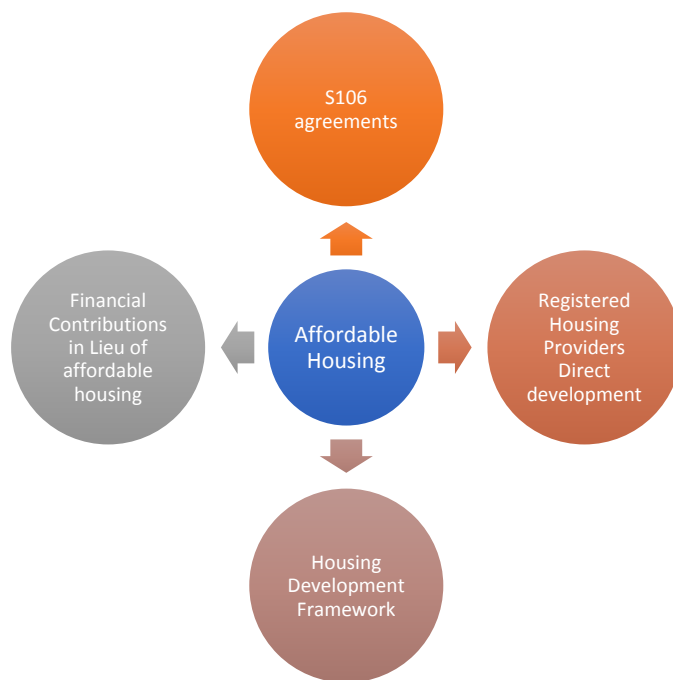
- 5.1. **Affordable Housing** - The ability to secure a safe, affordable home in which to reside is a fundamental human need, without which can have a detrimental impact on our resident’s lives. Cheshire East is an expensive place in which to reside, in comparison to other North West Local Authority areas where the average house price is £189,245 (landregistry.data.gov.uk – May 2021). The average house price in Cheshire East is £267,463 (landregistry.data.gov.uk – May 2021) and average incomes are £36,000 (plumplot.co.uk, 2020).
- 5.2. Affordability for households to access the housing market can be significantly impacted by this. First time buyers are often priced out of the market, private rented properties are in short supply and rental figures can be significantly high. Therefore, the demand for affordable and social rented properties is increasing, with just under 10,000 applicants registered. The level of voids and new schemes are not keeping up with demand.
- 5.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (July 2021) defines affordable housing as *“housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)”*
- 5.4. The type of affordable housing is categorised as rented or for sale and the diagram below illustrates the type of housing which is included within these 2 categorisations:



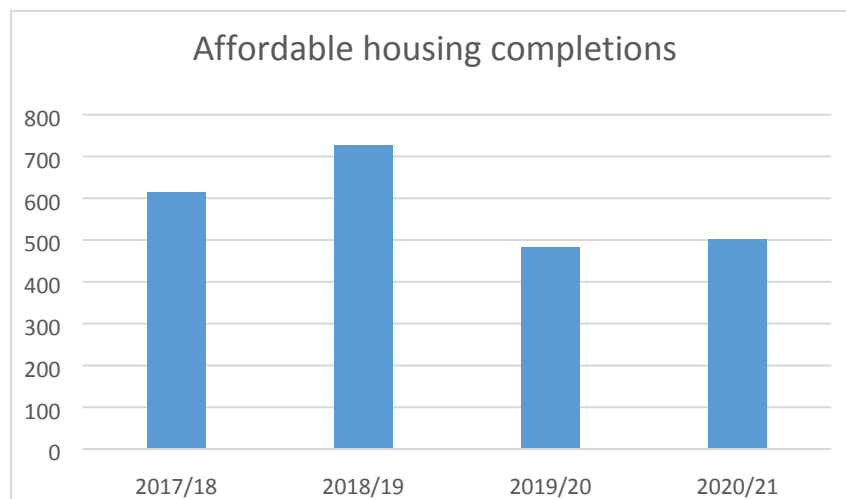
- 5.5.** Cheshire East’s planning policy on affordable housing is set out within Local Plan Strategy (“LPS”) Policy SC5 ‘affordable homes’. This clearly explains the requirements where, in residential developments, affordable housing will be expected to be provided, stating that within Principal Towns and Key Service Centres, residential developments of 15 or over (or 0.4 hectares) are required to provide at least 30% affordable housing.
- 5.6.** Within Local Service Centres and Other areas, developments of 11 or more (or have a maximum combined gross floor space of more than 1,000 sq.m) are required to provide at least 30% affordable housing.
- 5.7.** Of the 30% requirement, the explanatory text accompanying the policy says that the Council will seek a split of 65% for rent (social or affordable) and 35% for intermediate affordable housing. Rural Exceptions sites are permitted through Local Plan Policy SC6 ‘rural exceptions housing for local needs’ in circumstances where there is a defined housing need, however they will only be permitted on a small scale (up to 10 units)
- 5.8.** A Housing Supplementary Planning Document (“SPD”) is currently being developed, which will provide further planning guidance in relation to affordable housing, consistent with the Local Plan Strategy. The SPD also includes guidance on the delivery of Extra Care and specialist Housing Provision. Consultation on the initial draft of the Housing SPD took place between the 26 April 2021 and the 07 June 2021. A total of 119 comments were received from 29 parties and these comments are currently being

