

Children and Families Committee

Agenda

Date: Monday, 10th January, 2022

Time: 10.30 am

**Venue: Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe
CW1 2BJ**

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

The importance of undertaking a lateral flow test in advance of attending any committee meeting. 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 meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website.

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

1. Apologies for Absence

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

For requests for further information

Contact: Josie Lloyd

Tel: 01270 686 466

E-Mail: josie.lloyd@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 5 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 08 November 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. **Covid-19 Schools Update (Verbal)**

6. **Update on the Ofsted Inspection** (Pages 11 - 14)

To receive a presentation on the recent Ofsted inspection.

7. **Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020-21**
(Pages 15 - 40)

To receive the annual report of the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

8. **School Organisation: Update on the proposal for a primary school, Kingsley Fields, Nantwich, following consultation** (Pages 41 - 56)

To receive an update on the establishment of a new primary school in Nantwich.

9. **School Organisation: Proposal for the provision of a new primary school, Basford East, Shavington, Crewe** (Pages 57 - 74)

To consider and approve the progression of the free school presumption process to open a new primary school in Basford East, Crewe.

10. **2021/22 Financial Year Review** (Pages 75 - 114)

To receive an update on the financial position for 2021/22. To note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.

11. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 - 2025/26** (Pages 115 - 158)

To respond to budget consultation for Children and Families Services. (Appendix 2 to follow).

12. **Children and Families Winter 2021 Active Grant Briefing** (Pages 159 - 192)

To receive an update on government grant funding for Children and Families.

13. **Children and Families Performance Report Quarter 2 2021-22** (Pages 193 - 200)

To note the performance of Children's Services for quarter 2.

14. **Work Programme** (Pages 201 - 204)

To consider the work programme and determine any required amendments.

Membership: Councillors M Addison, L Anderson, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman (Vice-Chair), D Edwardes, K Flavell (Chair), S Handley, G Hayes, I Macfarlane, J Saunders, L Smetham and L Smith

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 8th November, 2021 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)
Councillor C Bulman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L Anderson, M Beanland, J Clowes (substitute), D Edwardes,
S Handley, G Hayes, I Macfarlane, J Saunders, L Smetham and L Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Ali Stathers-Tracey, Director of Prevention and Early Help
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14 – 19 Skills
Mark Bayley, Head of School Infrastructure & Outcomes
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning
Shelley Brough, Head of Integrated Commissioning
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager (People) and Deputy Monitoring
Officer
Paul Goodwin, Head of Financial Services & Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Addison and J Buckley.
Councillor J Clowes attended as a substitute.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 be approved as a
correct record.

30 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Ruben Barrow, a Member of Youth Parliament, attended the meeting to
speak in support of the Crewe Youth Zone. The Chair invited him to speak
at item 6 rather than during public speaking.

31 CARE AT HOME RECOMMISSION

The committee received a report which sought approval for the redesign and re-commission of a new Children's Care at Home Purchasing System.

There was extensive debate and concerns were raised by some Members about supporting the recommendations in the report without further detail. A number of Members expressed a view that this report required scrutiny from the Finance Sub-Committee before returning to the Children and Families Committee.

A motion was moved and seconded which sought to approve the recommendations outlined in the report and the motion was declared lost.

A further motion was moved and seconded to refer the item to the Finance Sub-Committee for scrutiny and for the report to be brought back to the Children and Families Committee following this. The motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be referred to the Finance Sub-Committee for scrutiny.
2. That the report be brought back to the Children and Families Committee for consideration following scrutiny at the Finance Sub-Committee.

32 CREWE YOUTH ZONE

The committee received a report which provided an update on the progress made to date to develop a Crewe Youth Zone, including an outdoor satellite site, following Cabinet approval in October 2020.

Ruben Barrow, a Member of Youth Parliament spoke in support of this item and the committee thanked him for his contribution.

A detailed business case would provide more information on arrangements and a further report would be brought back to the committee. The committee received assurances that safe walking routes and parking would be considered within the plans.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee note the report
2. That the committee note that a further Children and Families Committee report will be prepared to seek approval for the detailed arrangements for the opening, operation and governance of the Crewe Youth Zone.

33 SEND STRATEGY

The committee received a report which set out the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 1 September 2021 – 31 August 2024 and the consultation and engagement that has occurred to compile the SEND Strategy and associated action plan.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee approve the SEND Strategy and associated action plan for 2021 – 2024.
2. That the committee receive an annual report on the progress being made against the vision, values and actions contained in the SEND Strategy.

34 SCHOOL TRANSPORT UPDATE

The committee received an update on school transport, including the arrangements in relation to the additional transport provided as a result of COVID-19, implementation of the new COVID guidance from September 2021 and progress in relation to the transfer of Transport Service Solutions (TSS) functions to Cheshire East Council.

A question was raised regarding safe walking routes and it was agreed that Mark Bayley would take this away to ensure transport is not looked at in isolation but to be considered alongside walking routes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That Mark Bayley take away the request to consider safe walking routes alongside transport.

The committee adjourned for a short break.

35 ALL AGE SENSORY IMPAIRMENT STRATEGY

The committee received a report setting out the All Age Sensory Impairment Strategy which had been developed in partnership with Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group following formal consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the committee approve the All Age Sensory Impairment Strategy.

36 CHESHIRE EAST JOINT MARKET POSITION STATEMENT

The committee received a report which outlined the results of the consultation process and presented the final version of the Joint Market Position Statement 2021-25 for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the committee approve the final version of the Market Position Statement 2021-25 as outlined in appendix 1.

37 WORK PROGRAMME

Before considering the work programme, Mark Bayley was invited to provide a verbal update to the committee on the Covid-19 position in schools following the half term break. A concern was raised about Year 6 SATs due to take place next year with a high number of pupils having had regular time out of education due to Covid-19 and it was agreed that Mark Bayley would look into this outside the meeting. A further question was raised regarding what is being done to look at the impact of Long Covid on children and it was agreed that this would be raised with the Director of Public Health. It was agreed that this verbal update would be added as a standing item to the agenda.

The committee considered the work programme. It was agreed that two new items on the recent Ofsted inspection and on support grants would be added to the January agenda. The Finance Third Quarter Review, Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Self Evaluation of Children's Services would be deferred to February. It was requested that the S151 Officer would send an update to all Members to explain the reasons for delay in the finance reporting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Covid-19 Schools Update (Verbal) be added as a standing item to the agenda.
2. That Mark Bayley take away the question on Year 6 SATs to look into outside the meeting.
3. That the question of looking into the impact of Long Covid in children be raised with the Director of Public Health.
4. That the agreed changes be made to the work programme.
5. That the S151 Officer send an update to all Members on the reasons for the delay in the financial reporting.

38 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The committee received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting held on 14 September 2021.

A question was raised as to whether the minutes of the Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub Committee should be received by the Children and Families Committee and it was agreed that this would be looked into outside the meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee be received and noted.
2. That the question of the Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub Committee minutes being received by the Children and Families Committee be looked into.

39 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS

It was noted that an urgent decision was taken on behalf of the committee to undertake an accelerated procurement to recommission two residential Children's Homes.

RESOLVED:

That the decision be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10:30 and concluded at 13:20

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)

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8 December 2021

Dr Lorraine O'Donnell
Chief Executive
Cheshire East Council
Municipal Buildings
Earle Street
Crewe
CW1 2BJ

Dear Lorraine

Focused visit to Cheshire East children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the focused visit to Cheshire East children's services on 3 to 4 November 2021. Her Majesty's Inspectors for this visit were Kathryn Grindrod HMI and Russel Breyer HMI.

Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need or subject to a protection plan. Specifically, inspectors considered the application of thresholds, step-up/step-down arrangements, and children subject to edge of care or pre-proceedings support.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. This visit was carried out fully on site.

Headline findings

An inspection of Cheshire East children's services took place in November 2019, when the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were found to require improvement to be good. Since that time, there has been improvement in the overall quality of work with children who are in need of help or protection.

Assessments and plans are mainly thorough and focused on improving outcomes for children. In most parts of the service, more effective management oversight is ensuring that children's needs are met well, including through provision of relevant services. A child-focused programme of auditing is driving practice improvement and providing senior leaders with an accurate oversight of practice.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice?

- The identification of contingency arrangements in child-in-need plans.
- The consistency and effectiveness of management oversight for disabled children.
- The completion of audit recommendations to further improve experiences for children.

Main findings

COVID-19 rates reached their highest levels to date in Cheshire East in October 2021. During the pandemic, the local authority has experienced pressures in terms of capacity while leaders have attended to competing demands on their time. Despite this, the leadership team has overseen the safe reduction in the number of children in the borough requiring help and protection through children-in-need or child-protection plans. The quality of social work with these children and their families has improved overall during this time.

Children in Cheshire East benefit from stable and meaningful relationships with their social workers. Children have frequent opportunities to express their wishes and feelings, and social workers complete purposeful and creative direct work with children to better understand their experiences. While children's wishes are considered in plans, written records are not always clear about whether children have the opportunity to be actively involved in meetings about them.

Timely assessments of children's needs include careful consideration of family history and children's experiences to appropriately identify strengths and risks for children. The views and opinions of children, parents and relevant professionals are sought effectively to inform assessment conclusions.

Children who need help or protection are identified as a result of effective assessments of risk and need. Thresholds for working with children are appropriately applied. However, some assessments do not fully consider children's identities when reaching decisions, and assessments are not always updated promptly when children's circumstances change. For a small number of children, this has resulted in a delay in identifying and responding to their changing needs.

Most children in need of help or protection have written plans that are regularly reviewed and updated. Most written plans are clear about what needs to happen and who is responsible. While social workers can verbally describe the positive impact their work is intended to have on children's daily lives, some written plans still measure success by the completion of tasks rather than impact for children.

Contingency arrangements in child-in-need plans are not always sufficiently well formed or detailed. Management oversight is also not always fully responsive to children's changing needs, and child-in-need meetings do not always lead to the

identification of drift for children. This all means that, when situations deteriorate for children in need, alternative decisive action is not always taken promptly.

Family support networks are routinely considered to offer immediate support for children and families. This helps families to build resilience and lessens the need for external professional involvement. Family support networks are not explored well enough in longer-term contingency planning.

Most child-in-need and child-protection review meetings involve relevant professionals and their views feed into planning for children. Professionals share children's wishes and feelings in formal meetings. Parents are routinely involved in review meetings and their views can be seen in plans.

Child-protection chairs review progress for children subject to child-protection plans between formal meetings. Child-protection chairs routinely challenge practice when there are unnecessary delays. This usually results in managers and social workers agreeing and implementing remedial action to address the concerns.

Children receive pre-proceedings support when it is appropriate given the nature or duration of concerns about them. Improved senior-management oversight of early pre-proceedings work is having a positive impact on the timeliness and effectiveness of this input for children. Cases are appropriately stepped down from pre-proceedings when concerns lessen as a result of effective and focused support.

Care proceedings are issued when concerns are such that legal intervention is required to keep children safe. For a small minority of children, there are unnecessary delays in progressing pre-proceedings processes or issuing care proceedings. However, the local authority ensures that support is in place to promote the immediate safety and well-being of children experiencing these delays.

The local authority's edge of care service, @ct, has a positive impact for children who are at risk of needing to come into care. This ensures that children remain with their families when possible and appropriate. One child told us that their @ct worker helped them to be more confident about their feelings 'for definite'.

Most managers have regular oversight of social work with children and their families. Supervision takes place with sufficient frequency in most teams, and children's wishes and experiences are usually considered in discussions. However, management oversight does not always challenge and prevent drift for all children effectively. This is particularly evident in the service for disabled children, where supervision and management oversight are less regular and effective. While children are not left at risk of immediate harm as a result, they experience a more reactive service because of this weaker management grip.

Elected members and senior leaders are well informed on the quality of practice with children through receipt of regular and accurate reports about strengths and progress in areas for development.

A child-focused auditing programme provides a clear overall picture of the impact of practice for children across the service. Thematic findings from this work inform areas for future service development. For example, the identification through audit of the need to strengthen support for children at risk of neglect has led to more effective responses to these children. While the impact of individual audits can be seen in subsequent practice with some children, this is not always evident for every child whose records have been audited.

Social worker caseloads are high in some teams that work with children in need of help and protection. Despite this, the quality of practice continues to be such that, for most children, there is no detrimental impact. However, the lack of additional capacity in the system means a minority of children experience drift should their social worker be unexpectedly away from work.

Social workers feel supported by managers and leaders at all levels of children's services, and they enjoy working in Cheshire East. The workforce is stable and so children benefit from enduring relationships with their social workers. A comprehensive training offer is well used and appreciated by social workers, who can describe the direct positive impact their training has for the children they work with.

Social workers are able to talk about the local authority's strategic aims and ambitions and they know how their roles fit in in the local authority's plans. Senior leaders are successfully embedding a child-centred culture across the child-in-need and child-protection teams in Cheshire East.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning the next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Grindrod
Her Majesty's Inspector



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2020-21
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/34/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This report will provide the Children and Families Committee with an update on progress against the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities over 2020-21. It also includes the plans for the partnership for the next year to make Cheshire East a safer place for children and young people.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report will provide the Children and Families Committee with an update on progress against the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities over 2020-21. It also includes the plans for the partnership for the next year to make Cheshire East a safer place for children and young people.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is recommended to scrutinise the progress by the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and the impact for children and young people, recognising the achievements and progress made, and to seek assurance around ongoing areas for further development.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan aim to 'protect and support our communities and safeguard children from abuse, neglect and exploitation, adults at risk, and families from abuse,' and its objective that 'children receive the right support, by the right people, at the right time, so they are effectively protected from harm, and are supported to stay within their families and communities.'
- 4.2. One of the key areas of focus for the Children and Families Committee is to review and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for children and young people.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. This section is not applicable.

6. Background

- 6.1. The statutory guidance Working Together 2018 requires each area to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in their local area. The report has been scrutinised by the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership statutory representatives from Cheshire East Council, Cheshire Police and Cheshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1. The Council is defined by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as a safeguarding partner in partnership with the Cheshire NHS clinical commissioning group and chief officer of police for Cheshire. This partnership operates within that guidance.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1. The council, along with other partners, contribute financially to support the partnership's activity. Financial plans are due to be reviewed to ensure that the service can continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people in Cheshire East.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1. Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring as a partnership, we work together to make Cheshire East a great place to be young.

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1. Good quality practice with families ensures that all children and young people's needs are taken into account and supported.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. Developing high quality practitioners and managers is crucial in supporting us to achieve consistently good practice for children and young people. The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership provides a training programme and coordinates the development of practice guidance which contributes to this.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There are reputational and financial risks of not providing good Children’s Safeguarding Services, as well as risks to individual children and young people. The council must continue to ensure that these risks are minimised by ensuring effective plans are in place to improve where areas for development are identified.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. Vulnerable children and young people are present in all communities in Cheshire East.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The partnership’s priorities contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan aim to ‘protect and support our communities and safeguard children from abuse, neglect and exploitation, adults at risk and families.’

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. Children’s Services continue to support the council with climate change objectives.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alistair Jordan CЕСP Business Manager Alistair.Jordan@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Annual Report 2020-21
Background Papers:	None

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Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2020-21

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Foreword from the Partnership Chair

This is the second annual report of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership, it covers the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. We want to first recognise that through this period the global pandemic COVID-19 affected everyone in the Cheshire East community.

This report recognises the progress the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has made throughout this most challenging of years and those challenges that remain that we will continue to address in 2021/22.

If you have any questions about the report or the information contained in it, please contact me at CESCP@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Paula Wedd, Chair, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Summary

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has continued to lead the safeguarding work of the borough. Much of this year has been spent building upon the culture that supports the collaborative working arrangements needed to safeguard Cheshire East's vulnerable children and adults to ensure that despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic that safeguarding of children remained a priority for all services.

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has engaged multi-agency partners in the assurance process associated with delivery of the agreed work programme, encompassing core business and priorities relating to neglect, contextual safeguarding and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children. This has included partnership scrutiny, and constructive check and challenge. Evidence of actions arising from audits and case reviews have been scrutinised and signed off by the Quality

Assurance sub-group. Opportunities for learning and adopting good practice from peers has been reflected in the work programme.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership

The statutory guidance [Working Together 2018 \(WT18\)](#) requires each area to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in their local area. This report sets out what we have done over the past year and what we plan to do next year to make Cheshire East a safer place for children and young people.

This report is aimed at everyone involved in safeguarding children, including members of the local community, professionals and volunteers who work with children, young people, and families.

A copy of this report will be sent to senior leaders and stakeholders in our area, including the Chief Executive of the Council, the Leader of the Council, and the Executive Director of Children's Services. The report will also be sent to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People's Trust Board, Community Safety Partnership, and the Council's Children and Families Committee. Individual agencies will also be encouraged to present this report through their internal Boards and scrutiny arrangements.

The Partnership

Senior representatives from the statutory partners: Cheshire East Council, Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and Cheshire Police, are the [Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership](#). Also represented are the Youth Justice Service, National Probation Service, Cheshire and Greater Manchester Community Rehabilitation Company, Public Health, Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and East Cheshire Trust

NHS. These Executive members work together to keep children and young people safe from harm.

The partnership was responsible for scrutinising the work of its partners to ensure that services provided to children and young people make a positive difference.

The main role is to co-ordinate and to ensure the effectiveness of work undertaken by each agency on the board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Cheshire East.

The chair of the partnership was held by Cheshire East Council's Executive Director of People for quarters 1-3 of 2020/21. When the Director of People left the authority the opportunity to rotate the chair to the Clinical Commissioning Group was taken in line with the partnership chairing plan.

Independent Scrutiny

Due to the ongoing challenges of managing services during the COVID crisis the intention to conduct a peer challenge exercise with another Safeguarding Children's Partnership in the region were not realised. It is anticipated that an exercise like this will be conducted in the future.

The partnership commits to active involvement in Cheshire East Council's scrutiny arrangements, including the Chief Executive's quarterly safeguarding review meeting.

The partnership has commissioned two local safeguarding practice reviews led by independent chairs during 2020/21. One of those has concluded its enquiries and the other will do so during 2021/22.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission revisited the area of Cheshire East in May 2021 to evaluate whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing the two areas of significant weakness for children and

young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) detailed in the written statement of action in 2018. They concluded that sufficient progress has been made in addressing all the issues identified at the initial inspection in 2018.

Our Vision for the Children and Young People of Cheshire East

It is the right of every child and young person in Cheshire East to enjoy a healthy and happy childhood, grow up feeling safe from abuse or neglect and thrive in an environment that enables them to fulfil their potential.

We aim to do this through our collective commitment to:

- strategic Leadership across the partnership – to make the safety of children and young people a priority
- challenge – through focused inquiries or investigations into practice or issues based on evidence, practitioner experience and the views of children and young people, for us to improve together
- learning – to achieve the highest standards of development and to ensure all practitioners have the skills and knowledge to be effective.

This will include listening to the voice of children and young people and using what we hear to inform best practice.

The shared values are at the heart of all we do and are actively demonstrated through our behaviours and promoted throughout our respective organisations:

We will:

- ❖ Actively involve children and young people and their families, as what they say will shape the way that we work.
- ❖ Listen to frontline practitioners and their managers and take their views into account.
- ❖ Act in an open and transparent way and foster a culture of challenge, scrutiny, and support across the partnership.

- ❖ Ensure that our staff have the skills, support, and supervision to keep children and young people safe.
- ❖ Share information and intelligence that will enable us to keep our children and young people safe.
- ❖ Celebrate strengths and positive achievement. We are committed to continuously improve.
- ❖ Embed the principles of Signs of Safety across our partnership.
- ❖ Work with other strategic partnerships in Cheshire East to ensure that our plans are aligned to maximise the opportunities for children and young people.
- ❖ Hold multi-agency professional events to update the settings on the work of the partnership but also include them in delivering the key safeguarding objectives.

Children and Young People in Cheshire East - Our Child Population

Cheshire East is a relatively affluent area, and we know that most of our children and families experience good outcomes. However, there are areas where child poverty and associated deprivation is endemic and intergenerational.

Cheshire East has 18 areas which are within the top 20% of the most deprived areas in England, affecting 31,600 people or 8.5% of Cheshire East's population. Thirteen of these areas are in Crewe, with two in Macclesfield, one in Wilmslow, one in Alsager, and one in Congleton. Overall, relative deprivation has increased since 2010, as only sixteen areas were previously within the top 20% of most deprived areas.

There are approximately 75,400 children and young people under the age of 18 in Cheshire East, 51% are male and 49% are female. Children and young people make up approximately 20% of the total population.

8.8% of primary pupils are entitled to free school meals (an indicator of deprivation) compared to 14.2% nationally. 8.4% of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals compared to 13.3% nationally.

Overall, 92% of individuals are of British ethnicity. The biggest minority groups in Cheshire East are 'white other' (2.5%), Asian/ Asian British (2%), and mixed/ multiple ethnicities (2.6%).

The majority of pupils' ethnic backgrounds are reported to be White British (87% of primary pupils and 89% of secondary pupils), albeit the ratio has reduced slightly from last year

There are just under 100 different first languages recorded for primary and secondary pupils, although only 6.9% of primary pupils and 4.7% of secondary pupils have a first language other than English, compared to national figures of 21.2% and 16.6%, respectively, so although increased from last year it is at a lesser rate than the increase nationally.

The Child's Journey in Cheshire East

Cheshire East Consultation Service

The Cheshire East Consultation Service is the 'front door' to access services, support and advice for children, young people, and their families; from early help and support through to safeguarding and child protection. Co-located within the front door are the police, multi-agency Missing from Home Service, Child Exploitation Service and Domestic Abuse Hub.

	Consultation activity	No. converted to referral
2016/17	10,432	3,438 (33%)
2017/18	9,536	2,976 (31%)
2018/19	9,418	2,558 (27%)
2019/20	9,824	2,543 (26%)
2020/21	8,373	2,273 (27%)

Number of consultations over the past four years that resulted in a referral to Children's Social Care

There has been a 15% reduction in consultations activity since last year. Conversion to referral has increased by 1% to 27%.

Early Help

We are increasingly trying to intervene earlier through the partnership work driven forward by the Early Help Together Board and our emerging locality working model. However, we continue to see the issues that families are facing becoming increasingly complex; this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown and the ability of partners to deliver home-based and school-based work in the first part of 2020/21. The Early Help Brokerage Service is a service with a dedicated team whose aim is the allocation of early help cases. This will provide timely referrals to early help, and identification of the best service to meet the needs of the child or young person and their family.

We have refreshed our Early Help action plan to focus on tackling neglect and understand the mental health challenges that have emerged through lockdown; we intend to skill up our frontline practitioners to better respond to the needs of children and parents particularly those who will struggle to get back to school and college.

The local authority remains committed to continuous improvement and an effective range of services are in place across the continuum to meet need. This includes:

- ❖ High quality advice and information through the Family Information Service, support to our partners to engage with and deliver Signs of Wellbeing early help services, and supported access to more targeted services through our Locality Support Officers and the Early Help Brokerage Service.
- ❖ The Early Start Service deliver services in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and support families to achieve social mobility and early childhood health, ensuring localised intervention strategies between Children Centres and across our 480 private sector providers and maintained childcare settings with a focus on speech and language and readiness for school and learning.
- ❖ Early Start Hubs (clusters of Children's Centres and community venues) embed the Parenting Journey consistently across all centres and we have continued to deliver this as online support throughout the lockdown period.
- ❖ Family Support is offered across the continuum of need, and resources are aligned to need across level 2 targeted and level 3 complex caseloads – although we are making positive strides to enable other agencies to lead early help assessments and plans.
- ❖ Family Support Services lead the council provision for parenting interventions.
- ❖ Supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to access provision post 16 years.

Children in Need and Child Protection

Assessments Completed in 45 days

Local authority	2016-17	2018-19	2019-20	20-21
England	83%	83%	84%	N/A
North West	81%	84%	81%	N/A
Cheshire East	88%	81%	86%	74%
Statistical neighbour	82%	86%	84%	N/A

Assessment timescales

The total number of assessments completed in the year was 3,040 compared to (3,129) last year. 74% of these were completed within 45 days.

Children in Need

A Child in Need is defined as; a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired without provision of services from the local authority, or he/she has a disability.

As at the end of the year there were 2,082 children with open episodes – this equates to 269.4 per 10,000 compared to 272.5 last year (our statistical neighbours ranged from 196.7 to 347.2).

Child Protection

When the local authority receives a referral and information has been gathered during an assessment during which a concern arises that a child maybe suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required by Section 47 (S47) of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries.

The number of S47 enquiries initiated within the year was 940. The number of Initial Child Protection Conferences undertaken in the year was 319.

The percentage of S47 enquiries with an outcome of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) was 44%. The number of child protection plans (CPP) started in the year was 284.

Child Protection Numbers 2017-21

Key Indicators	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
CPPs lasting 2 years or more	1.1%	0.3%	0.3%	3.2%
CPP for a second or subsequent time	18%	26%	22%	28%
CP cases reviewed within required timescales	95%	98%	90%	93%
ICPC within 15 days	84%	81%	78%	79%

The data measures in the table above reflects that this year there has been a reduction in achieving the statutory timescales for multi-agency responses for children most at risk. For most children (79%) their needs and risk are considered in a timely way (15 days). We are aware of all the children where this falls outside the statutory timescales and the reasons for this are reported on a weekly basis. The impact for the child is minimised as an immediate temporary safety plan is agreed, and for those subject to a review a plan is already in place. We are not outliers in the national performance framework but would want improvement so that children at risk have the right interventions in a timely way.

The measure for children on second child protection plans is a priority indicator for the partnership as there has been an increase in 2020/21 and this is higher than we want it to be. The impact for children this suggests is that we are not ensuring they remain safe when we remove them from a plan. We know that for most of these children, their risk

relates to neglect. This is a task and finish priority for the partnership this year with the Neglect Strategy being updated.

The figure for child protection plans lasting more than two years has increased. The impact for children is that there are not significant delays for them in the progress of their plan to keep them safe.

Cared for Children

Cared for children are those that are looked after by the local authority either voluntarily or through a statutory order. On the 31 March 2021, 518 children and young people were being cared for by the local authority:

- ❖ 20.7 % live outside the local authority area and over 20 miles from home
- ❖ 8% live in residential children's homes
- ❖ 1% lived in residential specialist schools
- ❖ 67% were in foster placements (including friends and family approved foster placements).

On the 31 March 2021, 14 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were in the care of Cheshire East.

The figures show a number of young people live out of the area; many of these live nearby but across Cheshire East's border. Extensive work is underway to ensure there are sufficient local foster carers in Cheshire East to ensure where possible local placements are made.

In the last 12 months a total of 148 children have ceased to be cared for by the local authority. Of these, 26 children have been adopted; 13 children became subject of special guardianship orders; and 60 individuals have left care due to turning 18.

Care Leavers

On the 31 March 2021 there were 208 care leavers aged 17-21 who we were in touch with and supporting.

Listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people

CAN-DO Conference (Creative Act Now – Directly Online Conference)

Due to COVID restrictions it was not possible to hold the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Act Now Conference which for the previous 5 years had showcased the talent and knowledge of Cheshire East's children. In its stead, the Safeguarding Children in Education Service worked with several schools to develop and successfully deliver a **CAN-DO Conference (Creative Act Now – Directly Online Conference)**.

This provided the opportunity to feedback to children on actions taken in response to what they had said they were worried about at Act Now 2019 and what they thought we could do better:

- ❖ The development of a self-harm pathway that enables schools to be more aware and work with hospitals to offer support and help a young person who has self-harmed to understand what is happening to support them.
- ❖ You wanted to know what Children's social Care does:
 - we explained that we use the Signs of Safety approach and what that means including how we use a variety of approaches to communicate with you. This means that that other people know about and understand your problems and families are strengthened and work together meaning they stay together.

Several schools utilised virtual tools to develop presentations on cyber bullying, a real life journey through child sexual exploitation, self-harm,

trauma - how to help us, autism awareness, and a song celebrating how a school keeps its pupils safe. [These can be found here.](#)

November Children's Rights Month

November Children's Rights Month is an annual celebration of children's rights across the borough, developed by young people for adults to experience life in their shoes based on the 6 outcomes of the Children and Young People's Plan. Within Cheshire East we worked with Cheshire East Youth Council to make it a celebration of the positive participation of children and young people for services within Cheshire East.

Key events included:

- ❖ Loneliness and isolation opportunity - connect with others
- ❖ Staying safe online – switch off
- ❖ Recognising individual success – positive moments
- ❖ Body image and self-esteem – stretch and relax
- ❖ Exam stress and transitions – personal achievement
- ❖ Being kind and celebrating differences – thinking of others.

Review of Priorities for 2020-21

The following three partnership objectives underpin the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership business plan:

- ❖ Frontline Practice is consistently good, effective and outcome focused
- ❖ Listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people
- ❖ The partnership effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership agreed the following priorities to deliver these objectives in 2020/21:

We will improve frontline multi-agency practice through:

- ❖ Improving partnership engagement directly with frontline staff

- ❖ Continuing to drive developments around key safeguarding areas including children at risk of contextual safeguarding
- ❖ Embedding strengthening families
- ❖ Implementing our Neglect Strategy
- ❖ Implementing changes around the integrated front door
- ❖ Improving safeguarding arrangements for disabled children
- ❖ Improving identification and response around children and young people with mental health issues, including self-harming.

We will continue to improve the participation of young people in Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership business through:

- ❖ Ensuring that the voice of children and young people is central to Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership business.
- ❖ Engaging children and young people in co-producing information and support relevant to them.
- ❖ Ensuring that the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership celebrates children's rights and participation and the contribution of children and young people to safeguarding.
- ❖ Ensuring the voice of children and young people is central to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership training programme.

We will strengthen the partnerships through:

- ❖ Engaging the community through links with the voluntary and faith sector.
- ❖ Improving Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership role and traction in relation to developing early help.

Improvements against the Priorities

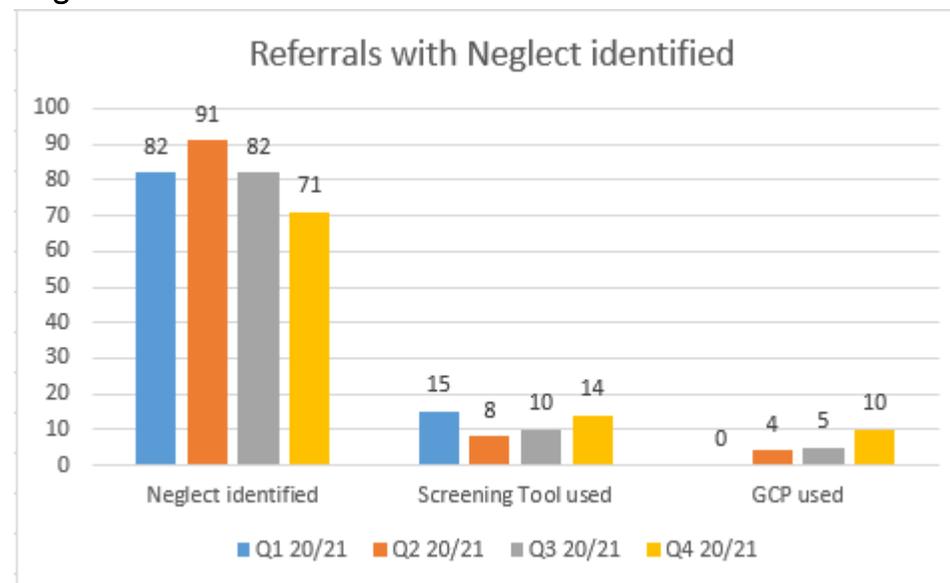
Improving engagement with frontline staff - e-bulletins

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has continued to publish its newflash and frontline bulletins. The frequency of these was increased due to the need to convey information to practitioners during the challenges of working during the pandemic. They have covered a variety of topics including:

- ❖ Child protection conferences and cared for reviews during these challenging times
- ❖ Assurance from the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre they are open usual apart from face to face.
- ❖ Domestic abuse risks and needs tool
- ❖ Foster Care Fortnight
- ❖ Safeguarding infants during the coronavirus pandemic: the ICON programme
- ❖ COVID-19: Stepped approach to caring for people who lack mental capacity and MCA: Liberty Protection Safeguards
- ❖ Safer Sleep
- ❖ Key Worker Parent/Carer Information
- ❖ Early Help Support
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Digital safety during COVID-19
- ❖ Summer Programme
- ❖ Preventative services sessions over the summer holidays to support families with transitioning back into school
- ❖ International White Ribbon Day
- ❖ COVID-19 safeguarding offer
- ❖ Mental Health Service Directory
- ❖ Local Safeguarding Adults Board Adult Safeguarding Bulletin
- ❖ Food and energy vouchers to support vulnerable children and families over winter
- ❖ Missing from Home and Care
- ❖ Coronavirus and Bereavement
- ❖ Trauma

Feedback from executive members and those participating in the COVID-19 response group has been that this method of communication is effective in supporting them in promoting the partnership and in disseminating safeguarding information within their services.

Neglect



During 2020/21 the Neglect Task and Finish Group developed the Neglect Strategy.

To inform this Strategy we have:

- ❖ researched the current partnership awareness and understanding of neglect using a survey
- ❖ used this information to develop 3 workstreams to support the development of the strategy as well as the training offer and performance measures

- ❖ Neglect is a priority for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.

To respond we will:

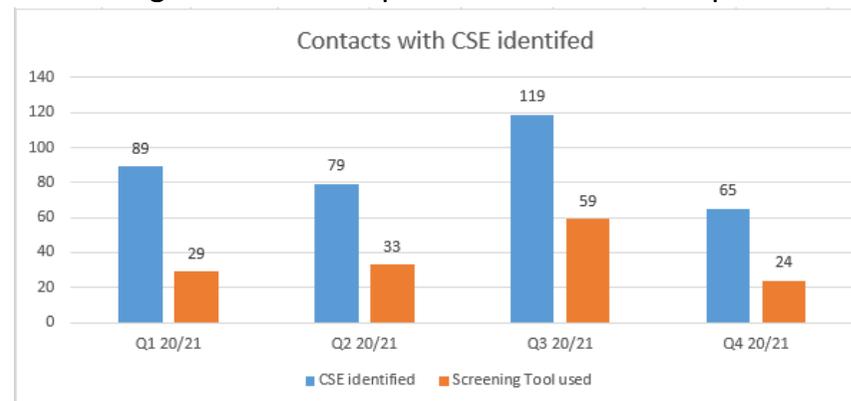
- ❖ develop practice guidance for all practitioners working with children and families who experience neglect at all levels of need
- ❖ review and launch the Early Help offer across all agencies
- ❖ each partner will take ownership and responsibility for promoting the Neglect Strategy within their organisation and embedding the practice
- ❖ further develop a partnership data set for neglect to continuously tell us what our picture is in Cheshire East
- ❖ develop a Neglect Strategic Board to analyse the data in Cheshire East including national comparators and research
- ❖ report findings of the board to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Quality Assurance Sub-group.

Measures for success – Activity that will tell us of the impact:

- ❖ multi-agency auditing regarding all aspects of neglect and the practice delivered to children and families to address neglectful parenting
- ❖ regular consultation with children and families regarding the impact of any level of intervention
- ❖ regular consultation with frontline practitioners to understand their confidence in practice and their view of their impact.

The [Neglect Strategy](#) along with practice guidance for working with children and families who experience neglect was launched in quarter 1 2021/22 and the training offered is being refreshed.

Continuing to drive developments around Child Exploitation



In 2020-21 there were 352 contacts to the front door where child exploitation was a factor affecting either the individual or a family member. This related to 304 separate children. 145 of these (41%) were accompanied by a screening tool. 173 of the contacts resulted in a referral to social care.

In 2020/21 the Child Exploitation Operational Group was established to share information monthly within a multi-agency arena to safeguard and protect children from potential sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, female genital mutilation, radicalisation and honour-based violence. The meeting provides an arena to share intelligence and knowledge on young people, persons of interest and places/premises where there could be links to such exploitation and/or significant harm beyond a young person home.

In Cheshire East child exploitation is a key priority for action for the next year.

Emotional health and wellbeing of our vulnerable children

Action	Indicator of Success	Progress 20/21	Plan 21/22
Examine the arrangements for, and effectiveness of work to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of vulnerable children, those on the edge of care and cared for children.	Development of a multi-agency approach to support children living with mental health issues from vulnerable backgrounds and where safeguarding concerns have been identified. To build on existing and emerging mental health pathways to ensure a comprehensive and responsive offer of support is available for children across the continuum of need framework and ensure that services are better aligned to the range of children and young people's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory of mental health services produced, including both adult and children's mental health. • Details of referrals and criteria for referral are included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor number of referrals received to mental health services. • Develop a scorecard to highlight any areas of concern.
Work with partners to understand the mental health needs of children who are out of school/on part-time timetables.	Key partners will understand the needs of these children, specifically those with unmet needs, and the board will have an agreed multi-agency action plan to address these needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task and finish group established to review current pathways which includes mental health commissioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency information sharing pathway will be implemented for children who are out of school or on part-time timetables.
Review the present pathway for sharing information between health and education regarding incidents of children and young people self-harming.	Development of a pathway that ensures there is timely and proportionate sharing between school and health following an incident of self-harm by a child or young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-harm notification pathway implemented across Cheshire. • School staff trained in Cheshire East by the Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) team on 'what to do when they receive a notification.' • Development and pilot of a leaflet for children on attendance at hospital on the assessment process by CAMHS, reason for information sharing and who will receive information in school. • Letter sent by all Cheshire East schools advising parents of self-harm notifications being received by schools to support children. • Initial quantitative and qualitative report from the SCiES team completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit completed in May 2021 which included number of notifications and evaluation of pathway. Report of findings and recommendations to be finalised. • Continue to monitor number of notifications being received by the SCiES team monthly and identify if there are areas where more awareness raising and training is needed. • Further qualitative report to evidence outcomes for children of the pathway. • Finalise information leaflet and review the final copy with children and young people before use.

Developing our Early Help Strategy

The Cheshire East Early Help Strategy sets out how partners who work with children, young people, their families and carers, will deliver services in a way which enables children to maximise their potential, are kept safe and, where appropriate, prevents escalation of needs that require targeted or intensive interventions from statutory agencies. The strategy sets out the ambition of all the partners in Cheshire East to 'get it right' for children, their families and carers, by providing support and early help that enables children to thrive within their family environment and improve their long-term outcome and goals. The strategy has five priorities:

1. The partnership has the right infrastructure to support the development of early help services
2. Children and families get the right service at the right time: all partners understand levels of need and referral pathways
3. Understand the training need required, to ensure that our practitioners are enabled to co-produce high quality assessments and plans
4. We understand the quality of our services and act on this to improve outcomes for children - in order to respond quickly to any areas for improvement within our services we need to have a comprehensive overview of our partnership offer, which we regularly review
5. We understand the needs of children and families in Cheshire East, and we have the right range of services to meet these that can be accessed locally

There is an action plan that sets out the key actions to achieve the priorities.

Learning and Improvement

The Learning and Improvement Sub-group have supported and improved safeguarding practice across agencies and have:

- ❖ received the Annual Training Report from the partnership's Training and Development Manager
- ❖ agreed an approach for delivering safeguarding training in the 'new normal'
- ❖ adapted the training charging policy in response to the COVID pandemic, removed any barriers of cost for all partners
- ❖ overseen the work of the task and finish groups working on
 - children living with mental health issues
 - contextual safeguarding
 - implementing the Local Safeguarding Practice Review recommendations actions
 - neglect.

Strengthening Partnerships

We will strengthen relationships with other key partnerships to improve the reporting, accountability and sharing of good practice

Key updates from Children's Services have been scheduled on the forward plan for the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure they have strategic oversight and scrutiny of the quality of children's services and the key issues for children and young people in Cheshire East.

The Partnership Chairs' Group has continued to meet during the year. It explores cross cutting issues within Business Plans and identifying shared risks.

Performance, Scrutiny and Challenge

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership has a comprehensive quality assurance framework, which can be found on our website. In 2020-21 this has provided the partnership with a range of quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the effectiveness of safeguarding in Cheshire East. The partnership has strategic oversight and scrutiny of the quality of children’s services and the key issues for children and young people in Cheshire East.

<p>Performance A quarterly picture, showing a clear trajectory of progress. Allowing us to set targets and evaluate our performance against our statistical neighbours.</p>	<p>Feedback from Children and Young People, Parents and Carers What children, young people and their families want and is important to them, what their experience is of our services.</p>
<p>Qualitative Information Detailed information on what is working well and areas for improvement for specific services, including what the causes of issues are.</p>	<p>Feedback from Staff What staff know would help them to work with families, what is working well, and what could work better.</p>

Quality Assurance Sub-group - Performance Monitoring

A range of quality assurance activity supports performance monitoring. Arrangements for this are robust and support and supplement partnership performance monitoring. This includes the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership multi-agency audit programme.

The scorecard covers a range of measures from all partners and is aligned with the areas of focus for the partnership. It provides oversight of safeguarding practice across the partnership.

The Quality Assurance Sub-group is effectively scrutinising and challenging partnership performance and driving improvements to partnership working. The Quality Assurance Subgroup has:

- ❖ undertaken audits on contextual safeguarding and vulnerable adolescents
- ❖ further developed the audit methodology which is much more comprehensive and inclusive with better practice-based findings and effective multi-agency debate and agreement on findings.
- ❖ scrutinised and monitored the progress of agreed actions from audits and reflective reviews
- ❖ scrutinised S175 submissions.

Multi-Agency Audit

This audit covered a range of ages and levels of need each time. The agencies audit their own involvement using a common tool. They all make judgements on the quality of partnership working. Agencies then came together to analysis the audits and make recommendations for improvements. The agreed improvements are then tracked to completion by the Learning and Improvement Sub-Group.

Contextual Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adolescents

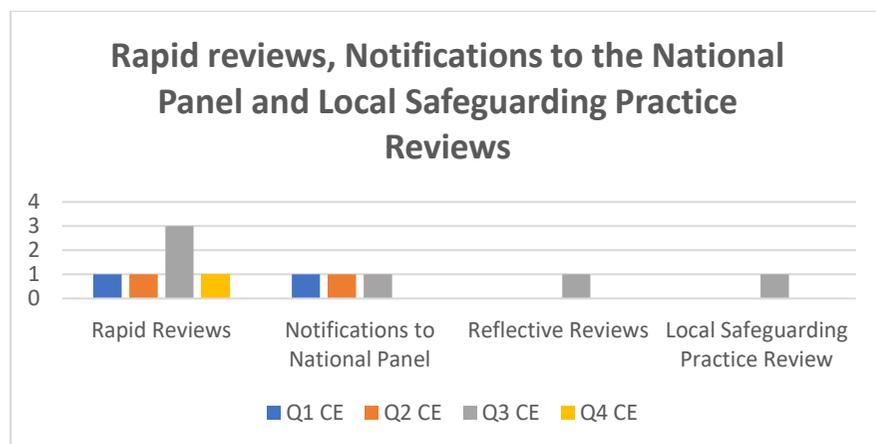
The audit findings are summarised below in terms of strengths and areas for improvement.

What are we worried about?	What's going well?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of professionals involved with each child – Some young people responded well to this, but others didn't. • Not all the information discussed within contextual safeguarding meetings can be recorded on LiquidLogic as it often contains police intelligence although Social Workers do receive the meeting minutes. • There were cases where the escalation process could have been considered. • Neglect features in all cases and there were re-referrals to social care due to a reoccurrence of neglect. • Several of the young people were excluded from school / alternative provisions or were on the verge of being excluded. Understanding on adverse childhood experiences / journey of the child and understanding of the contextual safeguarding issues should inform this process. • Specialist agencies, such as CGL and CAMHS, experiencing non engagement by either children or parents/carers. • Agencies not completing mapping exercises routinely to strengthen information within tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication and information sharing. Good evidence of partnership working. • Use of IOM / complex Youth Police Officers to support plan and young person. • Most agencies have a good understanding of the contextual safeguarding process. • @ct involvement - this acts as an effective disruption tactic in the work that they complete. • Professionals' ability to form good working relationships with young people and families. • Good working relationship with the police. • Evidence of the voice of the child within assessments and plans. • Positive change being evidenced in a lot of the cases audited.
What do we need to do?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be assured by partners that their frontline workers and managers are familiar with the escalation process is and use this when necessary. Assurance is required from CAMHS and CGL on what additional steps to engage are being tried and if consideration of a referral to other services is considered. 	

Serious Case Reviews

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership published a Serious Case Review (SCR) that had been delayed awaiting the conclusion of other processes. This is available on the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership website.

Rapid reviews, Notifications to the National Panel and Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews



The Rapid Review process has reviewed six cases during 2020/21; three of these resulted in notifications to the National Panel. Two of those progressed to Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews, of these one concluded during the year but could not be published due to ongoing criminal matters, the other was started in quarter 4 of 2020/21 and concluded in 2021. Where possible recommendations from all reviews have been progressed for example:

- ❖ dip sampling by health services and joint approach with Children’s Social Care implemented for under two year olds known to services

- ❖ shared email to practitioners issued highlighting what should be looked for when visiting and not to focus solely on the parent etc.
- ❖ new-birth face to face visits taking place since June, parents being given a choice depending on their circumstances.

Implementation was scrutinised by the Quality Assurance sub-group.

Section 175

Due to the impact of the Covid Pandemic on the education system a decision was made by the partnership to delay the request to schools to complete their Section 175 returns. This meant that it was conducted in October 2020 instead of July 2020.

The school’s submissions were extremely detailed and gave the partnership a very clear outline of schools safeguarding arrangements and what is under development. It provided the required assurance on safeguarding practice in schools. In addition, it also captured many of the ways in which schools have adapted and enhanced their safeguarding procedures during COVID.

In most primary schools, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is identified as the headteacher. All schools indicated that they have at least one named Deputy Safeguarding Lead. All schools indicated that they have a Designated Safeguarding Governor.

The Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) Team undertook analysis of the submissions and a report was scrutinised by the Quality Assurance Sub-group. SCiES are working with those schools who identified areas for improvement.

Type of setting	% completing S175
Independent School	82%
Primary School	93%
Secondary School	80%
Special School	100%
Colleges	67%
Nursery	100%

Joint Frontline Visits

The Joint Frontline visits during 2021 were completed by representatives of both the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership. These visits were undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period and therefore services were operating in a different manner. These visits have all been conducted virtually to comply with Public Health and NHS England guidance relevant at the time the visits took place.

In summary the visits made the following observations on children’s multi-agency safeguarding:

What’s working well?	What we are worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety well embedded in partners’ practice and assists in embedding a Think Family approach and encourages professional curiosity. • Links with schools and statutory agencies have been strengthened since COVID-19. • Identification of young carers via screening tools. • All partners had a good understanding of the work of the Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Board, newsletters, multi-agency communications and awareness raising activity. • Partners are clear regarding when to refer to the Children’s Safeguarding Partnership. • Clear evidence of consultation with the child or young person to ensure that their views and wishes are central to safeguarding activity. • Adapting ways of working whilst keeping everyone’s safety a priority has been crucial, ensuring appropriate PPE, vaccinations and keeping working/visiting areas as COVID-19 safe as can be. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in self-harm highlighted by children’s practitioners, closely linked to mental health • Difficult to pick up on Signs of Safety during virtual contact with children and young people. • It has been challenging to identify carers due to a lack of visitors to premises such as hospitals and GP surgeries where this would usually be identified. • Further thought required regarding how children’s safeguarding information is to reach some adult services. • Children and young people who use services and/or their carers having to repeat their history multiple times which can cause unnecessary distress, which could easily be avoided.
What needs to happen?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be more appropriate methods of sharing information in a sensitive manner, to ensure that children and young people who use services do not have to repeat their history multiple times, as acknowledged that this can be distressing and lead to a lack of engagement. • Training is needed to raise awareness in respect of complex safeguarding, and to ensure that practitioners are aware of local policy and guidance. • Frontline practitioners welcomed frontline visits and felt that this was a useful process, and it would be beneficial to increase the number of visits that are completed next year. 	

COVID-19

The initial response of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership was to create a COVID response meeting to which both statutory and relevant partners were invited. This initially sought assurance from all partners that safeguarding children was a priority within the COVID lockdown response. This assurance was provided by all partners.

The terms of reference were established as:

- ❖ to ensure that multi-agency working remains effective in safeguarding children at a time when there are challenges to practice and additional vulnerabilities
- ❖ to ensure that there is a common understanding and risk assessment across all partner agencies as to the service that is being delivered and how it is delivered to children and families and that there is early notification across the partnership of any area of work that may be compromised for any agency that may impact on children and young people's safeguarding
- ❖ To ensure during COVID-19 restrictions that there is fluid coordination of multi-agency resources to ensure the most vulnerable children and families are safeguarded.

The safeguarding partners also agreed measures and plans to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading of the virus to children, young people, and their families and within our multi-agency workforce. A document was also created on our offer to safeguard and support children and families during COVID-19 where services shared their offer during COVID and that has been updated as the situation has evolved.

Amongst other outcomes:

- ❖ the partnership created a forum for operational considerations and check/challenge in real time as the COVID situation has evolved
- ❖ analysis and challenge of the increasing use of Police Protection Orders in the early lockdown - each was examined and assured that the police had made the correct decisions when utilising this approach
- ❖ requested and received assurance regarding mental health provision
- ❖ processes have been developed for identifying cohorts of vulnerable children and planning partnership responses
- ❖ Child Protection Conferences have virtual and face to face attendance options for parents
- ❖ using the learning from first lockdown to inform joint working on further periods of restriction
- ❖ Summer 2020 back to school campaign encompassing reduction in anxieties and reluctance to return. Schools identified which children might be at risk of not returning.
- ❖ Cafcass and Children's Social Care worked on court listing to agree priority cases.

This meeting continued to meet weekly and then fortnightly through the remainder of 2020/21.

Training and Development

The training year 2020/21 was unprecedented with the impact of COVID on the workplace and how training could be delivered. The training team and training pool responded to ensure that safeguarding training could continue to be delivered to all partners across the children and families workforce. Initially this was one to one activity via Lync and small bespoke

sessions being delivered to partners on request and a particular focus on new starters. Also, a considerable amount of time was devoted to redeveloping the original face to face offer into a virtual delivery model.

With the deployment of Microsoft Teams, and the learning from the initial use of Lync it was possible to deliver all multi-agency safeguarding training courses via Teams. Support to the training pool at this time was another focus to ensure that the considerable benefit to safeguarding training from local safeguarding expertise was sustained. The multi-agency training pool need to be commended as all remained committed to the quality delivery of the safeguarding training program despite having to learn quickly how to use virtual platforms to deliver training.

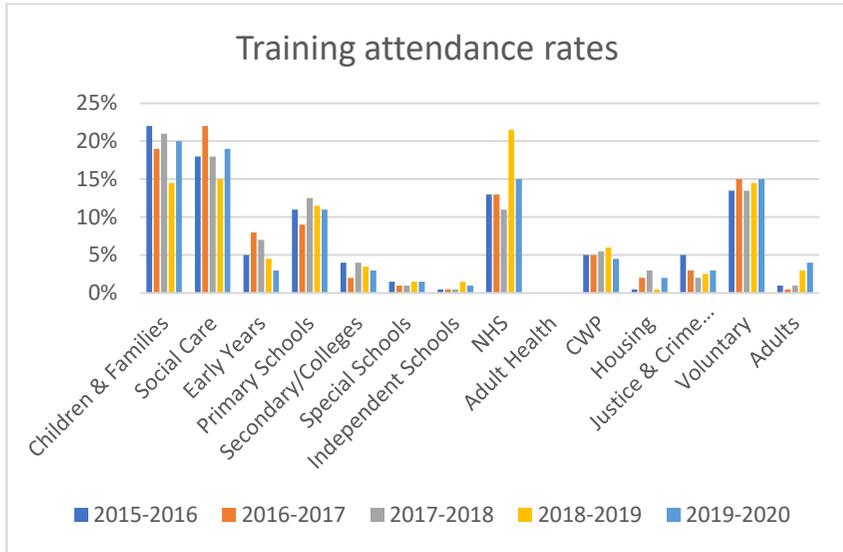
The information received will be useful to pass on to the families I support and during group facilitation. I have already checked that the ICON information is displayed within the Children's Centre and that my colleagues have completed the training too.

An informative and useful training session by trainers with exceptional knowledge bases and experience. Thank you.

Summary of the training year

Worries	Working Well	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT resources including connectivity not being fit for purpose. • Short notice on non-attendance because of the pandemic. • Support to participants when delivering sensitive and highly emotive training more difficult via virtual training delivery methods • Lack of group interactions available as initially IT resources could not facilitate group work easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke safeguarding learning opportunities were quickly developed to support one to one requests for training. • New starters were supported through Lync during the first four months of the pandemic specifically on Signs of Safety and Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2). • Successful conversion of all courses to a virtual package. • Signs of Safety two-day course successfully revised to a virtual modular approach which was easier for participants to access. • All members of the training pool have remained available to deliver training • Specific work undertaken with the NSPCC to convert GCP2 face to face training to a virtual delivery method with excellent results which have been commended by the NSPCC. • Evaluation data has been excellent during the transitional period. • Considerable savings made as no printing, venue, or refreshment costs over the training year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further review of training packages required to establish which courses if any need to revert to a face-to-face model of delivery. • Risk assessment required to ensure resuming any face-to-face delivery of training in the future is safe for participants, trainers, and other venue users. • Review and reintroduction of the charging policy to accommodate non-attendance fees, bespoke design and delivery of single agency courses and support to organisations requesting policy review.

Attendance rates



35 multi-agency courses were delivered in 20/21. 666 participants attended training, whilst this is a decline from last year’s activity this can largely be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of a platform to confidentially deliver training for the first four months of the training year, the work involved in converting all courses and the additional time and support needed for the training pool. This number does not include any one to one, bespoke or small team sessions which were delivered outside of the formal training program. Two courses are on hold for redevelopment and have not been delivered over the past 16 months.

In addition to the existing training programme the suite of e-Learning courses has been revised and 317 users have completed these, which is an increase on the preceding year.

Really difficult to deliver a full day’s training virtually so I was very impressed with how engaging and interactive it was.

The graph demonstrates the attendance percentages over the past five years, we are unable to accurately compare this year’s data due to the COVID pandemic.

Attendance is from across all areas of the children’s workforce, including health, education, social care, children and families and the voluntary sector. Notable exceptions include Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Northwest Ambulance Service, however given the multi-regional footprint of both organisations it is likely training may be accessed from outside Cheshire East. Attendance by adult practitioners is the highest recorded.

Impact on practice

80% of 2020/21 participants returned the in-course evaluation and indicated high levels of satisfaction for both content and delivery. 24% of post-course evaluations were returned and showed most participants found the training useful practically with children and families.

Grade Care Profile 2 evaluation was conducted separately and 94% of attendants said they would use the tool even if they haven’t had the opportunity to date in practice. All participants stated that it will be helpful in their work with families where neglect is a feature. Of the participants who have used the tool, 100% said families liked and understood the assessment. This is consistent with previous years.

Bespoke events, new courses, and development activity

The Training Team has delivered or coordinated the following learning and development processes alongside the existing training programme:

- ❖ Development of Grade Care Profile 2 refresher training.
- ❖ Support to three new Signs of Safety training pool members.
- ❖ Support to all training pool members to deliver courses confidently using virtual methods.
- ❖ Contribution to the Neglect Strategy - the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Training Manager has led on the Learning Sub-group for the Strategy.
- ❖ Working closely with Workforce Development to ensure courses are accessed appropriately by council staff.
- ❖ One to one support to new starters, particularly within the council.
- ❖ Support to regional colleagues regarding the harmful sexualised behaviour assessment toolkit.

Key Priorities for 2021-22

The local arrangements for Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership have been agreed by the partnership and published on its website. Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has agreed shared priorities for our partnership and have adopted these as their initial plan for supporting the protection and wellbeing of children and young people in Cheshire East. We will:

Improve frontline multi-agency practice through working on:

- Our approach to contextual safeguarding
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of our approach to neglect
- Emotional health and wellbeing of our vulnerable children

- Embedding the new arrangements.