considered. The next steps for the draft Housing SPD is to consider the feedback received to the public consultation and seek approval from the Environment and Communities Committee later in the year to publish a revised version of the SPD for public representations, alongside a consultation report which provides information on comments received to the initial draft Housing SPD and the Council's response

- 5.9.** There are a number of ways in which affordable housing provision can be secure as outlined below:



- 5.10.** The delivery of affordable housing has fluctuated over the years, but on average, 581 units have been delivered each year since 2017/18 due to the activity of housing developers and registered housing providers. These figures (outlined in the graph below) are retrieved through completion data submitted by the registered housing providers who are delivering affordable housing in Cheshire East. These figures differ slightly from those included in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) produced by Cheshire East due to slight variations of data recorded by different council departments. However, the delivery of affordable housing is consistently above the 355 minimum annual target as outlined in the Local Plan



5.11. Introduction of First Homes – As part of the Government’s planning reforms, a new affordable housing tenure called ‘First Homes’ has been introduced. These are properties specifically for first time buyers which come with a minimum of 30% discount from their open market value. This discount remains with the property in perpetuity (with limited exceptions) so that future eligible households can benefit from the scheme. Households will need to meet eligibility criteria to access these homes and they will be a requirement on all housing schemes where affordable housing is secured through a Section 106 agreement.

5.12. Specifically, First Homes are discounted market sale units which:

- must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value;
- are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria;
- on their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of current market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer; and
- after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000. First Homes are the government’s preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations (i.e. S106 agreements).
- In addition, to qualify as a First Home, there should be a section 106 agreement securing the necessary restrictions on the use and sale of the property, and a legal restriction on the title of the property to ensure that these restrictions are applied to the property at each future sale. The price cap of £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London), however, applies only to the first sale and not to any subsequent sales of any given First Home.

- 5.13. Depending on where local authorities are with regards to adopting their Local Plan, there are transitional arrangements for the implementation of First Homes. Under these arrangements and because the Council submitted its Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (“SADPD”) for examination at the end of April, it is not required to reflect the First Homes policy requirement directly in the SADPD. The SADPD is currently under examination.
- 5.14. Where local plans are adopted under the transitional arrangements, the First Homes requirements will not need to be applied in decision taking when considering planning applications in the Plan area until such time as the requirements are introduced through a subsequent Local Plan update. However, as planning applications may still come forward which include First Homes, in line with the requirements of national planning guidance then this may need to be considered further as a material consideration in decision taking.
- 5.15. The PPG encourages Local Planning Authorities to make development requirements for First Homes clear in their area and to be flexible in accepting First Homes, at the request of a planning applicant, as an alternative type of tenure for undetermined applications. Following advice from the Council’s Legal Services team, the local authority could pro-actively develop planning guidance to detail how it would respond to proposals involving First Homes in the borough on a consistent basis. The development of the Housing SPD is an ideal opportunity to achieve this. This will allow the Council to clearly articulate its approach to First Homes. The SPD is expected to be able to be considered for adoption in early 2022. When adopted, it would also be a material planning consideration in decision taking. This report seeks Committee’s approval to proceed in this manner.
- 5.16. Where necessary, eligibility assessments of households for First Homes will be completed through existing staffing resources, although the introduction of First Homes has the potential to increase workloads for a number of Council departments. First Homes will also impact the range of tenures provided. Government guidance requires a minimum of 25% of all affordable properties on a site to be First Homes. Government are keen to ensure that affordable rented properties are still delivered, so First Homes will have the greatest impact on the number of intermediate affordable properties delivered on-site.
- 5.17. **Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing** – Local Plan policy SC5 ‘affordable homes’ seeks to provide on-site affordable housing on development sites which meet the affordable housing threshold. In exceptional circumstances, affordable housing can be provided off-site, or a financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing can be provided to the local authority.

5.18. Such circumstances can include:

- the provision of the affordable housing elsewhere in the locality would provide a better mix of housing types
- Management of the affordable dwellings on site would not be feasible, due to a lack of registered provider interest
- It would be more appropriate to bring back existing vacant housing into use as affordable units which may also bring regeneration benefits
- There are specific and unusual constraints of the site which prevent the provision of the size and types of affordable housing required in the area.

5.19. The decision to accept a financial contribution in lieu of on-site affordable housing is the remit of either the planning case officer for delegated planning decisions, or the decision of the relevant planning committee as appropriate. This renewed policy seeks to clarify the process of administering the funding for future affordable housing provision. It is not within the gift of this renewed policy to determine how and when financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing are accepted.

5.20. The council currently holds several financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing, totalling £2,119,131.53. In addition to this, there are a number of legal agreements in place which will increase funding to a further £5,801,263 from developers in the future. These funds have a time limit for when they can be utilised, typically for 5 or 10 years, so a proactive approach to this would ensure funds are administered in a timely and strategic manner.

5.21. The Council's policy for allocating and spending financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing was approved at Cheshire East Cabinet in July 2014. This policy has since been updated by the Strategic Housing team to bring the priorities in line with the new Committee system. It allows financial contributions to be prioritised for current council projects and ensures that the utilisation of financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing is proactively delivered.

5.22. The amended policy is included within Appendix 1 of this report. The main amendments include the ability for the local authority to use financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing for the purpose of purchasing land, to develop affordable housing schemes brought forward by the Council's Housing Development Framework. It also ensures the Council is proactive in reviewing planning applications where a reduced amount of affordable housing is provided, as well as contacting Ward Members, housing providers, and town and parish councils on an annual basis to advertise and review options for spending the contributions. Members are involved during this process so that they are aware of the Council's proposals and intentions.

- 5.23.** This proactive approach will ensure that financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing are spent appropriately, in a timely manner, and in-line with the council's priorities for affordable housing. Authority to utilise financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing will be undertaken in line with the Council's constitution

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1. First Homes** – First Homes is a national initiative, and Government consulted on the proposals for First Homes between 7th February 2020 and 1st May 2020. Departments within Cheshire East Council, including Strategic Housing and Strategic Planning responded to this consultation. The draft Housing SPD will be subject to public consultation as required by planning regulations and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 6.2. Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing** – The revised policy for administering financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing was subject to internal consultation from Legal services and Finance. External consultation is unnecessary due to the policy clarifying how financial contributions are administered. The decision to receive a financial contribution is determined through the planning process.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1. First Homes** – Government will issue 'model clauses' to be inserted into Section 106 planning agreements to ease the burden on local authority Legal teams. Subject to Committee approval, there may be a requirement for certain applicable Council S106 agreements to make reference to First Homes.
- 7.1.2.** Cheshire East Council Legal Services will be required to enter into a covenant with each occupying household to ensure that the restriction on title is enacted and the discount percentage is retained in perpetuity. A model covenant has been published by the Government.
- 7.1.3. Financial Contributions in lieu of affordable housing** - There are no legal implications for these amendments.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1. First Homes** - There is potential for implications with resources due to increased workload. Through the Business Planning process for 2022/23, we will seek to increase the staff resources to be able to deal with any new First Homes requirement, by increasing the existing affordable housing officer post from 0.5FTE to 1 FTE. This role will be subject to a job evaluation as there will be a requirement to carry out financial appraisals of households and it is anticipated this will increase the post from a Grade 4 to Grade 7.

7.2.2. Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing – Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing are available to be utilised to increase the provision of affordable housing, and the proposed new process will not change this. The updated policy will allow the Council to purchase land with financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing, specifically for the Council's Housing Development Framework. These schemes will need to provide 100% affordable housing due to the source of the monies.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. First Homes – Additional detail will need to be included with the emerging Housing SPD to detail the Council's planning guidance for First Homes.