We aim to do this through our collective commitment to:

- Strategic leadership across the partnership – to make the safety of children and young people a priority.
- Challenge – through focused inquiries or investigations into practice or issues based on evidence, practitioner experience and the views of children and young people, for us to improve together.
- Learning – to achieve the highest standards of development and to ensure all practitioners have the skills and knowledge to be effective. This will include listening to the voice of children and young people and using what we hear to inform best practice.



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	School Organisation: Update on the proposal for a Primary School, Kingsley Fields, Nantwich, following consultation
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/21/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	Nantwich North and West Nantwich South and Stapeley Willaston and Rope

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the previously approved committee paper, received by the Children and Families Committee on 12 July 2021, on the establishment of a new primary school in Nantwich. The full committee paper from July can be found via the link: [School Capital Organisation - 1. Kingsley Fields New School Proposal.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#).
- 1.2 At the July Children and Families Committee meeting, it was agreed that an update would be provided to members of the committee on the outcomes from the informal consultation which is a required stage in the Department for Education (DfE) Free School Presumption process. This report and appendix provides the detailed information for consideration and noting.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. At the Children and Families Committee meeting on 12 July 2021, consideration was given to a report which sought approval to proceed with undertaking the free school presumption process to identify and obtain agreement for a new school sponsor relating to the Kingsley Fields housing development. It was noted and approved that a period of informal engagement would be undertaken including briefings with local ward members, school leaders and wider stakeholders at the

beginning of the process to help inform the specification of the school. It was agreed that the service would provide an update to be presented to the Committee following this activity.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the committee receives and notes the summary of the feedback received following the 5-week informal representation period (Appendix 1) which is a required stage in the DfE Free School Presumption process to allow the opening of a new primary school in Nantwich.
- 3.2. That the committee supports the progression of the prescribed free school process in the generation and submission of the draft specification (stage 3) to the DfE.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. This recommendation is made on the basis of the pupil forecasts for Nantwich town planning area for September 2024 and to ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its statutory duty to provide school places for children in their community.
- 4.2. To allow the service/directorate to ensure there is a reasonable timescale to implement the necessary statutory processes, procurement, and planning to deliver the new school in readiness for September 2024.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Other options considered were detailed in the committee paper that was presented and agreed at the 12 July 2021 committee meeting.

6. Background

- 6.1. A detailed committee paper was presented and agreed at the July 2021 committee meeting where a series of recommendations were approved:
 - 6.1.1. The service to proceed with the free school presumption process which will include undertaking a consultation, in accordance with the Department for Education guidelines, with the local community, local schools, local councillors, town council and local MP. This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake.
 - 6.1.2. The service to proceed with the transfer of the proposed school site into the council ownership, as detailed in the Section 106 agreement, together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the transfer.

6.1.3. To progress with the process of attracting potential sponsors to run the new school and to complete any agreements or land transfers associated with appointing a suitable sponsor.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1. In accordance with the free school presumption advice for local authorities and new school proposers issued by the DfE (November 2019) in order to open a new school, local authorities must follow the free school presumption process.
- 7.2. Before launching the competition to identify the sponsor to run the new school we will undertake consultation and engagement sessions.
- 7.3. This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake under section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, which takes place during the pre-opening phase i.e., after the sponsor has been selected.
- 7.4. As part of the consultation and engagement process the local authority has undertaken the following:
 - A formal briefing with local councillors
 - A presentation and meeting were held with local schools
 - A five-week representation period ran from 6 October to 10 November 2021 and a public notice was issued in the local press
 - Information was available on the Cheshire East website and during the representation period key stakeholders including Ward Members, MP, Diocese, and Town Council were informed of the process.
 - Information was emailed to all local schools together with a letter for distribution to their staff, governors, and parents.
 - A public drop-in session was held at Nantwich Library with representatives from the local authority in attendance to discuss the proposal and seek views from parents and the local community.
- 7.5. Feedback gathered through consultation is summarised in Appendix 1 and this will be used to help formulate and finalise the local authority's specification for a new school before its publication inviting expressions of interest from sponsors.
- 7.6. The DfE free school presumption process for proposing a new school has seven key stages, as set out overleaf. A proposed timescale for the remaining stages has been included for this specific new primary school for Nantwich:

Stage	Process	Detail	Proposed Timescale
Stage 1	Notification	Notification to the DfE to trigger the process – this has been completed	April 2021
Stage 2	Informal Consultation	Consultation of the proposal with local schools, parents, carers, staff, pupils, school governors and trustees, Diocese representatives, local community, and ward members – Minimum of 4 weeks recommended. Feedback received will help formulate the specification for the school and complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	October, November 2021
Stage 3	Draft Specification	Draft specification and EIA submitted to DfE for approval	January/February 2022
Stage 4	Formal Specification for the school published (In-line with DfE requirements)	Following DfE approval, LA and DfE publish the specification and invite potential sponsors to submit their applications. Recommended to allow 6-8 weeks but if time allows 12-14 weeks may be more appropriate	April/May 2022
Stage 5	Assessment Phase	The decision-maker (usually the LA) assesses/scores the applications, may invite potential sponsors for interview. This process is supported by the DfE regional leads.	July/August 2022
Stage 6	Sponsor Approval	The LA submits preferred sponsor to the RSC, which is taken to the Headteacher Board for potential approval.	Autumn 2022
Stage 7	Implementation, pre-opening.	LA and approved sponsor work together to ensure the school opens as per the specification. This stage includes the approved sponsor undertaking Statutory Consultation prior to any funding agreement being issued.	Spring 2023

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

8.1.1. No additional legal commentary is required for this update report.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. Included in the Education and 14-19 Skills Capital Programme is a named scheme 'New School Nantwich', with a total approved budget of £3.5m.

8.2.2. The proposed new school is currently funded via Section 106

contributions and Basic Need Grant. Section 106 education funding contributions are those agreed with new housing developers specifically to fund the additional pupil places needed due to new housing development, this is received in stages over many years.

8.2.3. The funding profile is as follows:

- £2.27m Section 106 contributions agreed.
- £1.23m Basic Need

8.2.4. The project will be forward funded by Basic need, this will be replenished as the Section 106 contributions are received.

8.2.5. At this stage a provisional budget of £3.5 million inclusive of all professional and statutory fees has been allocated to the project. Design development will be commissioned to identify more accurately the costs of implementation of a standard 1FE primary school in line with BB103 requirements and the DfE's standardised design principles.

8.2.6. Revenue funding for schools is provided through the schools' block of the dedicated schools grant.

8.2.7. The new and growing school will be funded through the schools funding formula in place at the time and in line with the relevant minimum per pupil funding levels.

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. In accordance with the free school presumption departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers issued by the DfE (November 2019), in order to open a new school, local authorities must follow the free school presumption process.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1 A detailed Equality Impact Assessment will be completed and submitted as part of Stage 3 'Specification' of the DfE Free School Presumption process.

8.5. Human Resources

8.5.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. Not applicable for this report summary. Please see the previous report for implications relating to the new school.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Mark Bayley Acting Director of Education and Skills mark.bayley@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Summary of Feedback Kingsley Field
Background Papers:	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/convert-to-an-academy-documents-for-schools

Appendix 1

PROPOSED NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL KINGSLEY FIELDS

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED

1. Background

The Kingsley Fields development in Nantwich comprises of 1,100 new houses. This development has been identified in the Local Plan which was adopted in 2017 for the period 2010-2030. This site plan includes a 1 Form Entry Primary School.

Cheshire East consistently monitors school places to ensure there are sufficient places for all school age children. An analysis of the latest pupil forecasts has identified the need to provide additional primary school places in Nantwich from 2024 in response to the increasing pupil population and additional pupils from this new housing development. This free school presumption process needs to begin now so additional places will be on offer from September 2024.

The new primary school will form part of a local centre that will include sports facilities and green spaces. This will provide a strong 'heart' to the development and offer the opportunity to create a new place of individual character and community infrastructure.

A phased opening of the school is planned, this will help manage places in the local area in line with housing growth and increased pupil numbers.

Where a local authority identifies the need for a new school, they are required to follow the Department for Education statutory guidance, this policy is called 'Free School Presumption Process, (November 2019)'. In accordance with this guidance the local authority is required to undertake an informal consultation with neighbouring schools, parents, and key stakeholders to seek feedback on the proposal of the new school.

This document provides an overview of the feedback received during the informal consultation and will be used to help the service to formulate and finalise the specification for the new school.

2. Timetable of events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Stage</u>	<u>Action</u>
6 October 2021 – 10 November 2021.	Public consultation period begins	A public notice of consultation was issued in the local press.
6 October 2021	5-week Representation Period started	<p>All information made available on the Cheshire East webpages</p> <p>Electronic Survey opened for easy response, or a paper feedback form or direct email available</p> <p>Key stakeholders emailed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local schools • Parents/ carers • Diocese • Local MP • Ward Members • Parish and Town Councils • Neighbouring local authorities <p>Cheshire East Council also undertook an informal consultation with Nantwich Education Partnership to gather their feedback.</p>
19 October 2021	Public drop-in Session	A public drop-in session was held in Nantwich Library which ran from 10.00am to 6.30pm. Officers for the project were available for the whole day to answer questions and record any feedback.
11 November 2021 – onwards	Feedback collated, summarised and reports produced.	Feedback and reports presented to DfE, Directorate Management Team meeting, Education Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team as they progress forward to Committee.

January 2022	Publication of specification of new primary school Cheshire East, School Organisation and Capital Team webpages.	
Spring 2022	Publicise the plans for the build of the new primary.	

3. Summary of Feedback

This is a summary of the feedback received during the 5-week representation period, the local authority (LA) response and proposed mitigation measures in response to the comments made.

During the 5-week representation period a total of 26 responses were received:

- **24** did support the proposal and left comments
- **2** did not support the proposal and left comments.

It should be noted that several respondents may have made more than one comment in their response hence the figures quoted will not necessarily equate back to the respondents figure.

4. Summary of Comments

Suggestions coming forward included:

- a wooded area on new school grounds for forest school curriculum
- gardening plot/allotment
- drop off point/parent parking
- children's play area close to the school grounds
- sports facilities
- safe road crossings near the school
- resource provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- nursery provision
- eco school like one at Kingsmead, Northwich
- cycle and walking routes to Reaseheath, Malbank, swimming baths.

4.1 Comments for the new school

Here are some of the positive comments about the new primary school:

"We need it, get it built."

"A primary school is needed. Our current catchment is Acton Primary - that hosts

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small class sizes, which will become problematic as more residents move to the development.”

“As Kingsbourne residents with a toddler, we hope to move our son to the school when it is ready.”

“The development already hosts an engaging and outward-reaching community - who want the best for neighbours and the town. I’m confident that many (including me and my wife) would revel at an opportunity to contribute to the school’s success when established.”

“A very good idea.”

“I think it’s an excellent idea for a new primary school by NTFC. With the numbers rising from new housing developments in the area a Primary School would be needed. That’s as long as you’ve done your maths on numbers at surrounding schools like Acton C of E and Millfields so there’s no possibility that the former would close. It’s a wonderful country church school with deep traditions and it would be a shame if numbers dwindled.”

“I support this proposal as a new resident of Nantwich.”

“Happy for this to go ahead good for the area.”

“I would fully support the development of a new primary school as part of the new development - this will both serve the new development and potentially increase parental choice locally as well.”

“I think the school is a great idea. We’re residents of the Kingsbourne estate and planning on having children soon. I can imagine the surrounding schools are already very full and it would make so much sense considering all the new residents on Kingsbourne.”

“I think a primary school is a necessity given the number of houses being built. Especially the fact the houses are catered and ideal for young couples (such as me) who may have children of a primary school age in the next few years.”

“With the intention of starting a family having a new school would greatly reduce stress in finding places in an already oversubscribed area.”

“As a mother of a 1-year-old on the Kingsbourne estate in Nantwich I am worried about what school my little girl will go to. It is important to me that I can walk my child to school, however I am aware that schools closest to us are bursting and it concerns me that she may not get a place. The quality of her schooling is also a concern, increasing class numbers will impact the education of our children negatively.”

“As a Kingsbourne resident who is planning to start a family in the next 4 years, I am extremely for this plan. With the new estate being built, and the national issue on overcrowding in schools, this seems like a great idea!”

These comments will be used to help the service to formulate and finalise the specification for the new school.

4.2 Comments against the new school

"What mandate do you have for the extra 1,100 homes, on top of the many thousands already built on our green fields? Why are you destroying our natural environment to boost developer profits?"

"Totally against this proposal it's hard enough at Malbank opening and closing times with cars parking to pick up and drop off without adding a primary school into the mix most of my neighbour's children are already settled in primary schools and by the time this would be built most children would already be in other primary schools."

4.2.1 Mitigation measures

The Kingsley Fields development is a strategic site within the Cheshire East Council Local Plan for 1,100 new dwellings with the inclusion of a 1 Form Entry Primary School.

As the Strategic Commissioner of School Places, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for children resident in its area and a commitment to allow local children to attend their local school wherever possible.

Demand for School Places in Nantwich: pupil projections, including the Kingsley Fields development, for the Nantwich Town planning area shows an overall shortfall of places. It is proposed that these additional places will be provided by the establishment of a new 1 Form of Entry Primary School opening in September 2024.

4.3 Comments about facilities at the new school

"In building a new school careful thought needs to be given to special needs provision and a strong EYFS, including nursery."

"I would hope that the new school is going to be eco-friendly. Kingsmead Primary school, Northwich, which I have visited, is great example of an ideal primary school. Here they have an allotment, water that is collected to flush the loos and at lunchtime the teachers all sit with each other and demonstrate how to have basic manners."

"I am a primary school teacher who has recently moved to the Kingsbourne development. I feel the demand is huge for more schools' places. I am planning on having children in the next couple of years and feel school choice will be very challenging if the new school does not go ahead. There is nowhere which is

suitable to walk to. I firmly believe as far as possible primary age children should be able to walk to a school which is in their local community.”

“We would ask for serious consideration to be made of a requirement for the sponsor school to develop a specialist resource provision on the site to address the very high level of SEN within the town. We would request that a clear understanding that this resource provision should be developed with open access to all qualifying children of the town. Places should not be ‘reserved’ for those children who attend the new school or other schools within the MAT that becomes the sponsor. Such an investment would support the long-term requirement for the local authority to meet needs of SEN pupils in the most cost-effective manner. It would provide an opportunity for a centre of excellence to be developed to support the very high number of EHCP and high-end SEN pupils across the town. It would give opportunities for an outreach model to be developed and help to bridge the huge capacity gap which we know the LA is currently experiencing. The opportunity to develop this from the start is a rare ‘gift’ and creative planning could bring about opportunities for other support services to utilise the RP as a base for services which other schools could draw upon. The resource provision would better support the needs of our children and lead to better outcomes for all. Located fairly centrally is allows relatively easy access for all NEP schools to consider split site education for some children and access to support networks and specialist groups to be support our children’s needs.”

“We live just off Waterlode and have children of a primary school age. See our feedback below. Inclusion of Nursery & Pre-School provision - we had to travel across Nantwich for a nursery that we liked. If the intention is to reduce congestion in the town then this would help.”

“Pedestrian crossings next to the school - there is no safe pedestrian crossing at Pear Tree Primary from where parents park at the pub to cross the road. We want it to be safe for young children to cross the road.”

“Outdoor areas in new school - include trim trail, forest school area, gardening area, football/ sport field, storage sheds.”

“Hall size - make sure the hall is large enough to accommodate whole school performances with parents watching. Pear Tree Primary has just had a hall extension because it wasn't built big enough.”

“Children's play area - a community park next to a school works well at Pear Tree Primary.”

4.3.1 Mitigation measures

The proposal is taking a holistic look at the school site. The new school provision is to encourage pupils to walk to a local school with the aim of reducing traffic and travel across town.

The new school will look to ensure that there are sufficient school places for local

children, and as part of the proposal Cheshire East Council will review the need for nursery provision and resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to be provided in the heart of a new community on Kingsley Fields development.

4.4 Comments about Traffic/ Access/ Car Parking

"I support the primary school providing there is sufficient provision for parents dropping off and not clogging up the roads."

"It is so important to keep children and their families healthy. Do we have cycle routes/ walkways from the school and estate to the local swimming pool? Reaseheath College is also very close. Are there walkways available to the facilities here too? It would be good to encourage partnerships via good cycle routes between Malbank and Reaseheath also."

"The parking for parents picking up children has got to be well organised. Local primary schools which are located within housing estates such as The Weaver and Highfields both suffer greatly from inadequate access. If a fire/ medical emergency was to occur during pick-up/ drop-off times a fire engine/ ambulance would not get access. Although this is a short period of time during the day, the welfare of the child must come first. You have the opportunity to build provision into your plan. We must not assume that children will all be walking or cycling to school - busy parents on their way to work rarely do this."

"We believe an estate of this size should have a primary school which is within walking distance of children's homes to avoid additional car journeys. We understand the philosophy of the Kingsbourne estate is to encourage sustainable living patterns particularly in transport terms. The school itself should not be providing car parking for parents' cars."

"Inclusion of sufficient parking for parents for drop off & pick up - in bad weather parents won't walk so this issue cannot be ignored. Our children go to Pear Tree Primary school and that school relies very heavily on the parking at the Cronkinson pub for parent drop off & collection."

4.4.1 Mitigation measures

As part of the design development and planning application process there will be a requirement for a transport assessment and development of a School Travel Plan to be commissioned. As part of this assessment a full review of the area around the sited school will be included e.g., vehicular and pedestrian access points, car parking, road safety, encouragement of sustainable modes of transport including cycle and scooter parking, school deliveries and staff parking.

4.5 Comments about Construction Traffic

"The development is already subject to construction due to the progressing phases of the development."

4.5.1 Mitigation measures

Contractors who tender for the project should be experienced in delivering large capital schemes and this aspect of the selection methodology will be fully investigated as part of the evaluation process. The site access and compound arrangements will be discussed in detail with stakeholders including the selected contractor, the construction design and management (CDM) co-ordinator, who will oversee the health and safety aspects of the project, and construction project manager, to ensure that the safety of all. There will be a plan developed to help mitigate the impact of deliveries and also to ensure roads are cleaned regularly from site traffic etc. Local residents will be letter dropped by the contractor to keep them informed of progress once the work on site commences.

4.6 Additional Comments Received from Nantwich Education Partnership

The Nantwich Education Partnership sent through a detailed response regarding this proposal, highlighting 3 key issues:

We would ask for serious consideration to be made of a requirement for the sponsor school to develop a specialist resource provision on the site to address the very high level of SEN within the town.

We would raise our concerns as to the accuracy of the figures predicted that the housing estate will yield in terms of primary age pupils. We appreciate as a group that this is not an exact science, but previous modelling has proven very inaccurate.

It would be beneficial to have a 'locally' based multi-academy chain taking on the sponsor role for the school. We are aware that locality of MAT is not scored during the process and understand any chain needs to have agreed sponsorship accreditation to be a part of the bid, but a local knowledge would serve our families best. We all see the benefit of locally informed MATS taking a driving role in the development of this new school.

4.7 Additional Comments received about linking up with Malbank School:

"I like the idea of the new school being situated next to the resources (sports facilities, language labs etc.) of Malbank school. While training I did a placement at The Weaver. They have land which adjoins Brine Leas - the pupils particularly in the older years used to have the opportunity to visit Brine Leas and they had a very smooth transition to the high school which can be very daunting at 10/11 years.

It would be wonderful if a special partnership could be developed between the new school and Malbank. I have a great deal of respect for Mr Harrison the current Headmaster at Malbank school. If links could be made, not only in terms of sharing sports facilities but also in having regular visits for both pupils and staff both ways, this could be a great advantage to both settings. Children learn a great deal by supervised teaching to others - this gives the opportunity to motivate those at Malbank and get them, in a very organised manner, to motivate, encourage and teach the pupils maybe at Kingsley Fields School. The primary school children would

see the older children as role models and keep their focus on being the best that they can.”

School Organisation and Capital Team

Email: socs@cheshireeast.gov.uk

17 November 2021

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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	School Organisation: Proposal for the provision of a new primary school, Basford East, Shavington, Crewe
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/21/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	Shavington Willaston and Rope Wynbunbury Haslington Wistaston

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is for the Children and Families Committee to consider and approve the proposal to progress with the free school presumption process to open a new primary school in Basford East, Crewe.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** As the Strategic Commissioner of School Places, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for children resident in its area and a commitment to allow local children to attend their local school wherever possible.
- 2.2.** The data analysis indicates the need for additional school places, Reception to Year 6, as a result of the development at Basford East, Shavington. These additional places would be provided by the establishment of a new 1 Form of Entry (FE) Primary School (with the option for a 30 place nursery), opening in September 2025.
- 2.3.** The proposed building design will include the infrastructure and design considerations to increase up to 2 Form of Entry to allow for future

expansion if the need arises as a result of additional housing in the local area. This will include an oversized hall and space for additional classrooms etc to be added if required.

- 2.4.** In the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS 2022-26) there is a proposal to allocate £5m to this project within the Children and Families Capital Programme, the current approved allocation is £2.5m. This programme will be submitted for approval by Full Council on the 24 February 2022.
- 2.5.** Section 106 agreements in respect of both phases of the proposed development are in place, and these include an obligation upon the developers to provide a total of education funding contributions of £2.528m to help fund the build of a new primary school. As part of the supporting infrastructure a site for the new primary school has been secured via the phase 1 Section 106 agreement which is large enough to provide up to 2 FE if the future need arises.
- 2.6.** Future housing development schemes in the area include South Cheshire Growth Village. As part of the planning process, it is anticipated that the service will request a Section 106 contribution towards the costs for providing additional school places. As detailed in the local plan, 650 houses are expected from this site, which would produce a pupil yield of 230 in total, of which 124 would be primary age pupils, 98 secondary age pupils and 8 special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) pupils.
- 2.7.** Currently, there is a scheme being progressed to provide additional capacity at Shavington Secondary School for 150 places to meet the increasing demand for secondary aged pupils.
- 2.8.** This report requests approval to proceed with undertaking the free school presumption process to identify and obtain agreement for a new school sponsor under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. For information regarding the free school presumption process please see sections 6.6, 7.1 and the background papers link - DfE Free School Presumption Policy, November 2019. This free school presumption route is local authority initiated and therefore fully funded through the use of grants and Section 106 contributions. It is not part of the national 'Wave' programme for new schools and therefore does not attract specific national funding.
- 2.9.** The primary school proposal is included within the Local Plan and meets with approval and the strategic aims of the Local Plan.

- 2.10. The establishment of the new primary school will help deliver the council's strategic plans for the provision of school places and ensure there is access to good quality schools within the area, particularly to ensure that the demand from new housing can be met.
- 2.11. This proposal incorporates elements of the Corporate Plan 2021- 2025 in that it will support all children to have the best start in life, and will increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
- 2.12. The service has formally met with Department for Education (DfE) officials to inform them of our intention to commence the free school presumption route for this new provision. Further meetings will continue to take place as different stages of the formal process are reached prior to actual opening of the school.
- 2.13. The service held a briefing session with local members for this area on the 9 December 2021 to discuss the proposals included within this paper. A presentation of key information was also sent out to all members.
- 2.14. The service held a briefing session with local school leaders for this area on the 13 December 2021 to discuss the proposals included within this paper. A presentation of key information was also sent out to all schools.

3. Recommendations

That committee gives approval:

- 3.1. To proceed with the free school presumption process which will include undertaking a consultation with the local community, local schools, local councillors, town council and local MP. This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake.
- 3.2. To report back to committee the outcomes from the consultation process so that feedback is considered from the local communities.
- 3.3. To proceed with the transfer of the proposed school site into the Council ownership, as detailed in the Section 106 agreement, together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the transfer.
- 3.4. To progress with the process of attracting potential sponsors to run the new school and to complete any agreements or land transfers associated with appointing a suitable sponsor. Ultimately, the Secretary of State will approve the sponsor following due process.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** This recommendation is made on the basis of the pupil forecasts for Weston Primary School (which is the only school within a two mile safe walking route from the Basford East developments) is not a suitable alternative to take in a significant number of additional learners due to site restrictions. The provision of a new school will ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in this planning area.
- 4.2.** Current forecasts, for Reception to Year 6 and covering the period 2021 to 2025, indicate a small shortage of primary school places at Weston Primary School in 2023 increasing year on year to indicate a shortfall of 52 places by 2025, see section 3.4, table 1. These figures do include additional pupils anticipated from new housing in the area, including a proportion of pupils from the Basford East development. These figures do not include the desired 2% level of operational surplus, which is intended to facilitate admissions mid-year, some degree of parental choice and reasonable journey times to school.
- 4.3.** In addition to this, and following the necessary consultation process, from September 2022 Weston Primary School has reduced their published admission number from 38 to 30. This will have a cumulative effect on reducing the available places in the area by 8 places starting in Reception from September 2022 until 2028 when the reduction will have worked through each year group.
- 4.4.** Table 1 below shows the increasing shortfall in places at Weston Primary School for this forecasting period:

	Weston Primary School - Pupil Forecasts					Weston Primary School - Pupil Shortfall/ Surplus Without 2% operational surplus				
Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	240	253	269	299	318	26	13	-3	-33	-52
Table 1 Data Source - 2021 Pupil Forecasts										

- 4.5.** Table 2 overleaf shows the increasing shortfall in places at Weston Primary School for this forecasting period with the desired 2% level of operational surplus.

Weston Primary School - Pupil Forecasts						Weston Primary School - Pupil Shortfall/ Surplus With 2% operational surplus which equates to 5 pupils				
Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	240	253	269	299	318	21	8	-8	-38	-57

Table 2 Data Source - 2021 Pupil Forecasts

- 4.6. To allow the service/directorate to ensure there is a reasonable timescale to implement the necessary statutory processes, procurement, and planning to deliver the new school in readiness for September 2025.
- 4.7. To ensure that the local authority has the right number of school places for all children to have a good local school to attend, and all children enjoy the best education which prepares them to thrive in adulthood.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The council has undertaken a detailed analysis of the named schools in the planning area and concluded that none of the existing schools within the vicinity are suitable to accommodate the children expected to arise from the development at Basford East. The schools included are Weston Village Primary School, Shavington Primary School, The Berkeley Academy, Wynbunbury Delves C of E Primary School and Wistaston Church Lane Academy.
- 5.2. Table 3 below shows the pupil forecast data for the primary schools within this planning area:

School	Net Capacity	Forecast NOR					Shortfall or Surplus Places				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Weston Village Primary School	266	240	253	269	299	318	26	13	-3	-33	-52
Shavington Primary School	420	390	436	452	455	463	30	-16	-32	-35	-43
The Berkeley Academy	420	406	407	408	413	412	14	13	12	7	8
Wynbunbury Delves CofE Primary School	209	177	176	184	194	191	32	33	25	15	18
Wistaston Church Lane Primary School	420	418	419	420	420	420	2	1	0	0	0
Totals	1,735	1,632	1,691	1,732	1,780	1,804	103	44	3	-45	-69

Table 3 Data Source - 2021 Pupil Forecasts

- 5.3. Of the schools on the above table only Weston Village Primary School is within two miles of the furthest point in the development. From September 2022 Weston Primary School has reduced their published admission number from 38 to 30. Weston Primary School is the catchment school for the new development at Basford East but due to site restraints/limitations has been ruled out as a potential expansion.

- 5.4. School Admissions and Transport data was used to gather information on distance to schools and safe walking routes in the Shavington Planning Area. School admissions use a straight-line distance measurement to allocate school places. Eligibility for transport on distance is calculated based on the shortest safe and available walking routes to schools. From this information it has been identified Weston Village Primary School as the only suitable school within two miles safe walking route of the Basford East development.
- 5.5. In table 3; Wynbunbury Delves and The Berkeley Academy are showing surplus places however both are further than the two mile distance from the development and in addition to this there are no safe walking routes from the Basford East development.
- 5.6. The service met with local schools in December 2021 to discuss the proposals included within this paper.