7.3.2. Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing – The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy allows for financial contributions in exceptional circumstances, and this position won't change. The proposed new financial contributions policy seeks to clarify the process and ensure funds are allocated fairly and in areas of affordable housing need.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. First Homes – Government produced a national Equality Impact Assessment for the provision of First Homes. It is not anticipated that the provision of these properties will impact the protected characteristics. The Housing SPD will be subject to its own Equality Impact Assessment.

7.4.2. Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing – an Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the revised process of utilising financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing. It is appended to this report under Appendix 2.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. First Homes – there are no immediate HR implications for the provision of First Homes and workload will be managed through existing staffing. However, there is potential for additional staffing resources required to deal with this requirement as detailed in 7.2.1.

7.5.2. Financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing – it is not anticipated that there will be any HR implications for this, and this will be facilitated through existing staffing.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. All financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing have a time limit on when they can be spent. If this lapses, the sum needs to be returned to the developer/source of the contribution. This proactive approach will mitigate this risk and ensure that the contributions are spent in a timely and effective way.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. The provision of First Homes and spends of financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing both have the potential to impact rural communities. Local Members will be included in proposals for both factors of this report.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no implications for Children and Young People or Cared for Children.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. Housing provision, including affordable housing, has the potential to improve access to safe accommodation, which can improve health inequalities throughout our communities.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. The Council is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025. The development of high quality, sustainable housing has the potential to reduce the impact of climate change. New residential housing developments will be required to address planning policies which aim to mitigate climate change impacts.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Christopher Hutton – Senior Policy Officer christopher.hutton@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 685642
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – S106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing funding procedure Appendix 2 – S106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing application form Appendix 3 – S106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing EIA
Background Papers:	Not applicable

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PROCEDURE FOR ALLOCATION OF FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIEU OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING

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3. Application process and promotion of funds	3-4
4. Approval of and process for spending funds	4
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6. Financial contributions process map	6

1. **Introduction:**

The Council, as the Planning Authority makes every effort to ensure that 30% affordable housing is delivered on-site in new housing developments, or off-site if this is not possible. However, in some limited circumstances where neither of these alternatives are possible, a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision can be accepted under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Such circumstances may include:

- The provision of the affordable housing elsewhere in the locality would provide a better mix of housing types.
- Management of the affordable dwellings on site would not be feasible, due to a lack of registered provider interest.
- It would be more appropriate to bring back existing vacant housing into use as affordable units which may also bring about regeneration benefits.
- There are specific and unusual constraints of the site prevent the provision of the size and type of affordable housing required in the area.

The Council receives payments from developers, in lieu of the on/off-site provision having entered into legally binding agreements (S106 agreements) which contain obligations on the Council to use the financial contributions in accordance with the provisions of each particular legal agreement, to enhance development opportunities throughout the borough.

This procedure relates specifically to the obligations as they relate to affordable housing provision in the S106 agreements, in order to facilitate the delivery of high quality affordable housing that meets the needs of the whole community and stimulates the housing market.

The Council is contractually bound by the terms of the S106 agreements and so can only apply the criteria set out in the procedure, in so far as it does not conflict with the specific terms found in each S106 agreement, such as restrictions on the geographical area that a financial contribution can be spent.

1.1 **Definition of Affordable Housing:**

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Annex 2 (NPPF) defines affordable housing as, in summary:

‘housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following: affordable housing for rent, starter homes, discounted market sale housing and other affordable routes to home ownership’, e.g. shared ownership, shared equity and rent to buy.

First Homes are not addressed in the NPPF or referred to in the definition of affordable housing set out in Annex 2. National planning policy for First Homes is contained in a Written Ministerial Statement made on 24 May 2021. The Ministerial Statement states that a home meeting the criteria of a First Home will also be considered to meet the definition of affordable housing. This is

restated in the national planning guidance on First Homes published alongside the Ministerial Statement.

2. Priorities for allocating funds:

In some cases, the S106 agreements are prescriptive, e.g. limited by geographical area or ward and funds can only be distributed in accordance with the specific terms and timescales set out in each individual S106 agreement.