6. Background

- 6.1. In 2017, Cheshire East Council adopted their Local Plan for the period 2010-2030. The site known as “LPS 2 Basford East” was identified in the strategic development for Crewe and the immediate surrounding area. This stated the following:

“LPS 2, 3.i - The provision of a site for a new primary school within the development or financial contribution towards providing educational facilities.”
- 6.2. The Basford East Development is a strategic site within the Cheshire East Council Local Plan for 850 new dwellings with the inclusion of a new primary school. The actual planned number of dwellings is 815 currently.
- 6.3. The development is expected to have a significant impact on education provision in the local area. The Section 106 agreement secured the provision of a new primary school, which included the land and a contribution from the developers for the partial build costs.
- 6.4. Phase 1 Basford East, planning reference 14/4025N, is for a total of 490 dwellings, with a Section 106 contribution of £1.568m towards the build costs of the new school.
- 6.5. Phase 2 Basford East, planning reference 15/1537N, is for a total of 325 dwellings, with a Section 106 contribution of £960,000 towards the build costs of the new school.
- 6.6. There are two further strategic developments sites in the locality, Basford West approved for 370 dwellings and South Cheshire Growth Village 650 dwellings currently awaiting approval.

- 6.6.1.** Basford West, planning reference 13/0336N or P03/1071, is under construction with permission granted for 370 houses. This is anticipated a total yield 130 school age children. 70 Primary age, 56 Secondary age, 4 SEND. There has been a section 106 contribution of £722,363 agreed for the provision of new Primary Places this has been pooled to the expansion of Shavington Primary.
- 6.6.2.** South Cheshire Growth Village is a Local Plan development site, LPS 8. This application is yet to be submitted formally but we anticipate 650 houses. If approved, the expected primary yield will be 124 pupils. 98 secondary age pupil yield expected in addition to 8 SEND pupils.
- 6.7.** Section 106 contributions currently agreed and attributable to the new school are £2.528m.
- 6.8.** As per the Section 106 agreement the land allocated to the school will need to be transferred to the council's ownership in a timely manner in order to comply with the Section 106 agreement.
- 6.9.** In the Section 106 agreement the council has agreed to construct the school. Therefore, it is key that we manage the land transfer process (including the undertaking of all necessary due diligence), start of the free school presumption process and the instruction to build the new school in a timely manner.
- 6.10.** The pupil numbers generated from this site will be consistently monitored as dwellings are built and become occupied. Current forecasts indicate places will be needed from September 2025.
- 6.11.** In the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) this project has been included titled Shavington Planning Area – New Primary School, with a proposed budget of £5m allocated to this scheme within the Children and Families Capital Programme. This programme will be submitted for approval by Full Council on the 24 February 2022.
- 6.12.** Appendix 1 shows the location of the housing developments, locations of the local schools and the proposed new school.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** In accordance with the free school presumption process departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers issued by the Department for Education (November 2019) in order to open a new school, the local authority must follow the free school presumption process.
- 7.2.** Before launching the competition to identify the sponsor to run the new school, we will undertake consultation and engagement sessions.

- 7.3.** As part of the consultation and engagement sessions the local authority will undertake the following:
- A formal briefing with local councillors
 - A presentation through the Primary Schools Association
 - A presentation and meeting with local schools
 - Information will be made available on the Cheshire East website and during the representation period notified to key stakeholders including Ward Members, MP, Diocese, and Town Council. Information will also be emailed to all local schools together with a letter for distribution to their staff, governors, and parents.
- 7.4.** It is proposed that a public drop-in session will be held at either Shavington Village Hall, Shavington Leisure Centre or Shavington Secondary (venue to be confirmed), with representatives from the local authority in attendance to discuss the proposal and seek views from parents and the local community. Please note that this proposed public drop-in session will be subject to the limitations of COVID restrictions, and dependant on guidance at the time and may be held via an online presentation via Cheshire East Council’s website and an online feedback form. Feedback gathered through consultation will be used to help formulate and finalise the local authority’s specification for a new school before its publication inviting expressions of interest from sponsors.
- 7.5.** This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake under section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, which takes place during the pre-opening phase i.e., after the sponsor has been selected.
- 7.6.** The DfE free school presumption process for proposing a new school has seven stages, as set out below. As this programme of work progresses, proposed timelines will be shared to show the suggested milestones to be achieved.

Stage 1	Notification	Notification to the DfE to trigger the process – this has been completed
Stage 2	Informal Consultation	Consultation of the proposal with local schools, parents, carers, staff, pupils, school governors and trustees, Diocese representatives, local community, and ward members – Minimum of 4 weeks recommended. Feedback received will help formulate the specification for the school and complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
Stage 3	Draft Specification	Draft specification and EIA submitted to DfE for approval

Stage 4	Formal Specification for the school published (In-line with DfE requirements)	Following DfE approval, LA and DfE publish the specification and invite potential sponsors to submit their applications. Recommended to allow 6-8 weeks but if time allows 12-14 weeks may be more appropriate
Stage 5	Assessment Phase	The decision-maker (usually the LA) assesses/scores the applications, may invite potential sponsors for interview. This process is supported by the DfE regional leads.
Stage 6	Sponsor Approval	The LA submits preferred sponsor to the Regional Schools Commissioner, which is taken to the Headteacher Board for approval.
Stage 7	Implementation, pre-opening.	LA and approved sponsor work together to ensure the school opens as per the specification.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1.** The DfE advice and guidance states that the Free School presumption process is the main route by which local authorities establish new schools in order to meet the need for additional places, both in terms of basic need and the need for diverse provision within their areas. Local authorities are responsible for determining the specification for the new school and will fund and deliver the site and buildings and work with the approved sponsor to establish the school.
- 8.1.2.** All new schools established through the presumption process are classified as free schools. This reflects the fact that ‘free school’ is the department’s term for any new provision academy. ‘Academy’ is the legal term for state-funded schools that are independent of local authority control and receive their funding directly from the government. Schools established through the presumption process are not required to use the term ‘free school’ in their name: this follows practice within the department’s free school programme.
- 8.1.3.** The Education Act 2011 changed the arrangements for establishing new schools and introduced section 6A (the ‘free school presumption’) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires that, where a local authority identifies the need for a new school in its area, it must seek proposals to establish an academy (free school). Section 6A came into effect on:

- 1 February 2012 for new mainstream and special schools; and
- 1 September 2012 for new AP/alternative provision free schools.

8.1.4. The legislation that relates to this guidance includes:

- *The Education Act 2011 (EA 2011).*
- *The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006).*
- *The Academies Act 2010 (AA 2010).*

8.1.5. Under the presumption route the local authority is responsible for providing the site for the new school and for delivering the capital programme for building the new school. Under the terms of the phase 1 section 106 agreement (14/4025N) the local authority may require the transfer of the site for the provision of the new school to it by giving notice to the owners/developers provided it does so prior to the occupation of the 350th dwelling on that phase. If it does so, it is required to construct the new school on that site as soon as reasonably practicable. Once that school has been constructed, it is the DfE's expectation that the site be made available free or on a peppercorn basis by the local authority usually in the form of a long lease to the academy proprietor. The local authority is also responsible for meeting the associated capital and pre/post-opening revenue costs.

8.1.6. The decision on all new free school proposals lies with the Secretary of State. His approval is required as it is the Secretary of State who will enter into a funding agreement with the sponsor chosen to run the new school.

8.1.7. The Secretary of State will consider any recommendation on the choice of a proposer made by the local authority. However, in some cases the Secretary of State may have additional information about the capacity, capability, or the academic track record of a proposer which he will consider when making his decision. In reaching his decision the Secretary of State will also have regard to quality and the diversity of the existing local provision, the ability of the proposed sponsor to redress social disadvantage, as well as to improve educational standards in an area.

8.1.8. The Secretary of State's decision is normally delegated to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the area in which the school will be located.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. In the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS 2022-26) this project has been included titled Shavington Planning Area – New Primary School, with a proposed budget of £5m allocated to this scheme within the Children and Families Capital Programme with £2.5m currently approved

in the 2021-25 MTFS. This programme will be submitted for approval by Full Council on the 24 February 2022.

- 8.2.2.** The proposed new school is currently funded via Section 106 contributions and Basic Need Grant. Section 106 education funding contributions are those agreed with new housing developers specifically to fund the additional pupil places needed due to new housing development this is received in stages over many years.
- 8.2.3.** The funding profile is as follows:
- £2.528 million - Section 106 contributions agreed from Basford East Developments.
 - £2.472 million - Basic Need Grant
- 8.2.4.** As stated above the project will be funded by agreed Section 106 contributions and Basic Need Grant, if further contributions are agreed for additional housing the Basic Need will be replenished as the Section 106 contributions are received.
- 8.2.5.** At this stage a provisional budget of £5 million is inclusive of all professional and statutory fees has been allocated to the project. Design development will be commissioned to identify more accurately the costs of implementation of a 1 FE primary school with the necessary infrastructure etc for a 2 FE primary school in line with BB103 requirements and the DfE's standardised design principles.
- 8.2.6.** Revenue funding for schools is provided through the schools' block of the dedicated school's grant.
- 8.2.7.** The new and growing school will be funded through the schools funding formula in place at the time and in line with the relevant minimum per pupil funding levels.
- 8.2.8.** Consideration will need to be given as to how a growing school is treated in terms of the number of the pupils the Council's receives funding for and expectations at the school in terms of year group sizes / timing.
- 8.2.9.** If a local growth fund is still in operation, the school may qualify for a payment in recognition of pupil growth but that will have to be judged against the basis for core funding rather than October to October census changes.
- 8.2.10.** The school will be expected to set a balanced budget within the funding provided and considering any other funding sources such as pupil premium.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1.** The provision of the new school will support the Council in meeting its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 8.3.2.** The Local Authority will determine the published admission number (PAN) from pupils for year groups Reception to Year 6, in line with the statutory timescales set out in the School Admissions Code (2021). The total capacity of the school will be 210 primary aged pupils initially (with the option for a 30 place nursery provision for pupils aged 2 to 4). Standard PAN will be 30 per year group. The new school may open in stages, this will be agreed following appointment of the sponsor. The preferred option would be that the admissions arrangements were broadly in line with the Local Authority Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. The local authority would propose a preferred catchment area considering catchment areas for neighbouring schools, impact on admissions to both primary and secondary schools and transport. Any admissions arrangements would be implemented under the appropriate process and consultation under the School Admissions Code. If the sponsor had alternative preferred oversubscription criteria (for example to allow consistency with other schools in the same Trust) the local authority would be willing to work with the sponsor but the expectation would be that the criteria would serve to meet the needs of the local families so the local authority may object to criteria that conflicted with this purpose.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1.** An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for this proposal.
- 8.4.2.** As part of the planning process for a new school the local authority must undertake an assessment of the impact of the proposal both with existing educational institutions locally and in terms of impact on groups of pupils from an equality's perspective.
- 8.4.3.** For the Secretary of State to meet his duties under section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 and under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, local authorities should provide the Secretary of State with a copy of their assessment.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1.** There are no additional human resource implications for the council.
- 8.5.2.** Any new establishment will open as a free school and HR responsibility will be with the successful sponsor which arise as part of the project.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1.** The proposed new school has been identified to address a basic need requirement for primary school places within Shavington because of a new housing development. Provision of this new school will ensure that the council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places within two miles and within a safe walking route.
- 8.6.2.** If additional places are not provided in Shavington, parents of Cheshire East children who are resident in the Shavington area may be unable to secure places at their local school and may be required to travel over two miles to alternative Cheshire East schools requiring transport assistance.
- 8.6.3.** Should the proposal be approved, the building of the new school will be subject to the necessary planning permissions. As the required building would be deemed to be land within the development allocated for education this would not be a change of use that requires consent from the Secretary of State for Education under section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act and approval from the school.
- 8.6.4.** Legal has advised that the Assets team will seek a title report in respect of the land which has been allocated by the developer and that it would be prudent for searches, surveys, and investigations to be carried out so as to ascertain the availability of necessary services and access to be required at the site prior to acceptance of the transfer.
- 8.6.5.** All the building works will be planned carefully, and contractors will work with the project team to ensure that works are scheduled to keep disruption to a minimum for residents on the development.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1.** There are no direct implications for rural communities. A new school within a new housing development will assist with reducing traffic around rural areas as the children from this development can attend their local school rather than travelling by car.
- 8.7.2.** The new school will provide the required places for the pupils from the development, limiting the impact on smaller rural schools and enabling such schools to retain their rural character and not have to expand.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1.** Shavington is an area that has consistently experienced several 'in year' applications from families moving into Cheshire East.
- 8.8.2.** Providing additional places at this new school will help ensure that local children, including cared for children, can be offered a place at their local school.

8.8.3. A number of schools, for example, Shavington Primary Academy and Weston Village Primary School have been oversubscribed at the Reception intake. This means that places may not be available for families moving into the Shavington area particularly where there is a sibling group. This may limit the ability to meet parental preference for their local school. Places cannot be reserved for families moving into the area and Infant Class Size Regulations mean that Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 classes are generally limited to 30 and so there is no flexibility to admit over this except in very limited circumstances. As a result, some children may need to attend schools outside the immediate Shavington area. An increase in capacity in the Shavington area would provide more places for families moving into the area particularly outside the usual admissions rounds and reduce pressure on families in managing their child's journey to school and help them settle into their local community.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. The new build school would need to comply with the Government's targets of nearly zero carbon as outlined within the Building Regulations and the council's own currently approved policies of achieving an BREEAM excellent accreditation or equivalent to achieve carbon neutral targets.

8.10.2. Providing additional places at this local school will enable Cheshire East children, resident in the Shavington area and more so the new housing development, the ability to secure a place at their local school thus reducing the need to travel outside of the area which will reduce energy consumption and enabling pupils to walk to school promoting a healthy lifestyle.

8.10.3. Cheshire East Council are very aware of their environmental education and stewardship role and are very interested in promoting sustainability in general.

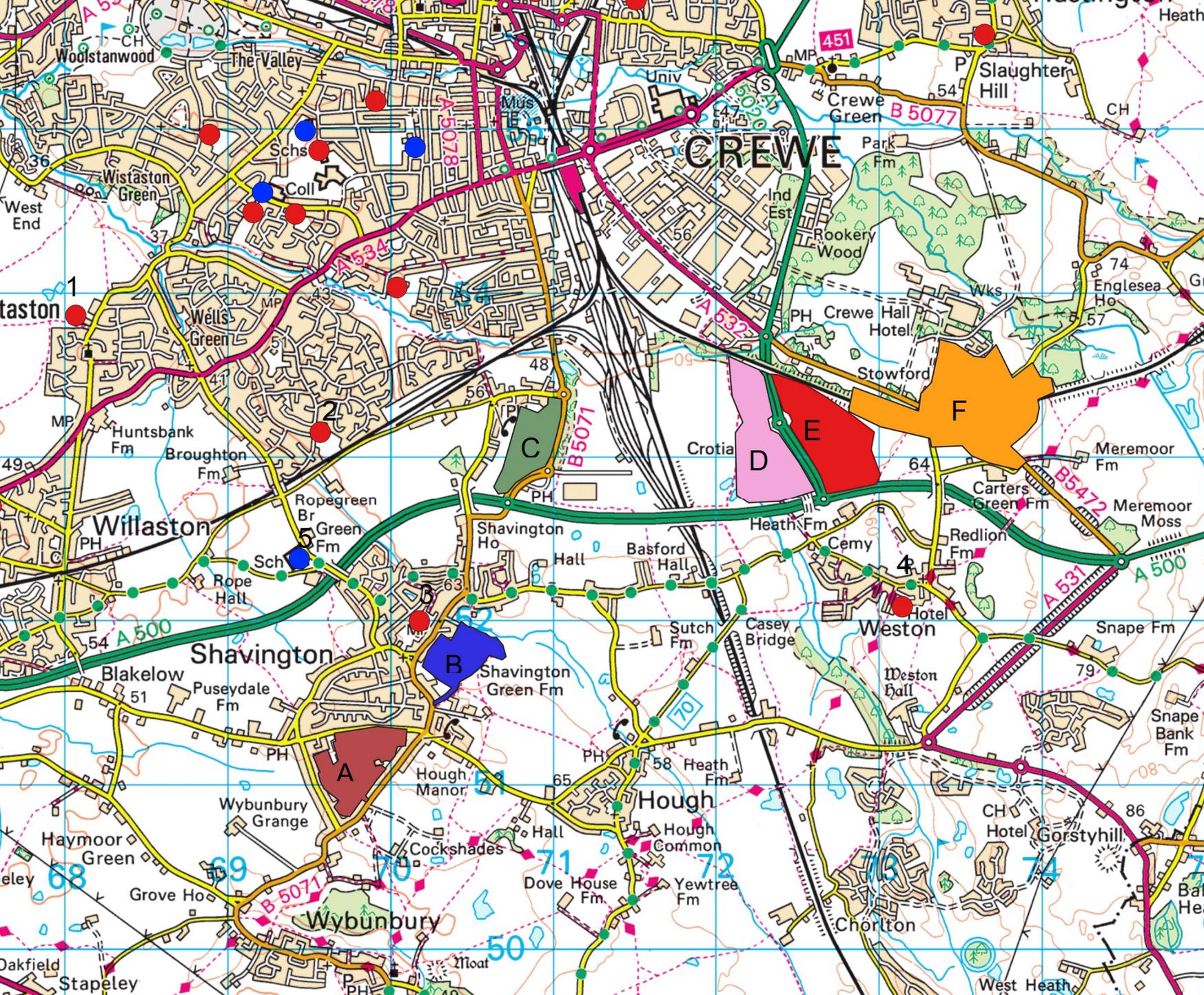
8.10.4. It is noted that the funding is for a capital project and not for the ongoing running costs. Therefore, as part of the detailed design process, the design team are exploring how the building could be designed to minimise future running costs.

8.10.5. Systems that save on energy consumption will be considered, particularly for electricity, with absence detection being the preferred lighting strategy.

- 8.10.6.** The building should be zoned for heating so when individual buildings or sections of buildings are opened for community use for example, the school can heat just that area.
- 8.10.7.** Savings on water consumption will also be considered with WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) certified.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Joanne Prophet School Organisation and Capital Manager Joanne.prophet@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Local Area Plan
Background Papers:	DfE Free School Presumption Process Policy November 2019 DfE Guidance – Schools Admissions Code DfE Guidance – Disposal or change of use of playing field and school land DfE Guidance BB103

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KEY

- SCHOOLS
- 1 WISTATON CHURCH LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL
 - 2 THE BERKELEY ACADEMY
 - 3 SHAVINGTON PRIMARY ACADEMY
 - 4 WESTON VILLAGE PRIMARY
 - 5 SHAVINGTON ACADEMY
- DEVELOPMENTS
- A LPS9 SHAVINGTON / WYNBURY TRIANGLE
 - B LPS10 EAST SHAVINGTON
 - C LPS3 BASFORD WEST
 - D LPS2 BASFORD EAST PHASE 2
 - E LPS2 BASFORD EAST PHASE 1
 - F LPS8 SOUTH CHESHIRE GROWTH VILLAGE

NOTE : THE PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL IS LOCATED WITHIN THE SITE ALLOCATED AS LPS2 BASFORD EAST PHASE 1

BASFORD WEST - NEW SCHOOL



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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	2021/22 Financial Year Review
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)
Report Reference No:	CF/35/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	Not Applicable

1. Recommendations

That the Children and Families Committee:

- 1.1. Notes the report of the Finance Sub-Committee ([Agenda for Finance Sub-Committee on Wednesday, 1st December, 2021, 2.00 pm | Cheshire East Council](#)), specifically the recommendations of that committee:
 - 1.1.1. Finance Sub-Committee recommend Service Committees to:
 - 1.1.1.1. note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
 - 1.1.1.2. note that officers will seek to improve outcomes and the financial outturn across all committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the council.
- 1.2. Notes Appendix 4 and the following sections specific to this committee:
 - Changes to Revenue budget 2021/22
 - Policy Proposals Update
 - Corporate Grants Register
 - Debt Management
 - Capital Strategy
 - Reserve Strategy

- 1.3. Approves the additional specific grant supplementary revenue estimate over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 in **Appendix 4, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2.**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. Committees are responsible for discharging the council’s functions within the Budget and Policy Framework provided by Council. The budget will be aligned with committee and head of service responsibilities as far as possible.
- 2.2. Budget holders are expected to manage within the budgets provided by Full Council. Committee and sub-committees are responsible for monitoring financial control and making decisions as required by these rules.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer) alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Finance Sub Committee – 2021/22 Financial Year Review which includes: Covering Report Annex 1: Appendix 4 Children and Families Committee
Background Papers:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25



Working for a brighter future together

Finance Sub-Committee

Date of Meeting:	01 December 2021
Report Title:	2021/22 Financial Year Review
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)
Report Reference No:	To be provided by Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected:	Not Applicable

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** This report outlines how the Council is managing resources to provide value for money services during the 2021/22 financial year. The report highlights financial activity that supports the achievement of outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2.** The Council operates a financial cycle of planning, monitoring and reporting. This review is part of the monitoring cycle but reflects on the impact of reporting last year's performance and on planning for next year's budget. This report supports the Council priority of being an open and enabling organisation, ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making (Source: CEC Corporate Plan Feb 2021).
- 1.3.** Local Authority budgets across the UK are being managed against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as inflation rises and increasing demand for services. The Council's budget has been affected in an unprecedented way due the response required to protect both the health and economic wellbeing of local people and businesses during the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, the statutory duties of the Council must still be delivered within the relevant parameters and the associated inspection frameworks.
- 1.4.** The report sets out the financial performance of the Council with and without the impact of Covid-19. This is helpful due to the separate

approaches to funding the impact of Covid-19 which was not factored into the original 2021/22 Budget.

- 1.5.** The headline findings of the review are:
 - 1.5.1.** Placement costs within Children's Social Care are exceeding budget by £2.8m, which reflects the ongoing pressure articulated in the outturn reporting of the 2020/21 budget.
 - 1.5.2.** Other pressures within Children's Social Services (£1.8m) including costs relating to an increase in the number of children being fostered and an increase in rates paid to foster carers.
 - 1.5.3.** Care Cost budgets remain under pressure and are supported by significant amounts of temporary funding streams in 2021/22 forecasts (net pressure £0.7m).
 - 1.5.4.** Car parking income is forecast to under-achieve the estimates within the current budget by £0.5m (further amounts relating to Covid-19 are included within 1.5.6 below).
 - 1.5.5.** There are vacancies in several service areas, where recruitment is challenging given the prevailing labour market or where activities are delayed due to Covid-19 response work. This is creating underspending of £3.6m overall, most significantly in Care4CE, Prevention, Planning and Corporate Services.
 - 1.5.6.** Covid-19 related expenditure, and losses in income, of £9.8m are not forecast to exceed funding set-aside within the approved budget.
- 1.6.** The position, excluding Covid-19, presents a forecast overspend of £2.2m (0.7% variance to budget).
- 1.7.** There is a further risk linked to the nationally negotiated Local Government pay award which is exceeding forecasts within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and remains uncertain due to the national position of a pay dispute lodged by the Trade Unions. Further analysis is required and the pressure will be managed by use of the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve if necessary.
- 1.8.** The year-end forecasts that, subject to further changes in demand or mitigating activity may be subject to change. With robust action it is expected that the outturn position will return in line with budget by the end of the year. Any remaining variation to budget at year-end will be managed through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy Earmarked Reserve.
- 1.9.** Members should recognise that spending on Children's Social Care Placements, the pay award and losses on car parking income are items that are expected to significantly impact development of the MTFS as they are likely to require recurring increases in budget. Underspending on vacancies is not expected to recur as service levels are returned to meeting existing un-met demand.

- 1.10. Forecast expenditure in the year on the capital programme is £143.7m.
- 1.11. The attached report, **Annex 1**, sets out details of how the Council is performing in 2021/22. It is structured into:
 - 1.11.1. **Section 1 Financial Stability** - provides an update on the Council's overall financial position.
 - 1.11.2. **Appendices** to the annex demonstrate how spending in 2021/22 has been funded, including the service budgets, policy proposals, grants, debt management, capital strategy and reserves by Committee. Updates are provided on the Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Finance Sub-Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and each appendix.
- 2.2. Finance Sub-Committee is asked to approve:
 - 2.2.1. supplementary revenue estimates for general purpose grants coded centrally up to and including £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 1, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 1**.
 - 2.2.2. capital virements up to and including £5,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 1, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 5**.
- 2.3. Recommend to Council to approve:
 - 2.3.1. fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for general purpose grants coded centrally over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 1, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 1**.
 - 2.3.2. fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 1, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2**.
 - 2.3.3. supplementary capital estimates over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 1, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 6**.
- 2.4. Recommend to Service Committees to:
 - 2.4.1. note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
 - 2.4.2. note that officers will seek to improve the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.

- 2.4.3.** approve supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services up to and including £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 2-7, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2.**

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** The Finance Sub-Committee has a function to “co-ordinate the management and oversight of the Council’s finances”. This function is facilitated through receiving a regular cycle of published reports as part of the financial cycle or planning, monitoring and reporting.
- 3.2.** The review reflects financial and operational performance and provides the opportunity for members to note, approve or recommend changes in line with the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules.
- 3.3.** The overall process for managing the Council’s resources focus on value for money and good governance and stewardship. Financial changes that become necessary during the year are properly authorised and this report sets out those areas where approvals are now required, and the relevant justification.
- 3.4.** The recommendations continue to highlight compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, whilst also meeting the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1.** Managing performance is essential to the achievement of outcomes. This is especially important in evidencing the achievement of value for money across an organisation the size of Cheshire East Council. The Council is the third largest in the Northwest of England, responsible for over 500 services, supporting over 386,000 local people. Gross annual spending is over £641m, with a revised net revenue budget for 2021/22 of £311.9m.
- 5.2.** The management structure of the Council is organised into four directorates: Adults, Health and Integration; Children’s Services; Place; and Corporate Services. The Council’s reporting structure provides forecasts of a potential year-end outturn within each directorate during the year, as well as highlighting activity carried out in support of each outcome contained within the Corporate Plan.
- 5.3.** The political structure of the Council is organised into seven Committees, with financial responsibilities aligned to the management structure. Performance against the 2021/22 Budget within each Committee is outlined in Table 1 below.

5.4. Table 1 – Revenue Outturn Forecast by Committee

2021/22 (GROSS Revenue Budget £492.7m)	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn Including Covid £m	Forecast Covid Expenditure £m	Forecast Outturn Excluding Covid £m	Forecast Over / (Underspend) Excluding Covid £m
Committee					
Adults and Health	119.0	120.8	1.6	119.2	0.2
Children and Families	68.8	74.2	1.1	73.1	4.3
Economy and Growth	21.8	22.4	0.4	22.0	0.2
Environment and Communities	42.3	45.5	3.7	41.8	(0.5)
Highways and Transport	11.2	14.0	2.1	11.9	0.7
Corporate Policy	35.5	35.3	0.9	34.4	(1.1)
Finance Sub	(298.6)	(310.0)	(9.8)	(300.2)	(1.6)
TOTAL	-	2.2	-	2.2	2.2

5.5. The Council set a balanced net revenue budget of £311.1m at its meeting in February 2021. Current forecasts against the revised budget of £311.9m, when excluding the financial impacts from Covid-19, shows a potential net expenditure of £314.1m. This position reflects the increase in demand led pressures in the Children’s Services Directorate relating to Children in Care, higher costs relating to care in Commissioning and unachievable income targets in Highways and Infrastructure. These pressures are offset by costs that are lower than budgeted, particularly in the Corporate Services Directorate, for example staff vacancies, lower costs of staff training, increased income due to demand of registrar services following the lifting of restrictions and reduced revenue costs due to delays in some capital projects. Past service employer pension contributions are also lower than budgeted and flexible use of capital receipts will fund some revenue costs associated with the B4B project.

5.6. The potential financial pressure from Covid-19 remains uncertain. Some additional funding from Covid-19 grants and the compensation scheme linked to income losses from Sales, Fees and Charges has continued into 2021/22. Negotiations between Local Government and Central Government continue which means government funding may increase, reducing the local effect on the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy. Contrary to this position the Council must balance the risk of further increases in expenditure or reductions in income based on further outbreaks of Covid-19 or from the Council’s recovery processes.