In other S106 agreements the terms are not so rigid, and the funds received will be pooled and allocated for the delivery of affordable housing across the whole of the borough. This allows the Council discretion in deciding how to allocate the funds available, to ensure the creation of mixed tenure affordable housing that meet the needs of communities.

Where the Council does have discretion in deciding how financial contributions are allocated for affordable housing, we will use them to:

- Purchase land and create new affordable housing schemes, where a need has been established.
- Provide funding to secure more affordable homes on specific developments in addition to those secured under the S106 agreements.
- Reduce funding gaps to help enhance developments, where a scheme will provide additional affordable housing.
- Invest in existing affordable housing stock within Crewe to raise the quality of accommodation (in accordance with Cheshire East Local Plan policy SC5 'affordable homes' – justification 12.51)

In addition, we will prioritise the housing needs of residents highlighted in the Council's Housing Strategy 2018-2023, including the development of:

- The right mix of affordable housing needed by the community.
- Additional temporary accommodation for people who have become homeless.
- Empty properties to bring them back into use.
- Specialist housing, e.g. for families with disabilities or for older people.
- Rural accommodation to enable people to continue to reside within their local communities.

In order to do this, we will apply the following priorities:

2.1 First Priority:

Consideration will be given to whether the terms of the legal agreement (S106) will allow the funds to be used to bring forward Council owned sites and property for redevelopment, where appropriate, through the new Housing Development Framework or another

appropriate procurement route, to commission the development of mixed tenure affordable housing provision, to meet identified housing needs. This also includes the ability to use funds to purchase land for the development of affordable housing schemes, which will be developed via the Housing Development Framework or another appropriate procurement route. This will need to be achievable in the timescales (if applicable)) outlined in the S106 agreement, in the geographical areas intended under each agreement.

2.2 **Second Priority:**

All planning applications will be checked to establish whether it would be appropriate to provide funding to purchase more affordable homes, whether this is on developments providing 30% affordable housing or on sites where the level of affordable housing provided is below 30%, because of viability issues. In addition, consideration will also be given to smaller developments, perhaps even those falling below affordable housing thresholds, in key areas where a particular need has been identified, e.g. rural areas to help meet the needs of the local community.

2.3 **Third Priority:**

If no Council led developments are possible and there are no outstanding planning permissions which would be appropriate for use of the funds then we will liaise with Town and Parish Councils and Registered providers on an **annual basis**, using their local knowledge and community ties to develop specific housing sites that have been highlighted in Neighbourhood Plans or those that maybe coming onto the market in the near future, that we may not otherwise be aware of, to bring forward affordable housing in high priority areas, e.g. empty properties, specialist housing and other identified requirements, that have not already been met through the affordable housing provision in previous S106 agreements.

In addition, in certain circumstances, where the criteria of specific S106 agreements are not met by applying the other priorities and financial contributions remain unspent then advertisements will be placed in suitable media to attract applications which do meet the criteria.

In applying its' discretion and the above criteria the Council will do so in deference to the terms of each individual agreement at each stage of the process.

3. **Application Process:**

To assess the viability of requests for funding, all applicants will be invited to complete a Financial Contribution Application form (Appendix 1). Applications will be received and considered in date order and a record of the submission and nature of the applications kept.

On receipt of a completed Application form and all relevant supporting documentation the **Strategic Housing team** will undertake a verification process which will include a credit check on the applicant, inspection of site ownership and planning status documents and project plan.

Once applications have passed these checks and are being actively considered for funding the proposal will be assessed by the **Head of Housing** and **Finance Management Officer** to determine whether the proposal is financially viable; that it meets not just the criteria set out in the specific S106 agreement(s), but the key priorities and objectives for affordable housing in the borough, highlighted in section 2 (above) and the Housing Strategy 2018-2023.

If the application is successful, but no financial contribution funding is available for allocation then it will remain on the list of live funding applications and as financial contributions become available for distribution then it will be considered against the terms of the particular S106 agreement and the Council's criteria (where discretion can be exercised).

In the event of there being more than one successful application for funding which meets the criteria specified in the S106 agreement, the following factors will be considered in order to decide which application should take priority:

- The project offers value for money and meets the identified needs of residents in 'high priority' areas, such as older people, the homeless and people with disabilities.
- It offers family homes to meet the needs of existing families and those moving into the area for work.
- The scheme can start on site within 3 months of being advised that the bid for funding has been successful.
- The applicant can demonstrate that the funding will be spent within the timescales set out in the S106 agreement.