5.7. General Reserve balances are risk assessed and it is clear that a number of risks, particularly associated with demand led service provision and the pandemic, have materialised, but have been managed through the actions detailed in this report.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1. As part of the budget setting process the Pre-Budget Consultation provided an opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the

Council's Budget proposals. The budget proposals described in the consultation document were Council wide proposals and that consultation was invited on the broad budget proposals. Where the implications of individual proposals were much wider for individuals affected by each proposal, further full and proper consultation was undertaken with people who would potentially be affected by individual budget proposals.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** The legal implications surrounding the process of setting the 2021 to 2025 Medium Term Financial Strategy were dealt within the reports relating to that process. The purpose of this paper is to provide a progress report for 2021/22.
- 7.1.2.** Other implications arising directly from this report relate to the internal processes of approving supplementary estimates and virements referred to above which are governed by the Finance Procedure Rules.
- 7.1.3.** Legal implications that arise when activities funded from the budgets that this report deals with are undertaken, but those implications will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records that relate.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1.** Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council. If spending associated with in-year delivery of services, or the response and recovery to Covid-19, is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves. This could require the Council to deliver a greater level of future savings to replenish reserve balances and / or revise the level of risks associated with the development of the Reserves Strategy in future.
- 7.2.2.** As part of the process to produce this report, senior officers review expenditure and income across all services to support the development of mitigation plans that will return the outturn to a balanced position at year-end.
- 7.2.3.** Forecasts contained within this review provide important information in the process of developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Analysis of under or over spending during the year will identify whether such performance is likely to continue and this enables more robust estimates to be established.
- 7.2.4.** Any overall shortfall in government funding for local activity linked to Covid-19 will add financial pressure to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, the Medium Term Financial Strategy will need to take account of any longer impacts relating to income, for

example, longer term impact on the Council's income and/or demand on its services.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. This report is a backward look at Council activities and predicts the year-end position.

7.3.2. The forecast outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2022 to 2026 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. Any equality implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. This report is a backward look at Council activities and states the forecast year-end position. Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. Performance and risk management are part of the management processes of the Authority. Risks are captured at Strategic and Operational levels, both in terms of the risk of underperforming and risks to the Council in not delivering its objectives for its residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders.

7.6.2. Risks identified in this report are used to inform the overall financial control risk contained in the Strategic Risk Register; CR3 Financial Resilience. Updates on the scoring and management of strategic risks are provided to the Council's Audit and Governance Committee, and the ongoing challenges to the Council's funding and financial position has been recognised in the Annual Governance Statement.

7.6.3. Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if and when required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2020/21 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2021/22 financial scenario, budget and reserves strategy.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. The report provides details of service provision across the borough.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The report provides details of service provision across the borough.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. Public health implications that arise from activities that this report deals with will be dealt with as separate reports to Members or Officer Decision Records as required.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. Any climate change implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer) alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Annex 1 – 2021/22 Financial Year Review which includes: Appendix 1 Finance Sub-Committee. Appendix 2 Corporate Policy Committee. Appendix 3 Adults and Health Committee. Appendix 4 Children and Families Committee. Appendix 5 Highways and Transport Committee. Appendix 6 Economy and Growth. Appendix 7 Environment and Communities Committee. Appendix 8 Treasury Management Strategy. Appendix 9 Investment Strategy.
Background Papers:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25



2021/22 Financial Year Review

December 2021

This report receives scrutiny and approval from Members of Cheshire East Council. As a public report, the Council welcomes feedback to the information contained here.

Anyone wanting to comment is invited to contact the Council at:

shapingourservices@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Introduction

Cheshire East Council is the third largest Council in the Northwest of England, supporting over 386,000 local people with annual spending of over £641m.

Local government is going through a period of financial challenges, with a combination of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, increasing demand for services and rising costs. There is also increasing uncertainty associated with income from business rates and government grants.

Demand for Council services is increasing, with more individuals and families needing support and services than ever before. This reflects an increase in population but also reflects changes in demographics. Excluding the impact of Covid-19 this demand is resulting in revenue pressures of £6.7m, with the most significant impact within the rising complexity of needs in Children's Social Care. Pressures are being temporarily offset by underspends across council services resulting in a forecast outturn of £314.1m against a net revenue budget of £311.9m.

The Council's budget continues to be affected by the pandemic. The Council continues to receive funding related to an array of activities in response to the situation. But current forecasts remain consistent with the Budget, in that the Council is not aiming to use reserves to fund Covid-19 costs in 2021/22.

When the 2021/22 budget was set, in February 2021, it was highlighted that the use of reserves was not sustainable in the medium term. Net spending therefore needs to be contained within the estimates of expenditure that form the budget. This issue, and how Covid-19 affects this is considered as part of the ongoing planning for the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The forecasts at mid-year highlight temporary underspends due to vacant posts and some beneficial underspending on pension costs. Whilst those issues are likely to be temporary in nature, the overspending on

Children's Social Care, pay inflation and car parking will almost certainly affect the medium term finances of the Council. This situation must be addressed as part of the MTFs process for 2022 to 2026.

To support openness and transparency, and provide evidence of strong governance, the report has a main section, to provide background and context, and then nine supporting appendices with detailed information about allocation and management of public money during 2021/22:

Section 1 provides information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council. It demonstrates how spending in 2021/22 is being funded, including the positions on overall service budgets, centrally held budgets, council tax and business rates. Further details are contained in the appendices.

- **Appendix 1** Finance Sub-Committee.
- **Appendix 2** Corporate Policy Committee.
- **Appendix 3** Adults and Health Committee.
- **Appendix 4** Children and Families Committee.
- **Appendix 5** Highways and Transport Committee.
- **Appendix 6** Economy and Growth Committee.
- **Appendix 7** Environment and Communities Committee.
- **Appendix 8** shows updates to the Treasury Management Strategy.
- **Appendix 9** shows updates to the Investment Strategy.

Alex Thompson

Director of Finance and Customer Services
(Section 151 Officer)

Note Section 2 Workforce Development Plan has been removed from the Review and will be reported to Corporate Policy Committee as a separate report.

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2021/22 Outturn Forecast - Financial Position

2021/22 (GROSS Revenue Budget £492.7m)	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn Including Covid £m	Forecast Covid Expenditure £m	Forecast Outturn Excluding Covid £m	Forecast Over / (Underspend) Excluding Covid £m	For further information please see the following sections
SERVICE DIRECTORATES						
Adult, Health and Integration	119.0	120.8	1.6	119.2	0.2	Section 1 - Paragraphs 6-7, 31
Children's Services	68.8	74.2	1.1	73.1	4.3	Section 1 - Paragraphs 8-21, 32
Place	75.3	81.9	6.2	75.7	0.4	Section 1 - Paragraphs 22-25, 33-35
Corporate Services	35.5	35.3	0.9	34.4	(1.1)	Section 1 - Paragraphs 26-30, 36-37
Total Services Net Budget	298.6	312.2	9.8	302.4	3.8	
CENTRAL BUDGETS						
Capital Financing	14.0	14.0	-	14.0	-	Appendix 1 Section 5
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	2.2	1.7	(0.5)	2.2	-	Appendix 1 Section 6
Corporate Contributions / Central Budgets	(2.9)	(4.5)	-	(4.5)	(1.6)	Section 1 - Paragraph 38
Total Central Budgets	13.3	11.2	(0.5)	11.7	(1.6)	
TOTAL NET BUDGET	311.9	323.4	9.3	314.1	2.2	
Business Rates Retention Scheme	(49.1)	(49.1)	-	(49.1)	-	Section 1 - Paragraphs 56-60
Specific Grants	(20.0)	(29.3)	(9.3)	(20.0)	-	Appendix 1 Section 3
Council Tax	(242.8)	(242.8)	-	(242.8)	-	Section 1 - Paragraphs 44-55
Sourced from Collection Fund	-	-	-	-	-	
Central Budgets Funding	(311.9)	(321.2)	(9.3)	(311.9)	-	
FUNDING POSITION	-	2.2	-	2.2	2.2	
	Planned Contribution			Forecast Variance	Impact on Reserves	
	2021/22			Outturn	Outturn	
	£m			£m	£m	
Impact on Reserves	-			(2.2)	(2.2)	
General Reserves Balance	2021/22 Budget			Forecast		
	£m			£m		
Opening Balance April 2021	11.5			Actual	11.5	
2021/22 Impact on Reserves (see above)	-			Forecast	(2.2)	Section 1 - Paragraphs 41-42
Closing Balance March 2022	11.5			Forecast	9.3	

1. Financial Stability

Introduction

- The Council has a strong track record of sound financial management. Nevertheless, in common with all UK local authorities the Council finds itself in a position where pressures on the revenue budget are intensifying as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, increased costs, growing demand and reducing Government grant. The Council has continued to receive some funding in response to the pandemic, as there is still a need to protect both the health and economic wellbeing of local people and businesses.
- Demand and increasing complexity in cases for Children's and Adults' Social Care remains the most significant financial pressure for the Council in the medium term, particularly in Children's services where overspending is occurring compared to budget.
- Table 1** provides a service summary of financial performance. The current forecast is that services will be £3.8m over budget in the current year on normal activities. The Financial Narratives provide further details and changes to service net budgets since the Medium Term Financial Strategy are analysed in **Appendix 1**.
- Further items impacting on the level of the Council's balances are detailed in the paragraphs below on Central Budgets and Funding.

Table 1 - Service Revenue Outturn Forecasts

2021/22 (GROSS Revenue Budget £492.7m)	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn Including Covid £m	Forecast Covid Expenditure £m	Forecast Outturn Excluding Covid £m	Forecast Over / (Underspend) Excluding Covid £m
SERVICE DIRECTORATES					
Adult Social Care - Operations	28.1	27.8	0.4	27.4	(0.7)
Commissioning	90.9	93.0	1.2	91.8	0.9
Public Health	-	-	-	-	-
Adult, Health and Integration	119.0	120.8	1.6	119.2	0.2
Directorate	0.9	0.8	-	0.8	(0.1)
Children's Social Care	43.2	48.4	0.5	47.9	4.7
Prevention & Early Help	8.3	8.0	0.1	7.9	(0.4)
Education & 14-19 Skills	16.4	17.0	0.5	16.5	0.1
Children's Services	68.8	74.2	1.1	73.1	4.3
Directorate	0.9	0.9	-	0.9	-
Environment & Neighbourhood Services	42.3	45.5	3.7	41.8	(0.5)
Growth & Enterprise	20.9	21.5	0.4	21.1	0.2
Highways & Infrastructure	11.2	14.0	2.1	11.9	0.7
Place	75.3	81.9	6.2	75.7	0.4
Directorate	0.4	0.3	-	0.3	(0.1)
Finance & Customer Services	12.0	12.7	0.5	12.2	0.2
Governance & Compliance Services	9.1	8.8	0.4	8.4	(0.7)
Transformation	14.0	13.5	-	13.5	(0.5)
Corporate Services	35.5	35.3	0.9	34.4	(1.1)
TOTAL SERVICES NET BUDGET	298.6	312.2	9.8	302.4	3.8

Note the costs of Covid-19 are reviewed regularly, the figures shown are based on the November Tracker.

Financial Narratives

- The financial narrative is split into three parts: Non Covid-19 Service performance narrative; Covid-19 Service performance narrative; and Central Budgets and Funding.

Part 1 - Non Covid-19 Service Performance

Adult, Health and Integration

- The Adult Social Care (Operations and Commissioning) and Public Health budgets remain under continued pressure across the country. The rising cost of Social Care in Cheshire East is driven by two main factors: increasing demand for services and increasing costs of providing them. Demand for Social Care is not driven exclusively by an ageing population, the prevalence of disability among working-age adults has also increased over recent years. In addition to increasing demand, the unit cost of providing care services is also going up, driven mainly by workforce costs and this has been recognised in the 2021/22 budget where growth has been allocated.
- There are significant risks to the Adults budget linked to many factors. Risks such as the long term impact of Covid-19 on individuals, the risk and impact of the temporary funding streams discontinuing, and the workforce and capacity issues in the Social Care market all have the potential to result in additional and unplanned costs. The financial impact of the new Social Care Reform is also unclear at this early stage, and may have significant implications for the Adults budgets. Changes in legislation around Liberty Protection Safeguards will also bring increased responsibilities, work loads and training to the service, with no clarity around the associated additional burden funding.

Children's Services

- The budget for the Children and Families Directorate for 2021/22 at mid-year is £68.8m.
- There are a number of key pressures within the Directorate resulting in a forecast overspend of £4.3m against budget.
- The position is summarised in the following table:

Table 2 – Children's Services Outturn Forecasts

Review - forecast outturn	Budget	Outturn Variance	Covid Costs	Net of Covid Costs
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Executive Director	0.9	-0.1	-	-0.1
Children's Social Care	43.2	5.2	0.5	4.7
Prevention and Early Help	8.3	-0.3	0.1	-0.4
Education and Skills	16.4	0.6	0.5	0.1
Revised Total	68.8	5.4	1.1	4.3
DSG - in year pressure				15.5
DSG Deficit Balance B/F				10.0
DSG Deficit Balance as at 31 March 2022				25.5

- Particular issues are set out in the paragraphs below.
- ### Children's Social Care
- The overspend is forecast at £4.7m. This is mainly as a result of pressure from Agency Placements of £2.8m due to:
 - Additional pressures at outturn 2020/21 that exceeded the growth available in the MTFs (based on earlier forecasts) by £1.7m.

- The high numbers of children in care at 519 at September 2021. This is down from 531 in May 2021 and an average of 535 throughout 2020/21. The reduction is positive but numbers in care remain higher than in previous years.
 - The increase in unit costs for all types of placement due to market inflation. The average cost of an external placement has increased by 14% over the 2020/21 average cost. Within that overall figure, the average cost for a residential placement has increased by 23% since last year.
 - The continuing roll out of the residential services contract and a delay in seeing the full benefit of the new homes through reduced agency placement costs.
 - Offsetting savings by reduced use of the short breaks contract.
 - Analysis of recent years shows that the spend on agency placements has risen by an average of 9% per annum. Therefore, the figures assume a further 4.5% increase in pressure to 31 March 2022.
13. The service is also experiencing pressure from:
- Internal Fostering in terms of an increase in rates paid to foster carers and an increase in the number of children being fostered. This equates to a £0.9m pressure.
 - Staffing pressures of £0.4m which includes a legacy saving target on management and admin staff that cannot be delivered under current demand levels.
 - Use of Early Help and Independence Payments – there has been a significant increase in demand with 500 clients compared to the budgeted level of 300. This has resulted in a forecast pressure of £0.3m.
- The Commissioning Contracts budget pressure continuing at £0.12m
- Prevention and Early Help**
14. The department is forecasting an underspend of £0.4m from holding vacancies.
- Education and Skills**
15. The Department is currently reflecting an overspend of £0.1m excluding Covid-19 costs. The key issues are:
- Transport ~ TSS is currently forecasting a pressure of £0.3m as a result of increased demand for SEND and cared for children transport where the journey is often out of borough so longer and more expensive. There is also an issue with the shortage of drivers resulting in significant price increases.
- After allowing for other transport grants and budgets of £0.2m, the service is forecasting a £0.1m overspend against transport.
- This position is under review as part of the Company's quarter 2 forecasts that take into account the results of the new academic year.
- Significant work is underway relating to the transfer of TSS back into the Local Authority as from 1st April which will allow for greater clarity in terms of financial management.
- Educational Psychologists / SEND Staffing ~ these two areas are broadly balanced forecasts but additional locum staff and SEN staff are urgently needed to maintain

timeliness levels which would result in a pressure over the coming years.

- Other parts of the Education and Skills Service are reporting an underspend of £0.1m
- Catering ~ the service has worked hard to successfully secure an increase in income levels albeit still less than pre Covid-19. In addition, significant cost pressures are being seen due to food costs and delivery issues. At this stage the reduction in income and cost pressures are giving a shortfall of £0.1m.

The service is considering a range of options moving forward including the scope to increase school meal charges to schools

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

16. This is ring-fenced funding received for:
 - schools
 - high needs / special educational needs
 - early years provision
 - a number of central services including statutory costs and certain support functions.
17. The key pressure on DSG relates to the high needs block. For 2021/22 high needs DSG funding is £48.1m representing an increase of £3.6m (8.1%) on 2020/21.
18. The DSG Reserve deficit balance carried forward from 2020/21 is £10m.
19. The forecasts reflect expected overspending on high needs offset by underspending against early years and the central DSG blocks to give an in year pressure of £15.5m. This takes the DSG reserve deficit forecast to £25.5m at 31 March 2022.

20. This is in line with the budget gap as determined the Council's DSG Management Plan that was approved by Cabinet in March 2021 and set out the planned expenditure and income on high needs over the medium term. Specific issues for 2021/22 include pressures on external placements and local provision.
21. The Council is working to deliver the mitigations set out in the DSG Management Plan but demand exceeds the current rate of local expansion. Additional key projects are being developed over the next 6 – 9 months including expansion of Springfield Special School in Crewe and the need for a centrally located special school. The service will be seeking to secure additional capital investment over the medium term.

Place Directorate

Place Directorate

22. Non Covid-19 underspends are forecast of £17,000. These arise from a staffing vacancy and additional income received towards staffing costs, partially offset by a forecast pay rise which was unbudgeted.

Environment & Neighbourhood Services

23. Excluding the impact of Covid-19, an underspend is forecast on Environment and Neighbourhood Services of £0.5m. This is predominantly from staffing savings made up of part year vacancies, maternity leave savings and budgeting for staff not in the pension scheme, offset by a forecast pay rise which was not budgeted.

Growth & Enterprise

24. There is a non Covid-19 pressure of £0.2m for Growth and Enterprise. This is made up of staffing underspends and control of costs within Tatton, Public Rights of Way and

Economic Development offset by income and cost pressures within Assets. Facilities Management have pressures arising due to increased energy costs and business rates but these have been mitigated by a forecast underspend on water and the control of costs such as responsive maintenance within the service. The majority of the pressure is for a forecast pay rise which was not included in the budget.

Highways & Infrastructure

25. Non Covid-19 pressures within Highways and Infrastructure total £0.7m. There is a £0.5m pressure in year because of proposed parking charges not going ahead as planned. Pressures of £170,000 also exist for Transport resulting from unachievable savings targets for Flexi Link advertising and fares and the restructure of the company. A forecast pay rise has also been included in the forecast totalling £78,000, this was not budgeted. These pressures have been partially mitigated by savings within Parking, mainly due to part year staff vacancies.

Corporate Services

26. The £35.4m budget for Corporate Services, which includes the Housing Benefits (HB) Payments Centre, is currently forecast to underspend by £1.2m at year end. There is a £0.3m pressure associated with implementing the Best4Business (B4B) programme. Members will be aware that B4B is the change programme implementing Unit4 ERP, a complex, technical solution designed to administer all HR, Payroll and Finance functions across both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester councils, schools, academies, and council companies. The financial pressures reported in 2021/22 are mainly one-off additional costs of the revised timeline of Go Live 2 (HR and payroll) (November 2021) which cannot be charged to the capital project and which will be mitigated from the revenue budget wherever possible. Most of the pressure (£0.2m) sits in ICT Service Delivery from

loss of income due to staff working on B4B project work. Further pressure of £0.1m in Finance & Customer Services is mainly because of additional implementation staffing costs.

Corporate Directorate

27. The Corporate Services Directorate area includes the cost of the Chief Executive, the Executive Director of Corporate Services and associated budgets. These budgets are forecast to underspend by £0.1m.

Finance & Customer Services

28. Finance and Customer Services, which includes the HB Payments Centre, is forecast to overspend by £0.2m. This is mainly attributable to a £0.4m overspend on the Transactional Service Centre hosted by Cheshire West and Chester, and £0.1m pressures from unbudgeted costs linked to implementing the B4B System, savings in Business Solutions relating to the introduction of B4B that will not be fully achievable until next financial year (£40,000), and the contribution to Corporate Services efficiency savings (£56,000). The overspend is partially offset by a £0.4m underspend in Customer Services as a result of delaying restructures, delaying filling vacancies, and savings on certain non-staff costs.

Transformation

29. Transformation is forecast to underspend by £0.5m, mainly due to a £0.1m underspend on the Director's cost centre, and £0.4m underspend in HR due to in-year staff vacancies, and underspending on central training, and Organisational Development budgets. In addition, the overall ICT budget is forecast to underspend by £0.2m. ICT Strategy is forecast to underspend by £1.0m but is offset by an overspend in ICT Service Delivery of £0.8m. The underspend in strategy has arisen in part from a delay in certain revenue consequences of capital projects hitting the revenue budget for which

revenue growth was included in this year's MTFs and in part from cost falling into the shared service rather than the strategy area where growth had been given. The shared service has worked hard to mitigate the impact of lost revenue however the extent of the loss of income is such that it has been difficult to offset without affecting standard business delivery. Rising in-year contract costs are adding to the pressure. The Shared Services Joint Committee is monitoring the overall budget pressures. There has also been further income lost due to B4B project work not being charged at the standard rate per hour. The overall Transformation Directorate underspend is further offset by the contribution to Corporate Services efficiency savings (£96,000), and £50,000 savings from staff travel being temporarily held in Corporate Services before the actual savings are allocated to individual services.

Governance & Compliance

30. Governance & Compliance is forecast to underspend by £0.7m. Within Governance & Democratic, the underspend of £0.4m is mainly due to increased marriage income in the Registrations Service as a result of surges in demand following the easing of restrictions put in place during the pandemic, Legal Services (£0.2m) due to underspends on staffing budgets, and Audit & Risk is forecasting a £0.3m underspend on staffing costs due to carrying staff vacancies but this is offset by pressures within Insurance due to a fall in school buy-back income, and increased premium costs. These underspends are being partially offset by unbudgeted costs being incurred relating to Standards work, and the contribution to Corporate Services efficiency savings (£45,000).

Part 2 - Covid-19 Service Performance

Adult, Health and Integration

31. Covid-19 for the social care and health system has thrown into turmoil what we normally accept as the status quo. Whilst the human, social and economic cost of Covid-19 has been inexorably high, the pandemic challenged Cheshire East on the way services were delivered meaning reduced costs in some areas as services had to be closed/stopped in line with government guidance, and pressures in other areas where demand has increased. Utilisation of Covid-19 Funding has meant that the services have responded by diverting resources to the most critical services during this challenging year, as well as supporting our NHS Partners.

Children's Services

32. At this stage the key Covid-19 pressures identified relate to:
- Children's Social Care - £0.5m from the necessary use of unregulated placements at much higher costs rates than elsewhere.
 - Prevention and Early Help - £30,000 from loss of rental income from hire of room space, £0.15m from additional emotional support to young people and enabling the continuation of Duke of Edinburgh courses.
 - Education and Skills - loss of income of £20,000 from fixed penalty notices plus a reduction in school meals income of £0.5m.
 - Capital programme - the Education and Skills service is also experiencing cost increases of 20% on capital schemes in terms of labour and material costs. An element of that is a result of Covid-19.

Place Directorate

Environment & Neighbourhood Services

33. There are covid pressures of £3.7m within Environment and Neighbourhood Services. £1.9m of these relate to Ansa for increased waste tonnage as more people are working from home, cover for sickness and isolation and some unrealisable route and rota optimisation savings. Income pressures of £1.2m also exist for Planning and Building Control, Licensing, Libraries and Markets. There is a £0.4m pressure to ensure service continuity for the Councils leisure centres. Additional costs also exist for the provision of PPE and cleaning materials, increased public funerals, and help to cover backlogs of work within Planning.

Growth & Enterprise

34. Forecast covid pressures of £0.4m exist for Growth & Enterprise. These are mainly due to loss of income at Tatton Park, ticket income in Visitor Economy, rental income within Assets and public path order income in Public Rights of Way. There are also some additional costs for cleaning of temporary accommodation for the Housing service.

Highways & Infrastructure

35. There are covid pressures within Highways and Infrastructure of £2.1m. The majority of this is from the Parking service with lower income received on pay and display car parks and from penalty charge notices. Covid pressures also exist in Highways due to loss of productivity and extra costs of service delivery.

Corporate Services

36. Additional cost pressures within Corporate Services as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic are forecast at £0.9m.

37. The main pressures are within Finance & Customer Services, with the Housing Benefits (HB) payments centre forecasting a £0.3m under-recovery of HB overpayments due to the pandemic, lost court costs income of over £0.1m and the Revenues Service incurring £0.1m additional staff overtime, and additional agency staff costs supporting business as usual in contact centres. Elsewhere, Covid-19 pressures include £0.4m additional staff, travel, and facilities costs, and a reduction in income across services within Governance & Compliance.

Part 3 - Central Budgets and Funding

Table 3 – Central Outturn Forecasts

2021/22	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn Including Covid	Forecast Covid Expenditure	Forecast Outturn Excluding Covid	Forecast Over / (Underspend) Excluding Covid
(GROSS Revenue Budget £492.7m)	(NET)				
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
CENTRAL BUDGETS					
Capital Financing	14.0	14.0	-	14.0	-
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	2.2	1.7	(0.5)	2.2	-
Corporate Contributions / Central Budgets	(2.9)	(4.5)	-	(4.5)	(1.6)
Central Budgets	13.3	11.2	(0.5)	11.7	(1.6)
Business Rates Retention Scheme	(49.1)	(49.1)	-	(49.1)	-
Specific Grants	(20.0)	(29.3)	(9.3)	(20.0)	-
Council Tax	(242.8)	-	-	(242.8)	-
Central Budgets Funding	(311.9)	(321.2)	(9.3)	(311.9)	-

38. It is currently forecast that there will be a £1.6m underspend variance to budget on the central budget. This is due to the over recovery of past service employer pension contributions compared to the budget set and flexible use of capital receipts will fund some revenue costs associated with the B4B project. Budgeted transfers of £1.3m to earmarked reserves have taken place in-year as planned. Grants relating to business rates have been received centrally in-year that are additional to budget which will be transferred to reserves for future use.
39. Specific grants include the unring-fenced Local Authority Support grant and an estimate for the Compensation scheme

linked to income losses from Sales, Fees and Charges which are currently funding the costs associated with Covid-19. The Covid-19 reserve, which holds the unused grant from 2020/21, will also fund this expenditure.

40. Details of grants received and reserves can be found within the individual Service Committee Appendices.

Outturn Impact

41. The impact of the projected service outturn position is to maintain balances as reported above (**paragraph 3**). With the central budget items detailed above (**paragraph 38**), the financial impact could result in a decrease in balances of £2.2m. Any deficit in non Covid-19 related expenditure / income remaining at the end of the year will be drawn down from the Medium Term Financial Strategy Earmarked Reserve which is used to smooth the effects of variations in spending / income in any specific year.
42. The Council will continue to manage and review the financial forecasts in response to emerging guidance and the local response to the pandemic and how this affects the Council's revenue budget.

Collecting Local Taxes for Local Expenditure

43. Cheshire East Council collects Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates for use locally and nationally.

Council Tax

44. Council tax is set locally and retained for spending locally. Council tax was set for 2021/22 at £1,579.03 for a Band D property. This is applied to the taxbase.

45. The taxbase for Cheshire East reflects the equivalent number of domestic properties in Band D that the Council is able to collect council tax from (after adjustments for relevant discounts, exemptions and an element of non-collection). The taxbase for 2021/22 was agreed at 153,796.10 which, when multiplied by the Band D charge, means that the expected income for the year is £242.8m.

46. In addition to this, Cheshire East Council collects council tax on behalf of the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the Cheshire Fire Authority and Parish Councils. **Table 4** shows these amounts separately, giving a total budgeted collectable amount of £299.0m.

47. This figure is based on the assumption that the Council will collect at least 99% of the amount billed. The Council will always pursue 100% collection, however to allow for non-collection the actual amount billed will therefore be more than the budget.

48. This figure may also vary during the year to take account of changes to Council Tax Support payments, the granting of discounts and exemptions, and changes in numbers and value of properties. The amount billed to date is £303.1m.

Table 4 – Cheshire East Council collects Council Tax on behalf of other precepting authorities

	£m
Cheshire East Council	242.8
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner	34.7
Cheshire Fire Authority	12.4
Town and Parish Councils	9.1
Total	299.0

49. **Table 5** shows collection rates within three years, and demonstrates that 99% collection is on target to be achieved within this period.

Table 5 – Over 99% of Council Tax is collected within three years

Financial Year	CEC Cumulative			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	%	%	%	%
After 1 year	98.3	98.2	97.9	97.4
After 2 years	99.1	99.0	98.8	**
After 3 years	99.3	99.2	**	**

**data not yet available

50. The council tax in-year collection rate for the period up to the end of September 2021 is 56.3%. This is an increase of 0.7%

on the previous year and shows positive signs of reverting to pre Covid-19 levels. Caution should be exercised however in view of the imminent end to furlough arrangements and the impact that may have on residents' ability to pay.

51. Council tax support payments were budgeted at £18.0m for 2021/22 and at the end of September the total council tax support awarded was £17.6m.
52. The Council Tax Support scheme remains the same for 2021/22, other than the uprating of the income bands in line with the Consumer Price Index in September 2020. The scheme was confirmed by full Council in December 2020.
53. A review of the Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23 is underway and will be finalised later this year.
54. Council tax discounts awarded are £26.8m which is a slight increase on the same period in 2020/21. This is mainly due to an increase in single person discounts following the postponement of the discount review during Covid-19.
55. Council tax exemptions awarded is £6.6m which is an increase on the same period in 2020/21. This has been impacted by the postponement of exemption reviews during Covid-19.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)

56. NDR is collected from businesses in Cheshire East based on commercial rateable property values and a nationally set multiplier. The multiplier changes annually in line with inflation and takes account of the costs of small business rate relief.
57. The small business multiplier applied to businesses which qualify for the small business relief was set 49.9p in 2021/22.

The non-domestic multiplier was set at 51.2p in the pound for 2021/22.

58. During 2020/21 Cheshire East Council was in a pooling arrangement with the Greater Manchester (GM) Authorities (also included Cheshire West and Chester) to maximise business rate retention locally and support the economic regeneration of Greater Manchester and Cheshire Councils. Pool members were entitled to retain the levy charge on growth that would normally be paid over to Central Government. Cheshire East retained 50% of this levy charge locally before paying the remaining half over to the pool. The pooling arrangement has ceased for 2021/22 due to the continued uncertainty around business rates levels and the possibility of LA's falling below the safety net threshold as the pandemic continues.

59. **Table 6** demonstrates how collection continues to improve even after year end. The table shows how over 99% of non-domestic rates are collected within three years.

Table 6 – Over 99% of Business Rates are collected within three years

Financial Year	CEC Cumulative			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	%	%	%	%
After 1 year	97.7	98.5	98.2	92.4
After 2 years	99.2	99.4	98.4	**
After 3 years	99.8	99.4	**	**

**data not yet available

60. The business rates in-year collection rate for the period up to the end of September 2021 is 48.25%. Although this is a reduction on previous years it does not stand comparison due to the introduction of the Extended Retail Discount scheme which has impacted the annual debit part way through the year. Additionally, normal processes to recover unpaid business rates will only commence during the second half of this year as Government grant schemes come to an end.

Appendices to 2021/22 Financial Year Review

December 2021

Appendix 4

Children and Families Committee

1. Changes to Revenue Budget 2021/22 since Medium Term Financial Strategy

	MTFS Net Budget £000	Additional Grant Funding £000	Restructuring & Realignments £000	Revised Net Budget £000
Children and Families				
Directorate	888	-	10	898
Children's Social Care	42,922	169	86	43,177
Education & 14-19 Skills	16,105	57	291	16,453
Prevention & Early Help	8,279	-	-	8,279
	68,194	226	387	68,807

Note additional grant funding is the expenditure budget relating to general purpose grants in section 3, tables 4 and 5 of this appendix. Specific grants income and expenditure budgets held in the service area (section 3, tables 2 and 3) do not appear as they net to nil.

2. Policy Proposal Update

Budget Policy Proposal	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	In Year Update
[40] Increase income from hire of Children's Centres	-10				On track to achieve this target.
[78] Reduction in contribution to Cheshire Youth Justice Service	-45				On track to achieve this target with part achievement in 2021/22.
[72] Move to Integrated Early Help Locality Service model		-167			Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
Review of Children and Families Transport Policies and delivery arrangements		-200	-300	-200	Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
Transport Management Fee savings will not be delivered due to Covid-19 placing additional pressure on transport to school	1,000				Achieved
[77] Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers	1,300	1,300	1,300		Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[11] Reduce the numbers of Business Support staff in line with the repurposing of Children and Family Centres		-200			Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[50] Prevention and Early Help Service – Locality working and changes to the management structure of the Family Service		-140			Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.

Budget Policy Proposal	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	In Year Update
[10] Prevention and Early Help Service – Reduction of the cost of Prevention Services			-200		Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[19] Reduced travel, supplies and services for Early Help services	-26				Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[74] Reduce supplies and services in Children's Centres by 20%.	-32				Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[66] Reduced capacity in Family Information Service	-50				Achieved
[76] Development and Partnerships Service			-300		Under review as part of the 2022/23 MTFS.
[20] Reduce pensions budget to match latest forecasts	-140				Achieved
[53] To review use of School Improvement Grant to provide capacity to support maintained schools	-60				Achieved
[71] Increase capacity in SEND service to meet continuing demands on the service	380				Achieved
[69] Review the use of the Cheshire East Lifelong Learning Service grant to reduce the requirement of Council funding	-110				Achieved

Budget Policy Proposal	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	In Year Update
[37] Establish an Education Psychologist traded service to enable a proactive early support and intervention offer		-25	-75		This is on track to be achieved
[70] To reduce costs of School Liaison and Governance service with less use of external support	-10				Achieved
[62] Fund the Cygnet programme for cared for children from pupil premium	-15				Achieved
[38] Establish a traded service for non-statutory elements of Attendance Service		-35	-35		This is on track to be achieved
Children's Social Care Transformation and OFSTED Response	1,500	-1,500			Currently on track for investment of £1.5m over two years
[75] Reduction in cost of external placements for cared for children		-1,530	-2,171	-707	Savings proposals not on track to be achieved. Growth proposals are being put forward as part of the 2022/23 MTFS update.

3. Corporate Grants Register

Table 1 – Corporate Grants Register

Grants 2021/22	Original Budget	Revised Forecast	Change from Original Budget	Treatment of Grant
	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000	Notes 2 - 5
CHILDREN and FAMILIES				
Specific Use (Held within Services)¹	160,065	157,768	(2,297)	
General Purpose (Held Corporately)				
Staying Put Implementation Grant	0	113	113	SRE
Extended Rights to Free Transport (Home to School Transport)	201	258	57	SRE
Extended Personal Adviser Duty Implementation	0	56	56	SRE
Extension of the role of Virtual School Heads	60	60	0	
TOTAL CHILDREN and FAMILIES	160,326	158,255	(2,071)	

Notes

1 The Dedicated Schools Grant, Pupil Premium Grant, Sixth Form Grant and Other School Specific Grant from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) figures are based on actual anticipated allocations. Changes are for in-year increases/decreases to allocations by the DfE and conversions to academy status.

2 SRE - Supplementary Revenue Estimate requested by relevant service.

3 ODR - Officer Decision Record to approve immediate budget change to relevant service.

4 Reserves - transfer to reserves at year end.

5 Balances - amount will be included as a variance to budget.

3.1 Cheshire East Council receives two main types of Government grants; specific use grants and general purpose grants. Specific use grants are held within the relevant service with a corresponding expenditure budget. Whereas general purpose grants are held in central budgets with a

corresponding expenditure budget within the allocated service area.

3.2 The decrease in specific grants relates to the dedicated schools grant reflecting the latest allocations. Other additional

specific grants have been received and are detailed in **Table 2**. Previously approved additional specific grants are detailed in **Table 3**.

3.3 Spending in relation to specific use grants must be in line with the purpose for which it is provided.

3.4 **Table 4** shows additional general purpose grants that are approved by the Finance Sub-Committee. **Table 5** shows general purpose grants that have previously been approved.

Table 2 – Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose)

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Covid-19 Local Support Grant	622	Extended Winter Grant now renamed, Covid Local Support Grant in recognition that "some restrictions on the economy continue".
Total Specific Purpose Allocation for Committee Approval		622	
Children and Families - Schools	Pupil Premium Grant	53	Pupil premium is funding to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England. Evidence shows that disadvantaged children generally face additional challenges in reaching their potential at school and often do not perform as well as other pupils.
Children and Families - Schools	Sixth Forms Grant	15	Funding is based on Pupil Numbers which makes up the main funding profile, the MTFs estimate will have been based on pupils in 2020/21 being forecast for the remainder of financial year. This will now have been updated for 2021/22 pupil numbers. Sixth Form providers also receive a High Value Course Premium based on the number of pupils taking high value courses.

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families - Schools	Free School Meals (FSM) Supplementary Grant	36	As the school funding system operates on a lagged basis, the government has introduced a supplementary grant to help schools manage this increase in Free School Meal numbers in the short term. It gives schools extra funding to help them meet the higher costs of providing extra meals before the lagged funding system catches up.
Children and Families - Schools	Teachers' Pay Grant	24	The teachers' pay grant (TPG) provides funding for schools to support teachers' pay awards. Local authorities must follow the terms and conditions set out in the conditions of grant.
Children and Families - Schools	Teachers' Pension Grant	66	The teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) supports schools and local authorities with the cost of the increase in employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme. Local authorities must follow the terms and conditions set out in the conditions of grant.
Children and Families - Schools	Covid-19 Additional Dedicated Home to School and College Transport	29	The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local transport authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in respect of the provision of the additional transport capacity for both Home to School and Further Education colleges.
Children and Families	Asylum Seekers	79	Based on clients' claims so therefore will fluctuate based on age / numbers of claims – we are also receiving some additional funding from those that move through the National Transfer Scheme. Looking at claims in the current year there have been additions to the UASC population, therefore this has likely seen an increase in the amount receiving the higher rate. In addition, possibly an element of being cautious with MTFS items as this can vary significantly purely based on the numbers as said above.

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Tackling Troubled Families (Payments by Results)	70	<p>In April 2012, the Government launched the Troubled Families Programme, a £448m scheme to incentivise local authorities and their partners to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families by May 2015. This programme worked with families where children are not attending school, young people are committing crime, families are involved in anti-social behaviour and adults are out of work.</p> <p>In June 2013, the Government announced plans to expand the Troubled Families Programme for a further five years from 2015/16 and to reach up to an additional 400,000 families across England. £200 million has been committed to fund the first year of this five year programme. This increased investment is testament to the Government's ongoing commitment to improve the lives of troubled families and as this work is taken to a significantly greater scale, to transform local public services and reduce costs for the long-term.</p>
Children and Families	Skills & Lifelong Learning	26	Increase of £25,556 on the MTFS estimate. This fund aims to help adults to train and gain the valuable skills they need to improve their job prospects and support the economy.
Children and Families	Supporting Families; Investing in Practice programme (Mockingbird Family Model)	20	Increase of £20,019 on the MTFS estimate. This is part of the same grant funding therefore the amount unused in 2020/21 will have been rolled forward and forecast to be used in current year.

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Remand Grant	20	Children and Young People (CYP) who are remanded in youth detention accommodation will be given Looked After Children (LAC) status. The grant is to cover the costs of the LA's responsibility and gives LA's incentives to reduce their secure remands and reinvest any savings achieved in Youth Justice (YJ).
Children and Families	Extension of the Role of Virtual School Heads to children with a social worker Implementation	118	Funding provides Virtual School Heads with the additional resource required to take on the strategic leadership role for children with a social worker and is sufficient to recruit additional team members to support them with these responsibilities.
Specific Purpose Allocations less than £500,000		556	
Total Specific Purpose Allocations		1,178	

Table 3 - Summary of Grants already Approved (Specific Purpose)

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families - Schools (June report)	Covid-19 Wellbeing for Education Recovery Grant	48	This grant is awarded to provide support to schools and colleges on mental health and wellbeing.
Children and Families - Schools (June report)	Covid-19 Additional Dedicated Home to School and College Transport	26	The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local transport authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in respect of the provision of the additional transport capacity for both Home to School and FE colleges.

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families (July report)	Supporting Families (Payments by Results) Upfront Grant	590	Local Councils and partners supporting vulnerable families to thrive. Providing help to those families who need support so they get it at the right point, in the right way, as early as possible.
Children and Families (June report)	Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Housing Grant	648	To deliver support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation.
Children and Families (June report)	Holiday Activities & Food Grant	793	The aim of the programme is to make free places available to children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year. This would cover 4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021. Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area. There will also be flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to older children.
Children and Families (June report)	Covid-19 Local Support Grant	207	Extended Winter Grant now renamed, Covid Local Support Grant in recognition that "some restrictions on the economy continue".
Children and Families (July report)	Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme	306	Funding to provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include some families who normally have access to Free School Meals during term time.
Children & Families (Outturn report)	Covid-19 Local Support Grant	829	The Government's Covid-19 Local Support Grant provides funding through local authorities for families who need help paying for food and utilities, has been extended until the end of September.
Specific Purpose allocations already Approved		3,447	

Table 4 – Allocation of Additional Grant Expenditure from General Purpose Grants Held in Central Budgets

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Extended Rights to Free Transport	57	The Department for Education provides additional transport funding to local authorities to support children from low-income families to be able to attend schools further from home than the statutory walking distances. The funding is paid as a non-ring-fenced grant paid via the Department for Communities and Local Government under the Local Services Support Grant (section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003).
General Purposes Allocations less than £500,000		57	
Total General Purpose Allocation		57	

Table 5 - Summary of Grant Expenditure already Approved from Central Budget General Purpose Grants

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families (July report)	Staying Put Implementation	113	The purpose of the grant is to provide support for local authorities in England for expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them, in respect of a young person aged 18 and their former foster carer, who wish to continue living together in a 'Staying Put' arrangement. For the purposes of this grant 'young person' means a former relevant child who was looked after immediately prior to their 18 th birthday. This supported arrangement can continue until the young person's 21 st birthday.
Children and Families (July report)	Extended Personal Advisor Duty Implementation Grant	56	The purpose of the grant is to support Local Authorities in England to meet the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, requiring them to offer Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to the age of 25. The grant is

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
			to support those young people that may request support from the Local Authority after the age of 21 and up to the age of their 25th birthday. The grant has been provided to meet the extra demand for personal adviser time that the new duties create. The new duty provides the Local Authority the ability to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers who may have difficulties and be struggling to transition to adulthood.
General Purpose Allocations already Approved		169	

4. Debt Management

	Outstanding Debt £000	Over 6 months old £000
Children and Families Committee		
Children's, Education, Prevention and Early Help	472	82
Schools	55	34

5. Capital Strategy

Children and Families

CAPITAL

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22- 2024/25

Scheme Description	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Expenditure				Total Forecast Budget 2021/25	Forecast Funding					Total Funding
			Forecast Budget 2021/22	Forecast Budget 2022/23	Forecast Budget 2023/24	Forecast Budget 2024/25		Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Childrens Social Care													
Foster Carers Capacity Scheme	634	348	0	0	286	0	286					286	286
Childrens Prevention and Support													
Ash Grove Nursery Expansion	230	0	230	0	0	0	230	230					230
Beechwood Nursery Expansion	867	64	803	0	0	0	803	738		65			803
Early Years Sufficiency Capital Fund	189	0	0	189	0	0	189	189					189
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Adelaide Academy	348	31	0	317	0	0	317	147				170	317
Brine Leas High school	1,264	1,205	59		0	0	59	59					59
Congleton Planning Area (Includes -CHS - Tolibet	4,527	232	245	3,800	0	0	4,045	3,960	85				4,045
Elworth CoE Primary School	2,073	1,175	648	0	0	0	648	383	265				648
Future Years Basic Need Allocation	6,570	0	6,570	0	0	0	6,570	6,570					6,570
Holmes Chapel Planning Area	2,014	18		140	1,856	0	1,996	1,996					1,996
Macclesfield Planning Area	3,471	228	1,200	2,043	0	0	3,243	3,243					3,243
Malbank High School	1,922	1,815	107	0	0	0	107	107					107
Middlewich High School	582	552	30	0	0	0	30	30					30
Middlewich Planning Area	1,500	0	0	1,500	0	0	1,500	1,500					1,500
Monks Coppenhall Sen Expansion	101	1	0	100	0	0	100					100	100
Nantwich Planning Area (Primary)	3,500	0	200	1,500	1,800	0	3,500	2,901	599				3,500
Nantwich Planning Area (Secondary)	300	0	300	0	0	0	300	300					300
Park Lane Expansion	3,604	1,503	2,101	0	0	0	2,101					2,101	2,101
Puss Bank SEN Expansion	532	471	61	0	0	0	61					61	61
St Johns CoE School Expansion	478	247	231	0	0	0	231	18	213				231
Sandbach High School - Basic Need	1,701	861	789	50	0	0	839	839					839
Sandbach Boys School - Basic Need	1,772	1,728	43	0	0	0	43	43					43
Sandbach Planning Area (secondary)	38	0	38	0	0	0	38	38					38
School Condition Grant	5,766	0	2,148	2,058	1,560	0	5,766	5,766					5,766
Sen/High Needs Grant Allocation	1,264	0	75	1,189	0	0	1,264	1,264					1,264
Sen Placement Expn - Phase 2	52	0	52	0	0	0	52					52	52
Special Provision Grant Allocation	767	0	137	630	0	0	767	767					767
Springfield Special School Expansion	1,138	1,074	64	0	0	0	64					64	64
Vernon Primary School	128	113	15	0	0	0	15	15					15
Wilmslow Basic Need Scheme	13,179	863	1,000	7,416	3,900	0	12,316	12,016	300				12,316
Wilmslow Primary Planning Area	500	0	0	500	0	0	500	500					500
													0
Total Committed Schemes	61,010	12,530	17,146	21,432	9,402	0	47,980	43,619	1,462	65	0	2,834	47,980

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22- 2024/25

Scheme Description	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Expenditure				Total Forecast Budget 2021/25	Forecast Funding					Total Funding
			Forecast Budget 2021/22	Forecast Budget 2022/23	Forecast Budget 2023/24	Forecast Budget 2024/25		Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
New Schemes													
Shavington Planning Area	2,500	0	157	2,343	0	0	2,500	2,500					2,500
Springfield Satellite Site (Dean Row)	3,027	0	127	2,150	500	250	3,027	1,427	800			800	3,027
Total New Schemes	5,527	0	284	4,493	500	250	5,527	3,927	800	0	0	800	5,527
Total Children and Families Schemes	66,537	12,530	17,430	25,925	9,902	250	53,507	47,546	2,262	65	0	3,634	53,507

6. Reserves Strategy

Name of Reserve	Opening Balance 1st April 2021 £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves 2021/22 £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31st March 2022 £000	Notes
Children's Services (Children and Families Committee):				
Directorate				
Childrens Directorate	422	0	422	To support a number of widespread projects within the Children and Families Directorate
Childrens Social Care				
Domestic Abuse Partnership	79	7	86	To sustain preventative services to vulnerable people as a result of partnership funding.
Transformation Funding	0	750	750	Service is planning to spend half of 1.5m in 2021/22 and half in 2022/23 so will be creating an EMR at Year End 21/22.
Education and 14-19 Skills				
Skills and Lifelong Learning	32	0	32	To support adult learning, training and improving skills for the workplace.
School Organisation & Capital Service	46	(29)	17	£28.5k drawn down in 2021/22 for Springfield Lease
TOTAL	579	728	1,307	



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 th January 2022
Report Title:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2025/26
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)
Report Reference No:	CF/36/21- 22
Ward(s) Affected:	Not Applicable

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to capture the Committee members' response to consultation on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022 to 2026.
- 1.2. The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets out the financial implications of the Council's Corporate Plan and how spending plans can be funded over the next four years. The Council is required by law to approve a balanced budget, where gross expenditure is matched by gross income and appropriate use of reserves, on an annual basis.
- 1.3. The consultation document includes proposals to update the current MTFS that was approved by Council in February 2021.
- 1.4. The current MTFS was balanced over the four-year period 2021 to 2025 and assumed that spending linked to the pandemic would be matched by government funding. The proposals recognised the risk of ongoing reductions in Government Grants as well as growth in demand, particularly within Adult and Children's and Waste services. Additional impacts were included for inflation such as staff pay and spending on utilities. Mitigation for increasing costs included savings, and additional income from some user charges. Mitigation also included increases in Council Tax of 4.99% for 2021/22 and a further annual increase of 1.99% from 2022/23.

- 1.5. The MTFFS 2022 to 2026 consultation reflects financial pressures identified in the In-Year Review of Finance. The consultation also recognises high-level implications of the 2021 Central Government Spending Review.
- 1.6. This report sets out the activities to date and current estimated timescales and assumptions. All Committees are being asked to provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub-Committee in July 2021.
- 1.7. Responses to the consultation will be reported to the Corporate Policy Committee to support that Committee in making recommendations to Council on changes to the current financial strategy. The Chief Finance Officer will report on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves in relation to the final proposals.

2. Recommendations

That Children and Families Committee:

- 2.1. Review the MTFFS 2022 to 2026 Consultation Document (**Appendix 1**) and provide feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee on the proposals relevant to the responsibilities of the Committee as outlined in the Constitution, which are:
 - 15) Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers (page 16)
 - 16) Increase capacity to support Statutory SEND service (page 17)
 - 17) Revenue costs for Crewe Youth Zone (page 17)
 - 18) Safeguarding Children – legacy staffing pressure (page 17)
 - 19) Growth in Children & Families Commissioning Contracts (page 17)
 - 20) Increase capacity to support Statutory Education Psychology Service (page 17)
 - 21) A redesign of Early Help Services into a Locality model (page 19)
 - 22) Restructure Early Help Budget for Crewe Youth Zone (page 19)
 - 25) School Transport (page 21)
- 2.2. Notes those proposals that are rolling forward from the MTFFS 2021-25 relevant to the committee (as part of **Appendix 1** (Appendix A)).
 - New) CSC Transformation and OFSTED Response (page 33)
 - 37) Establish an Education Psychologist traded service (page 34)
 - 38) Establish a traded service for non-statutory elements of Attendance Service (page 34)
 - 76) Development and Partnerships Service (page 35)
- 2.3. Notes the impact of the local government financial settlement as provided at **Appendix 2** on the MTFFS Consultation Document.

- 2.4. Comments on any other element of the MTFS Consultation Document related to the responsibilities of the Committee (including WOC Business Plans, and Reserves levels).
- 2.5. Notes that the minutes of this meeting will form the consultation response of the Committee for the consideration by the Corporate Policy Committee.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Council is required to consult on the proposals within the annual budget. This is required in general terms with businesses but may also require consultation with service users on specific proposals, although where proposals relate to universal services the requirements can be covered through a single consultation document on the overall budget.
- 3.2. The Council must set a balanced budget for each financial year based on robust estimates and supported by adequate reserves. This requirement is significantly supported by meaningful consultation as this improves the assurance that proposals will be delivered within manageable levels of risk.
- 3.3. Establishing key dates for the consultation process manages expectations for stakeholders.
- 3.4. The financial parameters within the MTFS have been reviewed and options for proposals that could be included in a revised MTFS have been put forward.
- 3.5. **Appendix 1** contains the Budget Engagement document including the survey questions that have been used during the consultation period (closed 4 January 2022).

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Delay the publication of budget proposals until after the local government finance settlement had been confirmed, which is usually late December, and adopt the minimum level of engagement. This was not desirable because it is not transparent and does not give enough time to consider future budget changes by stakeholders.

5. Background

- 5.1. Proposals to vary the current budget have been set out as part of the Budget Engagement document that was launched on 24 November 2021. These are continuing to be developed in line with the priorities included

within the Corporate Plan and refined as further funding announcements are confirmed.

- 5.2. Proposals will recognise growth and savings requirements to ensure the published MTFS is both robust and transparent and supports members in making informed decisions.
- 5.3. On 27 October, the Chancellor announced the spending review 2021 that will cover the next 3 years (2022/23 to 2024/25). Details of the actual funding allocations for each local authority were not announced until the provisional settlement on 16 December 2021. At the time of publishing the Budget Consultation in November it had been confirmed that broadly there is due to be an extra £1.6bn for local authorities in each of the next three years. This funding will help the council in managing the increasing costs of complex care, stabilisation of the care market and rising inflation as well as including funding to manage cyber threats.
- 5.4. Planning for the MTFS is an ongoing process, and the Council has, in most years, followed a path of establishing the parameters for the planning process, then proposing variations to achieve a sustainable strategy and then consulting on the proposals. The launch of the consultation process has taken place in November/December in recent years and for the 2022-26 MTFS, the consultation launched on 24 November 2021 and ran until 4 January 2022.
- 5.5. The Provisional Settlement announced on 16 December has varied the assumptions contained in the Budget Engagement document. **Appendix 2** sets out the changes announced and the impact on the estimated funding envelope.
- 5.6. Corporate Policy Committee and each Service committee will provide feedback on their individual proposals and then Corporate Policy Committee will make the final recommendation to full Council at the February meeting.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1. The budget consultation involves engagement with local people and organisations to ensure that we seek feedback from all stakeholders:
 - 6.1.1. With regards to the Budget consultation, the 6-week public consultation period ran from 24 November 2021 to 4 January 2022. During this time, residents, members and stakeholders were able to provide their views in a number of ways.

6.1.2. A dedicated engagement hub provided access for all stakeholders to get information about the proposals being consulted upon within the Budget consultation and encouraged the submission of comments, views and suggestions. The Council's social media accounts promoted the dedicated website.

6.1.3. The Council's Digital Influence Panel, Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Public Service partner agencies, voluntary, community and faith sector stakeholders and Trade Unions have also been invited to give their views. The Council also sought to engage with representative groups for young people, disabled people and older people in the community.

6.1.4. The feedback is being collated and analysed and used to enable transparent decision making.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy is a part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and as such requires approval by Council.

7.1.2. The Council should have robust processes so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty.

7.1.3. Any legal implications arising from this report will be addressed through the budget setting process.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. The current Medium-Term Financial Strategy estimates a balanced budget over the next four years.

7.2.2. The Budget Engagement document sets out the estimated revised position, based on up-to-date information and forecasts, and maintains that balanced four-year position.

7.2.3. Changes as a result of the provisional settlement are set out in Appendix 2.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The Corporate Plan sets out the vision, values, aims and priorities for Cheshire East. It is a sister document to the MTFS.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to support the MTFS, setting out the implications and mitigation.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. Consultation on the proposals will include staff. Any changes involving staff will be managed in consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There are significant risks associated with the financial consequences of the pandemic, recovery and COVID-scarring. These are set out in more detail in the Strategic Risk Register.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children & Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The proposals within the MTFS consultation has noted and responded to the increased demand, pressures and costs on the services for care for children and children with special educational needs and disabilities.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. The Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on public health.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. The Corporate Plan has a very strong environmental thread throughout with a specific aim for the Council to be 'Greener'.

7.10.2. A number of priorities and activities are underway which will support the Council's commitment of being carbon neutral by 2025, including the delivery of an Environmental Strategy and a Carbon Action Plan.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer) alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Budget Engagement Document Appendix 2 – Provisional Settlement
Background Papers:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25 2021/22 In-Year Review of Finance

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Cheshire East Council

Budget Engagement 2022 - 26



Your views matter



Purpose of our Budget Engagement

The Council must set a balanced budget each year, meaning we cannot spend more than our income. To help improve value for money we need to seek the views of residents and businesses about priorities for the year ahead. Your views and feedback as local people, businesses, organisations, councillors and staff are very important and will help us to understand the impact of any changes required to achieve a financially balanced position.

We are responsible for managing annual expenditure of around **£700million**. After taking account of all the income we receive for specific purposes, such as conditional grants for schools, we have an annual net revenue budget of approximately **£300million**. This must be funded from the local taxes paid by households and businesses, and some general government grants, and will cover the day-to-day running costs of our vital services. The net budget equates to approximately **£16** per week for every resident living in the borough.

As well as providing day-to-day services to support children and adults who need our help, or emptying the

bins and managing the highways, the Council also manages a range of capital projects. These projects include building new schools, new roads, information and digital technology and regenerating our town centres. The total value of projects being managed over the next four years alone, is almost **£400million**.

This document outlines the key financial issues that we need to tackle, including those that relate to the ongoing pandemic. It also includes our proposed response to these financial challenges and our plans for spending next year. Your views will be captured and will help inform councillors in making the decisions regarding the council's budget.