Please note: Where the Council feels that an application doesn't sufficiently meet housing needs or provide value for money, it reserves the right to refuse the application.

The Council must, in order to fulfil its function as the Planning Authority and its obligations under the individual legal S106 agreements, monitor the use of the financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing and obligations may be imposed on any recipient regarding provision of evidence, as to how the money is used, regardless of when the money is received.

The Council must also account for its use of the money to the developers who paid the financial contribution and remain in control of the use of and dissipation of the financial contributions.

In the event of a dispute the case will be referred to the **Director of Growth and Enterprise** whose decision shall be final.

5. Approval for allocation of funds

Approvals to allocate funds to projects will be made in accordance with the approval limits for supplementary estimates as outlined in the constitution.

6. Process for spending Funds:

Following approval payment will only be made on production of evidence that the specific works have been carried out in line with the original proposal and offer letter, and an invoice from the Developer or Registered Provider is received.

7. Consultation:

The Planning, Legal and Financial departments have all been involved in the development of this procedure.

7.1 Review:

This Procedure will be reviewed annually by Cheshire East officers when agreed. An update report will be provided to the Economy & Growth Committee on an annual basis.

7.2 Contacts:

Housing Strategy Team
Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Sandbach
CW11 1HZ

Tel: 01270 685 912

Email: housingpolicycec@cheshireeast.gov.uk

7.3 Equal Opportunities:

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of this procedure to ensure we serve the whole borough, tackle inequality and allocate affordable housing fairly and objectively.

Financial contribution Agreement

Distribution of funds

Approval Process

Planning decision results in a financial contribution in lieu of on-site affordable housing

Priority 1: Council-owned or Council-led developments in the borough through the Housing Development Framework or another appropriate procurement route.

Priority 2: Relevant planning applications checked to determine suitable sites to bring forward for affordable homes.

Priority 3: Liaison with Town and Parish Councils and Registered providers to bring forward affordable housing in high priority areas.

*****The only exception to this process is where a financial contribution is prescriptive in where and how it must be spent***

Application form (Appendix 2) and all other supporting documentation received.

Application approved and added to list of live funding applications (in date order of receipt).

If/when financial contribution is available, suitable applications provisionally allocated the funding.

Offer letter sent to applicant stating specific terms and timescales for use of the funds.

Funds paid following provision of evidence (invoice) of completion.

Verification process carried out by Strategic Housing Team, including:

- Credit check on applicant
- Inspection of site ownership
- Proof of planning application status
- Review of Project plan and timescale for development

Key priorities and financial viability assessed by Head of Housing and Financial Management Officer.

Approval sought for funds to be spent as outlined within the Council's Constitution

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**CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL
APPLICATION FOR CHESHIRE EAST
COMMUTED SUMS FUNDING**

DETAILS OF APPLICANT(S) (PART 1)	
Name of Organisation:	
Registered or Trading name: (if different from above)	
Contact name:	
Position in organisation:	
Contact email address:	
Contact telephone number:	
Registered address:	
County	
Postcode	
Correspondence address (if different from above)	
County	
Postcode	
Organisation Type (e.g. Town Council, Parish Council, Registered provider or Developer etc.)	
Company registration number (if applicable)	
Year established	

Organisations principal business activity	
--	--

PROJECT PROPOSAL (PART 2)	
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Project name	
Address	
Town	
Postcode (if known)	
Co-ordinates of site (if known)	
What is the site area (hectares)	
Type of development (e.g. new build, conversion or regeneration project)	
Is this phase of the project part of a wider scheme?	Yes/No
If YES, please give further details	
Have you received any other public funding in relation to this project?	Yes/No
If YES, please give details of the public agency, type and amount of funding	

SUMMARY OF PROJECT
Please give a brief description of the project (max. 500 words) which clearly shows what the Commuted sums funding will provide:

Cont.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING							
Please specify the type and tenure of affordable housing that will be developed with the funding?							
Total Affordable housing	Apartments			Houses			
	Studio	1 bed	2 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
TENURE							
Total Affordable housing	Rented			Intermediate			
Type, e.g. social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership or equity, discounted for sale or rent to buy etc.							

DETAILS OF SITE OWNERSHIP	
Do you own or control the site?	Yes/No
If YES, what is the nature of the control?	
If NO, how do you intend achieving this?	
Does any public body have an ongoing interest in this site?	Yes/No
If YES, please give details of the public body	

PLANNING	
Is Planning permission in place for the project?	Yes/No
If YES, what type of planning permission is in place? (e.g. outline or full)	
Planning reference	
Date planning permission was approved	
Has a Section 106 agreement or Unilateral undertaking been signed by all parties?	Yes/No
If YES, what date was the legal agreement signed?	
Are there any outstanding Reserved Matters or planning conditions, e.g. discharge of conditions?	Yes/No
If YES, please give details	

PROJECT FUNDING (PART 3)	
Total project costs	£
Estimated capital value	£
Total funding requested	£

TIMESCALE	
Expected start date	
Expected completion date	
Are you able to begin work on site within 3 months of you receiving notification that your bid has been successful?	Yes/No
If NO, please give details of any time constraints that could affect the project?	
Please note: all offers of funding are time sensitive and must comply with the timescales highlighted in the S106 agreements and funding offer letter.	

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
All applications for Commuted sum funding should be submitted with the following supporting evidence:
Project Plan, including a detailed financial breakdown for the project
Plan showing layout of development
Certificate of title to the site
Evidence of Planning permission in place

DECLARATION

I confirm that I have read the Cheshire East Council Commuted sums policy and that the details provided within this funding application are accurate:

Name	
Position in organisation	
Signature	
Date	

STATE AID COMPLIANCE (SUBSIDY)

This assistance may constitute State aid as defined under Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union and The State Aid (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which may come into force following our exit from the EU. European Commission rules prohibit any undertaking from receiving more than €200,000 (sterling cash equivalent) 'de minimis' aid over any period of three fiscal years. Any 'de minimis' aid granted over the €200,000 (sterling cash equivalent) limit may be subject to repayment with interest. If you have received any 'de minimis' aid over the last three years (from any EU or UK source) it is your responsibility to inform us of the details of the dates and amounts of aid received.

Please note: If the proposal is successful applicants will be asked to demonstrate that their application is State Aid compliant before any funding is released.

All application forms and supporting evidence should be sent to:

Commuted Sum Applications
Housing Strategy Team
Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Sandbach
CW11 1HZ

If you require further clarification or support in completing this form, please contact:

Pam Henriksen, Housing Policy Officer

Tel: 01270 685 912/07545 423 060 or email: pam.henriksen@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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Work Programme – Economy and Growth 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
EG/16/21-22	16 Sep 2021	First Homes & Affordable Housing - increasing opportunities	To provide guidance on First Homes initiative, and opportunities to promote Affordable Housing.	Director of Growth and Enterprise				A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/05/21-22	16 Sep 2021	Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025 - Feedback on Consultation	To provide feedback on the consultation and seek approval for the final version of the strategy.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/08/21-22	16 Sep 2021	Report from Tatton Park Board	To receive an update from Tatton Park Board.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/07/21-22	16 Sep 2021	Rural Strategy Update	To receive an update on the Rural Strategy.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/14/21-22	16 Sep 2021	Tourism Recovery Plan	To endorse the plan to support the Tourism Sectors recovery from the impact of the pandemic.	Director of Growth and Enterprise				A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/15/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Housing Enforcement Policy - Update	To present and seek approval for the updated policy.	Director of Growth and Enterprise				A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/04/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Capital Development Project - Broadways Meadows MSCP	To approve a Development Project for a new Multi Storey Car Park in Wilmslow.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			yes	A thriving and sustainable place	

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
EG/06/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Connecting Cheshire - Future Phases	To report on digital connectivity and infrastructure future phases.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/09/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Corporate Asset Management Strategy	To seek endorsement of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/11/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Mid Year Finance Review	To receive an update on the financial position for 2021/22 and to note or approve supplementary virements as required.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	An open and enabling organisation	
EG/10/21-22	30 Nov 2021	Update on Town Centre Regeneration Programmes	To receive an update on Town centre regeneration initiatives in Crewe and Macclesfield.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			yes	A thriving and sustainable place	
EG/13/21-22	11 Jan 2022	Medium Term Financial Strategy	To respond to the budget consultation.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			yes	An open and enabling organisation	
EG/12/21-22	11 Jan 2022	Third Quarter Finance Review	To receive an update on the financial position for 2021/22 and to note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Growth and Enterprise			Yes	An open and enabling organisation	