Giving your feedback



This PDF document is for information only – to let us know what you think about this budget engagement document please use one of the methods below. Please submit your feedback by 4th January 2022:

[Complete an online survey here](#)

- Complete a paper survey, available at all Cheshire East libraries, and return it to Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ
- Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Write to Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ
- Tweet [#CheshireEast](https://twitter.com/CheshireEast) #CECBudget

- Comment on our budget consultation comments board at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/BudgetEngagement

For any queries about this engagement, for example if you would like to receive this questionnaire in an alternative format, or submit your response in a different way, please call Customer Services 0300 123 5500 or email our Research and Consultation Team

RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Your confidentiality is assured

Any personal information you supply will remain strictly confidential and will be used in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

To find out more about how we use your information see our privacy policy at

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/Privacy



Content

This budget engagement document covers the below topics :

1 | Our corporate priorities

2 | Spending within resources

3 | Spending on our priorities for next year

4 | Summary position for 2022/23

5 | Open investment and savings proposals

6 | Fairer investment and savings proposals

7 | Greener investment and savings proposals

8 | Central budgets and funding activity

9 | Final budget consultation comments

1 | Our corporate priorities

Our corporate plan sets out the vision and priorities over the next four years. Our vision is for a more **Open**, **Fair** and **Green** Cheshire East.



Open - We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East.

Fair - We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents

Green - We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development

- The vision is ambitious, long-term and includes actions that will help us towards achieving our priorities.

- Our ability to achieve them all will depend on the resources we have at our disposal. This means that our corporate plan and the budget are intrinsically linked.

- The plan also relies on the council demonstrating a set of values that support success.

Our Priorities

An open and enabling organisation

- Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
- Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
- Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
- Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
- Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

A council which empowers and cares about people

- Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs
- Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2025
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all

Our Values



2 | Spending within resources

Cheshire East Council gets income from council tax, business rates, government grants and local fees and charges.

Since 1st April 2019 the council has not received any central government general-purpose revenue support grant (it was worth £55.9million to us in 2013/14). To maintain spending on vital services the council has therefore had to increase council tax and fees and charges.

We receive more money when new houses are built, and new residents begin to pay council tax. However, increasing population, and a population that is living longer with new needs, does increase overall costs of services. It is a difficult challenge to manage increases in demand as well as unavoidable costs such as inflation on the things we use and the wages we pay.

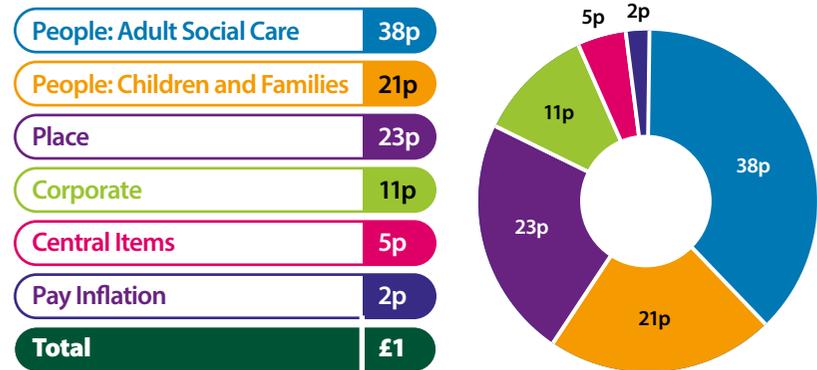
Almost 40% of the budget is spent on supporting older people in care homes or in the community, people with a physical or learning disability or mental ill health. About 20% is spent protecting our most vulnerable young people who need to come into the care of the local authority or ensuring our children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) are supported to live full and active lives.

The council's finances are audited, with reports to central government and independent external auditors that provide an opinion on the quality of the council's arrangements. Services are also inspected by external bodies such as OFSTED, CQC and the Local Government Ombudsman. If there ever is a risk that a council is not going to achieve a balanced budget in-year or in the future, it must take immediate action.

When the council agreed its budget in February 2021, it was balanced for a four year period. This consultation again sets out a balanced position, but with several potential changes within that reflecting improved estimates and emerging information on costs and financial pressures.

How is £1 of your Council Tax spent?

In February 2021, Cheshire East Council agreed it would spend each £1 of its budget for the year April 2021 to March 2022 in the following areas:



2 | Spending within resources cont'd

Within budget so far

The good news is that this year, the council is again living within its means. The Financial Review 2021/22 is balanced to within 0.7% of the revised budget that was agreed for the year. In-year spending on Children's Services reflects the most significant ongoing financial pressure. This challenge was identified at the end of last year and is a significant factor in the changes to the financial plans looking ahead. Mitigating action across all services will continue during the final quarter of the year to try and achieve an overall balanced position without having to rely on reserves.

COVID-19 continues to have a local impact, with council spending (or lost income) of £10m in excess of what would normally be expected. Government grants and good financial control locally means the council is currently forecasting that the impact of COVID-19 should not reduce council reserves. Longer term effects of COVID-19 are still a factor in public sector finances and the council continues to work with government and our partners to support local people and businesses in an appropriate affordable way.

Council Tax and funding allocations

Since setting the financial strategy in February 2021 the council has experienced ongoing increases in the costs of caring for children, and although the budget was increased for 2021/22 it has not been sufficient. The council is also having to manage increasing costs from a nationally negotiated pay award and local decisions not to increase income targets in car

parking. There is further significant financial pressure on some care providers partly due to changes brought about by COVID-19 and increases to minimum wages. There continues to be ongoing growth in costs for adult social care and waste services due to an increasing population. These financial pressures are addressed within this consultation document through efficiencies and increasing income from council tax and government grants.

On 27th October, the Chancellor announced the Spending Review 2021 that will cover the next 3 years (2022/23 to 2024/25). Details of the actual funding allocations for each local authority will not be announced until the provisional settlement in December 2021 but broadly there is due to be an extra £1.6bn for local authorities in each of the next three years. This funding will help the council in managing the increasing costs of complex care, stabilisation of the care market and rising inflation as well as including funding to manage cyber threats.

Council tax thresholds will remain at similar levels to recent years, with the threshold for "core" council tax increases remaining at 1.99%. There is also an expectation from central government that some demand growth in adult social care will be funded by a further annual precept of 1%.

Final confirmation of the threshold limits will be in the provisional settlement in December but for the purpose of presenting these budget estimates we have **increased council tax in each year by 2.99%** in order to manage ongoing demand for services.

Government have also made announcements about the Social Care Levy, funded from increasing national insurance contributions. The levy will support the NHS and help keep down the overall care costs for individuals. At this stage the full financial implications on the council are not known. This consultation therefore assumes that any new income from the new levy will be matched by expenditure. We have therefore taken the approach of not including it within this consultation. As more information is shared, we will be able to publicise the impact on local people and organisations.

Use of Reserves

It is essential to balance resources against forecast spending levels, as the council continues to have relatively low levels of reserves. Reserves cannot therefore be used to regularly manage the risk of potential reductions in income or unachievable savings proposals. Therefore, the proposals contained within this document aim to address all key areas of risk and cover the planned and estimated increases in spending to keep up with demand. Reliance on reserves is kept to a minimum to manage in-year variations and specific spending.

3 | Spending on our priorities for next year (Summary)

We will continue to invest in our priorities, support our most vulnerable residents and meet the needs of a growing population. Detailed proposals to change the 2022/23 budget are included in Section 5. Proposals previously consulted on are also included at [Appendix A](#). The total of all these budget changes result in a net change to each Directorate as follows:

Service Area (+£ Net increase)	Spending Priorities
<p>+£2.9m in 2022/23 for Children’s Services (Services include Social Care for Children, Education and Prevention services)</p>	<p>Despite significant financial challenges, we plan to invest in children’s services. There will be increases in spending to meet the needs of the growing numbers of children in care, care leavers, education (including more school places) and early help. Social Care spending is proposed to increase by £4m, which is mitigated by lower travel costs and removing one-off transformation funding provided in 2021/22. There will also be investment in SEND services.</p>
<p>+£0.3m in 2022/23 for Adult Services (Services include Social Care for Adults, Public Health and Communities)</p>	<p>We plan to increase spending by £4m to meet the needs of the growing numbers of older people who often have complex care needs and younger adults who are living with very complex needs. However, we aim to transform care services where possible to mitigate some of the growing cost pressures and drive efficiencies in every aspect of the service to provide best value for money.</p>
<p>+£0.6m in 2022/23 for Place Services (Services include Highways, Waste, Environmental Management, Economic Development, Planning and Leisure)</p>	<p>As more houses are being built, we need to ensure we can increase the level of services such as waste collection to meet this demand. The financial strategy previously included additional potential income from car parking, but local decisions not to proceed with this approach mean income must be made up in other ways. These requirements will be offset by service reviews and efficiencies elsewhere within the Directorate.</p>
<p>+£0.4m in 2022/23 for Corporate Services (Services include Legal and Democratic Services, ICT, Finance, HR and Customer Services)</p>	<p>We continue to invest in modern technology and efficient ways of working. We have completely changed how we work since the pandemic and all staff who can work from home continue to do so for the majority of the time. This will help us to reduce our premises and mileage costs to allow us to invest in other parts of our support services.</p>
<p>+ Additional Budgets (Across all services to manage items such as pay inflation and the ongoing costs of the capital programme)</p>	<p>Pay inflation is set to increase the budget by £5.5m in 2022/23 as we also need to catch up from the unbudgeted, likely, nationally agreed pay increase from 2021/22. The costs of the capital programme which reflect the Council’s requirement to borrow money to fund significant infrastructure schemes will also increase by £4m for next year.</p>

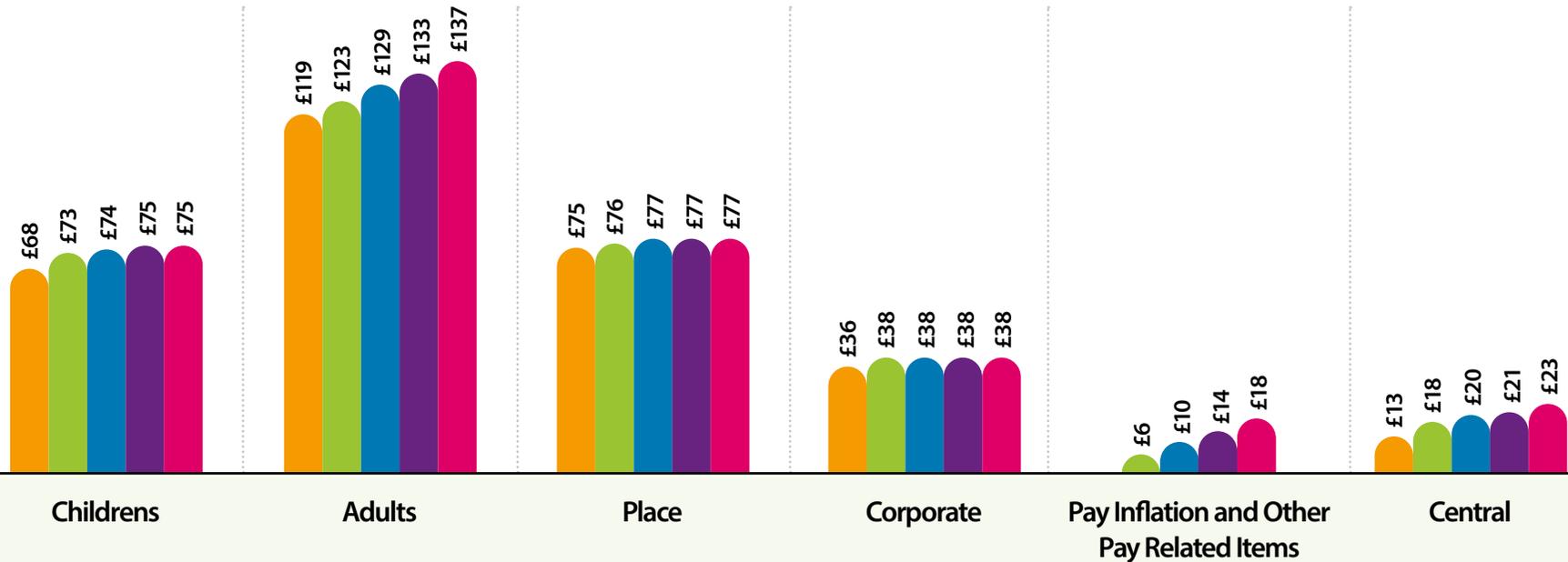
3 | Spending on our priorities for next year (Summary) cont'd

Revenue Budget (for day-to-day spending)

MTFS Budgets, by service area (£million)

This chart shows the proposed budget for each year up to 2025/26 for each of the directorates at Cheshire East, plus the planned budget increases required for pay inflation and central services.

There is planned increased investment overall in all areas over the medium term. The increase in budgets is growing at a faster rate in our people based services for Children and Adults.



● 2021/22 ● 2022/23 ● 2023/24 ● 2024/25 ● 2025/26

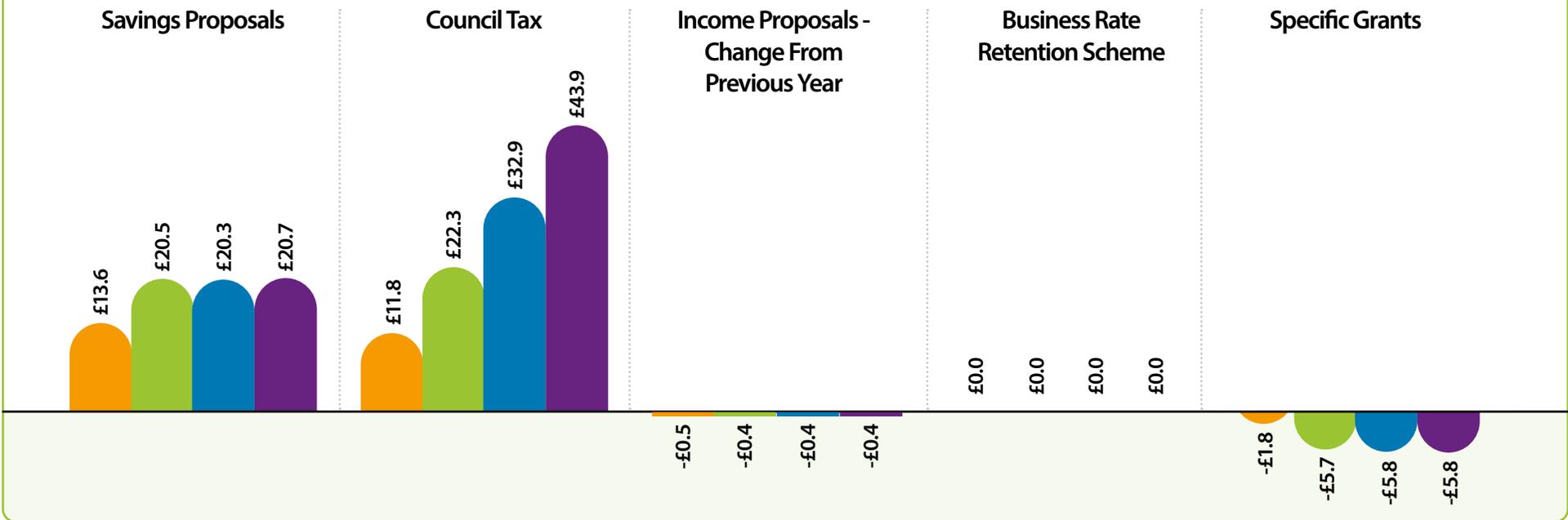
3 | Spending on our priorities for next year (Summary) cont'd

Funding, income and savings

Funding, income and savings proposals - cumulative change (£million)

This chart shows the change in funding, income and savings proposals over the medium term. Council tax is steadily increasing while business rates are forecast to plateau due to the uncertainties around the future of the Business Rates Retention Scheme. Specific grants available to support the general revenue budget continue to decline over the

medium term (although this remains a prudent estimate until firm allocations are released in December 2021). Some proposed car parking charge increases are no longer being implemented as planned (as shown by the negative income stream compared to current budget levels).



● 2021/22 ● 2022/23 ● 2023/24 ● 2024/25

3 | Spending on our priorities for next year (Summary)

cont'd

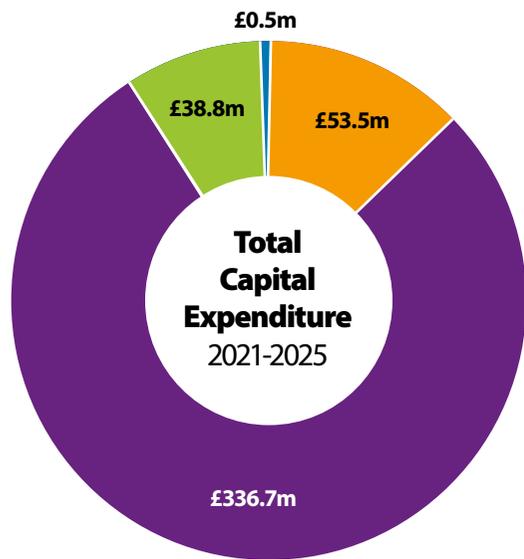
Capital Budget (for spending on projects)

These charts show the 2021-2025 Capital Programme expenditure for the council as well as how the programme is to be funded.

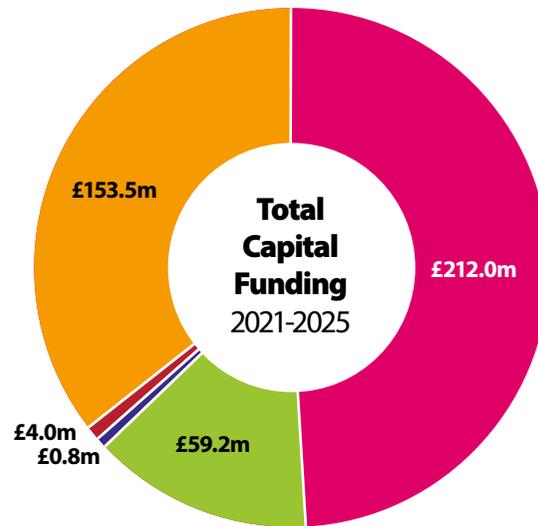
The Place Directorate, which is responsible for Highways and Regeneration projects, is responsible for almost 80% of the programme overall.

Over 60% of the programme is to be funded from external resources, such as government grants and contributions from developers.

Borrowing is mainly funded from the council's net budget.

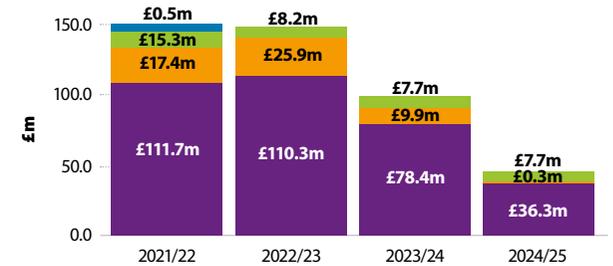


- Adults, Health and Integration
- Children's Services
- Place
- Corporate



- Government Grants
- Prudential Borrowing
- Revenue Contributions
- Capital Receipts
- External Contributions

Capital Expenditure 2021/22 to 2024/25



- Adults, Health and Integration
- Children's Services
- Place
- Corporate

4 | Summary position for 2022/23

We are consulting on our plans to increase spending each year across the range of council priorities. To fund the increasing cost of services the council expects to increase council tax in line with government inflation targets.

Estimated Net Budget				
	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Service Budgets	298.5	309.1	315.5	324.6
Proposed changes as follows:				
Open	+2.2	+2.2	+4.2	+4.1
Fair	+6.6	+3.7	+4.5	+4.4
Green	+1.8	+0.5	+0.4	-
Total Service Budgets	309.1	315.5	324.6	333.1
Total Central Budgets (Net of Reserves)	12.1	12.1	13.7	16.1
TOTAL Service + Central Budgets	321.2	327.6	338.3	349.2
Funded by				
Council Tax	-254.7	-265.1	-275.8	-286.7
Business Rate Retention Scheme	-49.1	-49.1	-49.1	-49.1
Revenue Support Grant	-	-	-	-
Specific Unringfenced Grants	-17.4	-13.4	-13.4	-13.4
TOTAL Funded by	-321.2	-327.6	-338.3	-349.2
Balanced Position	-	-	-	-



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council spends money wisely?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

5 | Open Investment and Savings Proposals

New or revised investment proposals

The following table presents the ‘Open’ investment proposals that are new or revised within this year’s budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending.

Please note within the following tables positive numbers represent a budget growth, while negative numbers represent a budget saving.

	Open – Investment	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Listen. Learn	1) Improving Digital Customer Experience [New for 2022/23 Budget] This proposal directly supports the implementation of the agreed Customer Experience Strategy which will improve customer responsiveness and delivery.	0.110	-	-	-
	2) Pay inflation [Change to item 3 in 2021/22 Budget] This proposal includes incremental increases for eligible staff and nationally negotiated pay awards. Average increases are forecast at c.2.5%. This may not apply evenly across pay bands due to implications of the Living Wage. The proposals recognise the additional delayed impact of the 2021/22 pay negotiations that also affect the 2022/23 budget.	5.536	3.873	3.964	4.062
Financial Sustainability	3) National Insurance increase at 1.25% for social care funding [New for 2022/23 Budget] The planned introduction of a national Social Care Levy will increase national insurance contributions for all employers. As the council is part of the public sector, government will provide compensation for such payments. Although not confirmed these costs are currently mitigated in full through increased grant.	0.913	-	-	-
	4) Improved Debt Recovery and correcting budgeted court costs income targets to reflect actual levels [Change to item 16 in 2021/22 Budget] Improving debt collection will reduce income from court costs, which are already forecasting a budget shortfall. This is positive in many respects, although it does reflect an income deficit. The council will continue to innovate with debt collection improvements that recognise the circumstances of those in debt.	0.337	0.013	-0.024	-

5 | Open Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

	Open – Investment	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Commercial Opportunities	5) Transactional Service Centre additional funding [New for 2022/23 Budget] Transactional Service is a shared service with Cheshire West and Chester. The TSC Team budget is again unbalanced due to a loss of income (primarily from schools opting out), additional costs of the new Unit4 governance and support team, and inflation costs to the base budgets.	0.238	-	-	-
	6) Vendor Management Phase 3 [New for 2022/23 Budget] Continuing improvements to the council procurement and contract management process have seen the rollout and adoption of a new system. The system, Atamis, is a cloud-based contract lifecycle management (CLM) solution across Cheshire East Council, by the Corporate Procurement Team.	0.175	-0.089	0.071	-
	7) Unified IT Communications [Change to item 44 in 2021/22 Budget] Additional funding required to modernise the communication systems including telephony and video conferencing, to further enable the Flexible and Mobile Working (FMW) strategy by enabling corporate calling from most devices in most locations and improve video calling between corporate locations.	0.110	0.009	0.017	-
Workforce	8) IT Security and Compliance [New for 2022/23 Budget] Cyber threats are increasing in both quantity and sophistication, with sources ranging from individuals, professional groups, and international actors. Additional investment would be needed from CEC to ensure the council continues to have an appropriate security and compliance posture, capability, and capacity across our ICT platforms.	0.097	0.006	0.006	-
	9) IT Procurements and Application Lifecycle Management [Change to items 45, 46, 47 in the 2021/22 Budget] Additional funding would be needed for the council's key line of ICT business systems from initial procurement, to implementation, maintenance and decommissioning. The benefits of robust Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) will be modern business systems that are secure, supportable and compliant.	0.075	0.075	0.078	-
	10) Information Assurance and Data Management Phase 3 [New for 2022/23 Budget] The Information Assurance and Data Management (IADM) programme phase 3, will deliver key projects that will underpin the safeguarding of information and enhance its use.	0.040	-	-	-
	Open – Investment	7.631	3.887	4.112	4.062

5 | Open Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised investments under Open?

Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending. Please tick one box only in each row:

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
1 Improving Digital Customer Experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2 Pay inflation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 National Insurance increase at 1.25% for social care funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4 Improved Debt Recovery and correcting budgeted court costs income targets to reflect actual levels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5 Transactional Service Centre additional funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6 Vendor Management Phase 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7 Unified IT Communications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8 IT Security and Compliance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9 IT Procurements and Application Lifecycle Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10 Information Assurance and Data Management Phase 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised investments under **Open** please do so below – Please clearly state which investment you are commenting on. Please write in below:

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5 | Open Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

New or revised savings proposals

The following table presents the 'Open' savings proposals that are new or revised within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending.

	Open – Savings	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Financial Sustainability	11) Removal of temporary implementation budget and investment to run the new Financial System [Change to Item 5 in the 2021/22 Budget] Implementation costs for the council core financial system can now be removed from the ongoing revenue budget. Inflation costs of the new system need to be reflected to ensure estimates are robust in respect of the whole life costs of the system.	-0.453	0.006	0.006	0.006
Workforce	12) Staff Travel and related savings [Change to item 14 in the 2021/22 Budget] Staff travel savings will be derived from changes to working practices since COVID-19, some of which will continue in the future. A review of other terms and conditions will be undertaken to ensure that the council is aligned with other Local Authorities in its application of terms and conditions.	-0.525	-	-	-
	Open – Total savings	-0.978	0.006	0.006	0.006
	Open – Net budget change	6.653	3.893	4.118	4.068

5 | Open Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised savings under Open?

Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending. Please tick one box only in each row

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
11 Removal of temporary implementation budget and investment to run the new Financial System	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12 Staff Travel and related savings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised savings under **Open** please do so below – Please clearly state which savings you are commenting on. Please write in below:

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Previously agreed proposals

The following table presents the 'Open' investment and savings proposals agreed during last years' budget setting process that have not changed since then. Detail on these can be found in the [MTFS 2021-25](#).

	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Open – Previously approved MTFS proposals – February 2021				
See Appendix A (for further details see MTFS 2021-25)	-4.394	-1.656	0.076	-

6 | Fair Investment and Savings Proposals

New or revised investment proposals

The following table presents the 'Fair' investment proposals that are new or revised within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending.

Please note that within the following tables positive numbers represent a budget growth, whilst negative numbers represent a budget saving.

Fair – Investment		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Reduce Reliance	13) Investment in Adult Social Care [Change to item 57 in the 2021/22 Budget] The Adult Social Care (Operations and Commissioning) and Public Health budgets remain under continued pressure across the country. The rising cost of social care in Cheshire East is driven by two main factors: increasing demand for services and the increasing costs of providing them. Unit costs are driven mainly by workforce costs and reflect current difficulties with the recruitment of staff. Demand for social care is related directly to the number of people who need personal care or support to help them live their lives.	4.000	3.500	4.000	4.000
	14) Care fee uplifts [New for 2022/23 Budget] Cheshire East Council has a duty under the Care Act 2014 to “promote the efficient and effective operation of a market in services for meeting care and support needs.” In delivering this obligation, councils must ensure the sustainability of the market and that there are sufficient high-quality services available to meet the care and support needs of adults in the area. This business case proposes a fee uplift for delivering care at home.	-	2.000	-	-
Safeguard Children	15) Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers and other pressures [Change to items 75, 77 in the 2021/22 Budget] Cheshire East Council has corporate parenting responsibility for over 500 cared for children and young people. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand and complexity across the spectrum of need. The pandemic has also impacted upon our ability to recruit new foster carers at the pace that we require and fully mobilise our block residential contract, resulting in a financial pressure. The impact of the pandemic remains visible nationally in relation to demand for statutory services and sufficiency challenges. Figures are under review and may be revised following further analysis of demand and pressures.	4.000	0.400	0.400	0.400

6 | Fair Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

Fair – Investment		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Safeguard Children	16) Increase capacity to support Statutory SEND service [New for 2022/23 Budget] Additional SEND service capacity required due to the growth in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and the need to comply with statutory timescales for annual reviews, ensure co-production and improve communications with families. Figures are under review and may be revised following further analysis of demand and pressures.	0.400	0.200	0.120	-
	17) Revenue costs for Crewe Youth Zone [New for 2022/23 Budget] Growth for running costs of Crewe Youth Zone for three years (to be funded through restructure of Early Help Budget).	-	-	-	0.400
	18) Safeguarding Children – legacy staffing pressure [New for 2022/23 Budget] In previous years children’s social care has increased its frontline capacity due to increased demand and particularly in relation to the need for agency placement. The service continues to experience high demand and is not in a position to offset legacy savings. This has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic where complexity across the spectrum of need has increased and frontline capacity is essential.	0.390	-	-	-
	19) Growth in Children & Families Commissioning Contracts [New for 2022/23 Budget] Growth to correct a legacy pressure in the Children and Families commissioning budget.	0.180	-	-	-
	20) Increase capacity to support Statutory Education Psychology Service [New for 2022/23 Budget] Growth in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans requires additional Educational Psychology capacity to carry out statutory work. Figures are under review and may be revised following further analysis of demand and pressures.	0.125	0.063	-	-
Fair – Total investment		9.095	6.163	4.520	4.800

6 | Fair Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised investments under Fair?

Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending. Please tick one box only in each row.

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
13 Investment in Adult Social Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14 Care fee uplifts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15 Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers and other pressures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16 Increase capacity to support Statutory SEND service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17 Revenue costs for Crewe Youth Zone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18 Safeguarding Children – legacy staffing pressure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19 Growth in Children & Families Commissioning Contracts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20 Increase capacity to support Statutory Education Psychology Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised investments under **Fair** please do so below – Please clearly state which investment you are commenting on: Please write in below:

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6 | Fair Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

New or revised savings proposals

The following table presents the 'Fair' savings proposals that are new or revised within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending.

Fair – Savings		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Safeguard Children	21) A redesign of Early Help Services into a Locality model [Change to items 10, 11, 50, 72 in 2021/22 Budget] We will redesign Early Help Services to a Locality Model. This will support us to achieve better outcomes for children as it will enable services to be strongly connected to communities which will support strong joint partnership working and information sharing. The redesign will result in a reduction in the budget for Early Help Services, but this will be offset by funding from external grants, including the Supporting Families Grant.	-0.424	-	-	-
	22) Restructure Early Help Budget to fund Crewe Youth Zone [New for 2022/23 Budget] Restructure of Early Help Budget to fund Crewe Youth Zone for three years.	-	-	-	-0.400
Fair – Total savings		-0.424	-	-	-0.400
Fair – Net budget change		8.671	6.163	4.520	4.400

6 | Fair Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised savings under Fair?

Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending. Please tick one box only in each row.

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
21 A redesign of Early Help Services into a Locality model	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22 Restructure Early Help Budget to fund Crewe Youth Zone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised savings under Fair please do so below – Please clearly state which savings you are commenting on: Please write in below:

Page 142

Previously agreed proposals

The following table presents the 'Fair' investment and savings proposals agreed during last years' budget setting process that have not changed since then. Details on these can be found in the [MTFS 2021-25](#).

	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Fair – Previously approved MTFS proposals				
See Appendix A (for further details see MTFS 2021-25)	-2.100	-2.450	-	-

7 | Green Investment and Savings Proposals

New or revised investment proposals

The following table presents the 'Green' investment proposals that are new or revised within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending.

Please note that within the following tables positive numbers represent a budget growth, whilst negative numbers represent a budget saving.

	Green – Investment	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Transport	23) Parking service – postponement of review of charges [Change to item 88 in 2021/22 Budget] This business case updates a prior year's proposal to align parking operational arrangements with corporate priority outcomes through changes to the borough's car parking provision. Following a decision at the Highways Committee in September 2021, these proposals will not be taken forward at this time.	0.504	-	-	-
	24) Local Supported Buses [Change to item 89 in 2021/22 Budget] The planned efficiency savings are no longer considered to be achievable at this time following market testing of options and taking into account the bus sectors prolonged recovery from the pandemic.	0.008	-0.012	-	-
	25) School Transport [Change to item NEW in 2021/22 Budget] Review of current school transport budget requirements as a result of an increase in eligible children, in particular those with SEND, and rising costs of school transport provision. Figures are under review and may be revised following further analysis of demand and pressures.	0.150	-0.050	-0.150	-
	Green – Total investment	0.662	-0.062	-0.150	-

7 | Green Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised investments under Green?

Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending. Please tick one box only in each row.

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
23 Parking service – postponement of review of charges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24 Local Supported Buses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25 School Transport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised investments under **Green** please do so below – Please clearly state which investment you are commenting on: Please write in below:

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7 | Green Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

New or revised savings proposals

There are no new or revised Green savings proposals being put forward this year.

Previously agreed proposals

The following table presents the 'Green' investment and savings proposals agreed during last years' budget setting process that have not changed since then. Detail on these can be found in the [MTFS 2021-25](#).

	Green – Previously approved MTFS proposals	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
	See Appendix A (for further details see MTFS 2021-25)	1.158	0.524	0.536	-

7 | Green Investment and Savings Proposals cont'd

Assessing the carbon impact of proposals

As part of our Environment Strategy, the council has committed to its operations becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to influencing carbon reduction across the borough.



We are also proposing that as part of our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), we assess the estimated 'net carbon impact' of all new saving and investment proposals that are put forward, to understand how they will contribute to carbon reduction, or the extent of any work we will need to do to compensate for any additional carbon.



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the introduction of "net carbon impact" assessments for all new saving and investment proposals that are put forward?

Please tick one box only

Support

Oppose

No opinion / Don't know

Support Oppose No opinion / Don't know

If you wish to you can comment on the introduction of "net carbon neutral" assessments for proposals below – this could include comments on anything you would like to see the council do to help combat climate change and reduce emissions. Please write in below:

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8 | Central budgets and funding activity

To ensure openness and transparency the council identifies the use of reserves and other impacts of the council's balance sheet. It considers how these affect the overall requirement to raise council tax to fund local services in a sustainable way.

General reserves were increased by £1.2million at the end of 2020/21 which was achieved ahead of planned targeted increases as a result of a more favourable outturn in April 2021. This takes the level of general reserves to £11.5million to reflect the increasing size of the budget and the associated risks from managing demand led services. However, at the same time, built up reserves from COVID-19 Grants, capital spending and the collection fund will be used to manage the impact of COVID-19 and ongoing costs of borrowing to fund infrastructure costs.

Costs of capital financing will still increase significantly over the medium term though (costing £21million over four years).

The previous strategy for year-on-year increases to contributions to the pensions fund has created a more sustainable position and contributions do not need to continue increasing which will continue to save money over the MTFS (saving £4million over four years).

Council tax provides the most significant funding source for local services and cumulative increase over the MTFS as a result of increased homes and proposed 2.99% annual increases, which will be significant (providing £110million over four years).

Overall, unringfenced grant funding continues to reduce over the medium term despite Spending Review announcements that local government is due to receive an extra £4.8billion over the next three years. There is widespread uncertainty around the allocation methods and the future of the New Homes Bonus Grant and business rates, so at this stage the council is not factoring-in these additional grants.

If the government settlement provides additional funding compared to the forecasts in this document it will help the council improve funding for local priorities and create additional flexibility to respond to the consultation responses.

Investment proposals

The following table presents the 'central budgets and funding activity' investment proposals that are within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending.

Please note within the following tables positive numbers represent a budget growth or reduction in funding, whilst negative numbers represent a budget saving or increased income.

8 | Central budgets and funding activity cont'd

Central budgets and funding activity – Investment / reduction in income		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Financial Sustainability	26) Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Councils are required to charge a minimum amount to their revenue account each year, to finance the cost of capital expenditure. This ensures that the revenue costs of repaying debt are spread over the life of the asset. The budget for MRP is included in the capital financing budget along with interest charges, offset by income received on investments. MRP will rise significantly over the period of the MTFS due to the number of major schemes in the capital programme that are to be funded by borrowing. These include: Highways Improvements; Crewe and Macclesfield Town Centre regeneration schemes; Congleton Leisure Centre; Poynton Relief Road and investment in the council's assets and ICT infrastructure.	4.000	1.000	1.000	-
	27) Changes to unringfenced specific grant estimates Unringfenced grant funding estimates continue to reduce over the medium term despite Spending Review announcements that local government is due to receive an extra £4.8billion over the next three years. Prudent estimates have been factored in at this stage due to uncertainties around allocation methods and the future of the New Homes Bonus Grant.	1.755	3.969	0.046	-
Central budgets and funding activity – Total investment / reduction in income		5.755	4.969	1.046	-



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised investments under 'central budgets and funding activity'?

Investments are areas where the council is proposing to increase spending. Please tick one box only in each row

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
26 Minimum Revenue Provision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27 Change to unringfenced specific grants estimates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised investments under 'central budgets and funding activity' please do so below – Please clearly state which investment you are commenting on: Please write in below

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8 | Central budgets and funding activity cont'd

Savings proposals

The following table presents the central budgets and funding activity savings proposals that are within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending.

Central budgets and funding activity – Investment / reduction in income		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Financial Sustainability	28) Council tax Each new home brings additional council tax revenue as well as a New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy (if applicable). But homes also create additional costs, such as education, waste collection and highways. The council ensures that any subsidy from its general funding sources is carefully examined to achieve maximum value to ensure council tax increases for residents are kept to an overall minimum.	-4.527	-2.807	-2.728	-2.639
	Percentage increases in the base council tax charge brings in additional income to help fund demand growth in vital service areas but has to be considered against the impact on Cheshire East residents (1.99%). Extra adult social care precepts are ringfenced specifically to fund demand led growth in this area (1.00%).	-7.306	-7.622	-7.952	-8.293
	29) Business Rates Retention Scheme New commercial developments can result in additional income being retained to fund local services as well as benefiting local economic wellbeing. This supports the Council's approach to invest in economic growth through unlocking development land and supporting inward investment. Since the baseline funding level for business rates retention was set back in 2013/14, there have been many policy changes around reliefs for different business types. With each policy change, all local authorities are compensated for their share of business rates foregone. Up to and including 2018/19, these compensation grants have been set aside to help smooth changes in business rates that can arise when businesses are revalued or move out of the area. From 2019/20, some of the compensation grants being received are being used to fund the revenue budget. There are no changes forecast to the budget over the medium term due to uncertainties around the future of the Business Rates Retention Scheme.	-	-	-	-

8 | Central budgets and funding activity cont'd

Savings proposals

The following table presents the central budgets and funding activity savings proposals that are within this year's budget setting process – you can comment on any of these proposals in the following survey. Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending.

Central budgets and funding activity – Investment / reduction in income		2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Financial Sustainability	30) Central Pension adjustment For 2020/21 and 2021/22, the past service deficit element of the draw from service budgets is clawing back more than is required to be paid over to the Pensions Service. This is due to the fact the service pension oncost rate was calculated then the rate required by Pensions was reduced. This will result in three years' worth of over recoupment from service budgets from 2020/21 to 2022/23 (if budgets remain at current levels). This is creating a surplus in the central pension budget which is available to support the wider revenue budget.	-2.500	2.100	-	-
	31) Bad Debt Provision – change in provision Outstanding debt is reviewed on a quarterly basis and the bad debt provision is adjusted to reflect the current position. The provision generally increases during the year and this proposal provides an annual budget for a low level of increase to the provision during the year. There is also a plan to reduce adult social care debt by £800,000 by 2023/24.	0.200	-0.800	0.600	-
	32) Use of Earmarked Reserves Some of the proposals within this budget will be funded from specific earmarked reserves set aside to cover planned expenditure, or conversely, money is being put aside to cover future planned projects. Over the medium term, money that has been set aside to cover COVID-19 related shortfalls is being released to help smooth the transition back to normal activity levels. The council continues to have relatively low levels of reserves therefore they cannot be used to regularly manage the risk of potential reductions in income or unachievable savings proposals. Reliance on reserves is kept to a minimum.	-2.270	-2.252	-0.066	2.465
Central budgets and funding activity – Total savings / increases income		-16.403	-11.381	-10.146	-8.467

8 | Central budgets and funding activity cont'd



Your views matter

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

Do you support or oppose each of the new or revised savings under 'central budgets and funding activity'?

Savings are areas where the council is proposing to decrease spending. Please tick one box only in each row.

	Support	Oppose	No opinion / Don't know
28 Council tax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29 Business rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30 Central Pension adjustment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31 Bad Debt Provision – change in provision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32 Use of Earmarked Reserves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you wish to comment on any of the new or revised savings under 'central budgets and funding activity' please do so below – Please clearly state which saving you are commenting on: Please write in below

9 | Final budget engagement comments

For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

If you would like to comment on any other aspect of this budget engagement, please write in below:

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Your views matter

On a scale of 0 to 10 how do you rate this budget engagement overall, where 0 is "not good at all", and 10 is "very good"? Please tick one box only:

- 1 Not good at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Average
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 Very Good

How could we improve the way we conduct budget engagements? Please write in below

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10 | About you



For options on how to complete this survey, including digitally or in paper format, please see 'Giving your feedback' on page 2.

It would help us to check that we are providing services fairly if you would answer the questions below.

Information you give will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people, and to check if services are being delivered in a fair and accessible way. You do not need to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

Which of the following best describes how you are you responding to this consultation.

(Please write in the space below):

- On behalf of a group, organisation or club
- On behalf of a local business
- As an individual (e.g. local resident)
- As a Cheshire East Council employee
- As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor
- Other (Please write in the space below):

If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation, club, business, Town / Parish Council, or a Ward please state the name and postcode below if you wish to (you do not need to complete the rest of the 'About you' section).

(Please write in the space below):

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What is your home postcode?

We ask this so we can be sure we have obtained a range of views from across the borough.

(Please write in the space below):

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What is your gender identity? Please tick one box only:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (Please write in the space below):

What age group do you belong to?

Please tick one box only:

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 and over
- Prefer not to say

10 | About you cont'd



Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

This includes problems related to old age.

Please tick one box only:

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic origin?

Please tick one box only

- White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish
 - Any other White background
 - Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian
 - Asian / Asian British
 - Black African / Caribbean / Black British
 - Prefer not to say
 - Prefer to self-describe (Please write in the space below):
-

Which of the following best describes your religious belief / faith?

Please tick one box only:

- Buddhist
 - Christian
 - Hindu
 - Jewish
 - Muslim
 - Sikh
 - None
 - Prefer not to say
 - Prefer to self-describe (Please write in the space below):
-
-
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Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

Please tick one box only:

- No
- Yes, 9 hours a week or less
- Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week
- Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week
- Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week
- Yes, 50 or more hours a week

Appendix A - MTFS approved February 2021

Open

Fair

Green

The following proposals were consulted on in developing the 2021/22 budget. Most are not proposed for amendment in 2022/23, but where changes are being proposed they are marked as 'Revised' and are included in the tables in the main part of this document. Please note the reference number in the tables below refers to last year's budget reference numbers.

Ref No	Detailed list of proposed budget changes – service budgets - Open	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
[NEW]	CSC Transformation and OFSTED Response	-1.500	-	-
3	Pay inflationary increase	Revised [see proposal number 2]		
5	Core Financial System	Revised [see proposal number 11]		
6	Mitigation of reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant (Corporate Services)	0.042	0.033	0.027
7	Mitigation of the year-on-year reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant (ICT)	0.065	0.089	0.109
9	Continuing Healthcare Reviews	-1.000	-0.500	-
10	Prevention and Early Help Service – Reduction in the cost of Prevention Services	Revised [see proposal number 21]		
11	Reduce the numbers of Business Support Staff in line with the repurposing of Children and Family Centres	Revised [see proposal number 21]		
12	Reduce Base budget assigned to Community Grants	-0.100	-	-
13	Efficiency savings and Restructures within Corporate Services	-0.350	-	-
14	Review Staff Terms and Conditions	Revised [see proposal number 12]		
15	Shared services review	-	-0.200	-
16	Improved Debt Recovery and correcting budgeted court costs income targets to reflect actual levels	Revised [see proposal number 4]		
21	Review of corporate subscriptions	-0.015	-	-
24	Improving customer experience – Highways correspondence		Removed	
25	Transfer of Congleton Visitor Information Centre	-0.020	-0.010	-0.020
26	Regulatory Services and Environmental Health ICT procurement	-0.009	-	-
27	CCTV migration to wireless networks	-0.085	-	-

Appendix A - MTFS approved February 2021

Open

Fair

Green

Ref No	Detailed list of proposed budget changes – service budgets - Open	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
29	Orbitas income and management fee	0.021	-	-
31	Everybody Sport and Recreation Annual Management Fee	-0.042	-0.041	-0.040
34	Brighter Futures Together Programme Customer Experience	-0.133	-0.081	-
37	Establish an Education Psychologist traded service to enable a proactive early support and intervention offer	-0.025	-0.075	-
38	Establish a traded service for non-statutory elements of Attendance Service	-0.035	-0.035	-
39	Review of governance of ASDVs and seeking increased opportunities for savings/ commercial opportunities	-0.225	-0.100	-
42	Strategic Leisure Review	-0.250	-	-
43	Infrastructure Investment Programme	0.127	0.224	-
44	Unified Communications	Revised [see proposal number 7]		
45	People Directorate - ICT Procurements	Revised [see proposal number 9]		
46	Place Directorate - ICT Procurements	Revised [see proposal number 9]		
47	Corporate Directorate - ICT Procurements	Revised [see proposal number 9]		
48	Productivity and Efficiency in Adult Social Care	-0.500	-0.500	-
49	Estates Transformation - Office Accommodation	-0.100	-0.460	-
50	Prevention and Early Help Service – Locality working and changes to the management structure of the Family Service	Revised [see proposal number 21]		
51	Neighbourhood Estate Review	-0.260	-	-
Total service budget change (February 2021)		-4.394	-1.656	0.076

Appendix A - MTFS approved February 2021

Open

Fair

Green

Ref No	Detailed list of proposed budget changes – service budgets - Fair	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
57	Investment in Adult Social Care	Revised [see proposal number 13]		
61	Direction of travel for the Communities Team to focus more on the Intervention and Prevention Agenda to make cost savings, growth and future cost avoidance	-0.500	-0.750	-
63	Day Opportunities, Redesign, Strategy and Savings	-0.070	-0.150	-
64	Mental Health Services Review	-0.500	-	-
67	Electronic Call Monitoring Reclamation	-0.030	-	-
72	Move to Integrated Early Help Locality Service model	Revised [see proposal number 21]		
73	Learning Disabilities Future Service Development and Review	-1.000	-1.250	-
75	Reduction in cost of external placements for cared for children	Replaced [see proposal number 15]		
76	Development and Partnerships Service	-	-0.300	-
77	Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers	Revised [see proposal number 15]		
Total service budget change (February 2021)		-2.100	-2.450	0.000

Appendix A - MTFS approved February 2021



Ref No	Detailed list of proposed budget changes – service budgets - Green	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
80	Tatton Park	-0.006	-0.028	-0.046
81	Asset / Service Transfer	-0.030	-0.020	-
84	Waste Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth	0.644	0.657	0.613
85	Environment Strategy and Carbon Neutrality	0.020	-0.081	-
86	Tree Risk Management	0.500	-	-
87	Carbon Reduction - Replacement of existing illuminated signs and bollards with LED units	0.030	-0.004	-0.031
88	Parking Strategy	Replaced [see proposal number 23]		
89	Local Supported Buses	Replaced [see proposal number 24]		
[NEW]	Review of Children and Families Transport Policies and delivery arrangements	Replaced [see proposal number 25]		
Total service budget change (February 2021)		1.158	0.524	0.536



Working for a brighter future together

BRIEFING REPORT

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	Children and Families Winter 2021 Active Grant Briefing
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** This report provides an update to committee on government grant funding for children and families. Information is provided on active grants over the winter period (Household Support Grant and Holiday Activity Fund) and the impact of grants over summer 2021 (please see the impact report at Appendix 1). This report is for information for the committee and is for noting, it does not require a decision.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** 2020/21 has presented unique challenges for families, central government, and local government. The government response provided high levels of grant funding to local authorities to mobilise efficient and targeted responses. As part of the wider poverty package, the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) 'Household Support Fund' (HSF) and the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Holiday Activity Fund' (HAF) were targeted at supporting children and families to combat food poverty, with wider support and education included. The two grants equate to a total of approximately £2.45m between the winter months of October 2021 and March 2022.
- 2.2.** The Household Support Grant was awarded by the DWP in October 2021. Cheshire East's allocation is £2,203,892.10. The funding will be used to support households in the Cheshire East borough with food, utilities, housing costs, white goods, and other essentials over the winter period.
- 2.3.** The Holiday Activity Fund was awarded by the DfE in March 2021, with Cheshire East's allocation totalling £881,340. The programme has run in the Easter and summer costing £630,000 with the final portion over winter

costing approximately £250,000. The programme has the aim of providing support to vulnerable children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

3. Background

- 3.1.** During the pandemic, several temporary grants and funding initiatives were introduced in recognition of the hardship this placed upon families and individuals. This included the 'COVID Winter Grant Scheme' (December 2020 – April 2021) and the 'COVID Support Grant' (April 2021 – September 2021). These grants distributed e-vouchers via early years settings, schools, and colleges to families and adults who were vulnerable to financial hardship due to the impact of the pandemic. Approximately 10,000 children and families across Cheshire East were supported via these grants, with a total of over 65,000 vouchers provided. The council also ensured that families in need of replacement goods, such as fridges, cookers and washing machines, were also helped, and benefited from a partnership involving schools, colleges, the NHS, council services and third sector organisations to identify families in need. Please see Appendix 1 for more information on the impact of the Covid Support Grant.
- 3.2.** In October 2021, the government announced that a new Household Support Fund grant would be made available to councils in England to support those most in need this winter. This new grant will run from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £421m in England. Cheshire East's allocation is £2.2m. This is a new scheme, and the council cannot carry forward any underspends from previous DWP grants.
- 3.3.** The aim of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support this winter as the economy recovers. In Cheshire East we are proposing to use the £2.2m fund to support vulnerable households with food, utilities and other essentials between October 2021 and March 2022.
- 3.4.** At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children. The council is encouraged to work closely with local partners to identify a broad range of vulnerable households across their local area. The proposal is to split the administration of this grant approximately in half between Children and Families using the existing COVID support grant systems and the Benefits Service to extend the Hardship Support payment system for adults.
- 3.5.** The Holiday Activity Fund programme has the purpose of providing healthy meals and enriching activities for benefit related free school meal eligible young people during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. The programme has run successfully in Easter and summer, with eligibility for the programme requiring a minimum of 85% of the programme to be delivered to benefit related free school meal eligible young people with 15%

of the programme available for young people with identified needs by providers/professionals. The funding was available to support clubs in offering comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible offers and to support quality improvements.

- 3.6.** A total of £592,535 was spent during Easter (£64,320 to providers and £6,400 on administration) and summer rollout (£474,815 to providers and £47,000 on administration). This funded a total of 40 providers in 70 locations. This was spread across the Cheshire East geography, with a particular concentration in Crewe, Macclesfield, and Congleton. The programme supported over 2,130 young people, equating to 1,667 in summer and 463 in Easter. 90% of grant funds are allocated to funding places, with 10% being used to cover administration costs by Cheshire East Council.
- 3.7.** To receive funding for the scheme, providers were required to bid via the Community Response and Recovery Grant. Offers were funded if providers were able to evidence their offer provided enriching activities, healthy meal provision, suitable attendee exposure/interest within a location in Cheshire East for a fair, market appropriate price alongside satisfactory operational and health and safety policies. For more information on the impact of the Holiday Activity Fund, please see Appendix 1.

4. Briefing Information

Household Support Grant

- 4.1.** The Household Support Fund was awarded by the DWP in October 2021. Cheshire East's allocation is £2,203,892. The funding will be used to support households in the Cheshire East borough with food, utilities, housing costs and other essentials over the winter period.
- 4.2.** Below is a funding breakdown of the overall programme (please note these figures are indicative and the funding may be used flexibly within the categories):

Food	£1,500,000
Utilities	£350,000
Housing Payments	£50,000
Boiler Payments	£50,000
White Goods	£50,000
Admin	£203,892
Total:	£2,203,892

- 4.3.** The Household Support Fund rollout with young people will be in line with the previous children's voucher schemes (COVID Support Grant and COVID Winter Grant Scheme). This process will supply over 50,000 e-

vouchers to children, and families with children, for the holidays between October 2021 and March 2022, with an inclusion of Easter in April 2022. Funding will total six weeks of funding which includes October half term (one week), Christmas holidays (two weeks), February half term (one week) and Easter Holidays (two weeks). Each voucher will equate to £20 worth of funding for food for one week, with a total of six weeks being provided to pre-existing known eligibility groups. Pre-existing groups include free school meal eligible young people, young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), care leavers, and children in receipt of the early years pupil premium (EYPP).

- 4.4.** In addition to the school holiday voucher rollouts, additional referrals are accepted via the online inquiry form. Within this form trusted professionals/practitioners can apply for support for food (£20 voucher per week per child), utilities (£100 voucher per household per week) and white goods (one application per household). Applications for the inquiry form are considered on a case-by-case basis, with a limit of one utilities voucher, one white goods claim and three additional food vouchers. These funding limits will be reviewed and evaluated throughout the delivery of the scheme.
- 4.5.** The children's portion of the programme will be managed directly by a project manager from the Children's Development and Partnerships Service. Two grant administrators (subject to recruitment) will be recruited to assist with the school holiday e-voucher rollouts and with the administration of the inquiry forms, release of vouchers/referral to partners and design/amends to project documentation. Support for the voucher rollouts will also be required from various teams across Children's Services. The project sits within Early Help and Prevention and steering groups are held bi-weekly with a range of partners to track and progress the fund.
- 4.6.** The funding breakdown of the children's portion of the Household Support Fund is set out below (please note these figures are indicative and the funding may be used flexibly within the categories):

Childrens:	Food	£1,200,000
	Utilities	£100,000
	Food (inquiry)	£50,000
	White Goods	£25,000
	Admin	£103,892
	Total:	£1,478,892

- 4.7.** The Holiday Support Fund has additional scope from previous schemes to include adults. Support for adults will be available for food (totalling £40 voucher per single adults and £60 per adult couple one off payments) and utilities (£98 energy voucher per household one off payments), boiler support (subject to evidenced need), housing payments (rent contribution

with a £500 limit). The above payments are contributions to support recipients, with payment sizes proportioned as per expected volumes.

- 4.8.** Applications for the inquiry form are considered on a case-by-case basis, with a limit of one utilities payment per household, one food payment, one boiler support payment per household, one white good request and one housing payment per household. These funding limits will be reviewed and evaluated throughout the delivery of the scheme.
- 4.9.** Inquiry forms will be completed by trusted professionals/practitioners from organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Associations, the Winter Wellbeing Group and AgeUK. However, we will accept referrals from a wide range of trusted practitioners. The inquiry form is only open to professionals/practitioners to avoid fraudulent claims. The information the form records also enables organisations to engage in further dialogue with the claimant and ensure any other needs are being met.
- 4.10.** Eligibility for food, utilities, white goods, and boiler support will be in cases where individuals can evidence 'genuine need' and the trusted professionals/practitioner recognise said need e.g., in receipt of universal credit, in receipt of housing benefit, in receipt of council tax support, evidence of financial vulnerability. Eligibility for housing payments will only be in cases of 'genuine emergency' where the existing schemes of universal credit, housing benefit or discretionary housing payments have not met the need.
- 4.11.** To deliver the food, utilities, and white goods payments/support, we will follow the existing inquiry form process, which will be tracked separately from the children's requests, with duplication checks conducted when appropriate. Housing payments will also be received via the inquiry form, with details passed onto the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme to conduct necessary checks on eligibility. If successful, the payments will be made via a DHP payment. If ineligible for a DHP, but they have evidenced financial vulnerability, individuals will be provided with one week's worth of food and utilities support via the scheme and considered for a £500 rent arrear payment. Boiler support will be accessed via Cheshire East's Housing Department, who will be using the funding to extend their 'affordable warmth grant' programme. The boiler support will only be provided in cases once all other available options via the 'affordable warmth grant' have been exhausted, at which point the Household Support Fund programme will support the shortfall. The above process will be piloted until January 2022, at which point demand will be evaluated. In the situation of low demand, we will have the option to conduct a bulk food release to those known to the DHP programme and emergency assistance applicants, values subject to remaining funding.
- 4.12.** Management of the adult's portion will also be managed by a project manager from the Children's Development and Partnerships Service within Early Help and Prevention. The adult's section will also require recruitment

of two grant administrators to assist with the school holiday e-voucher rollouts and with the administration of the inquiry forms, release of vouchers/referral to partners and design/amends to project documentation (so there will be a total of four grant administrators for the children and adults delivery). Adults' payment records will be held within the Adults Screening department within Benefits, which will be reported on to the steering group on a biweekly basis. Eligibility checks will be conducted by Benefits and Housing as appropriate.

- 4.13.** The funding breakdown for the adults portion is shown below (please note these figures are indicative and the funding may be used flexibly within the categories):

Adults:	Food	£250,000
	Utilities	£250,000
	Housing Payments	£50,000
	Boiler Support	£50,000
	White Goods	£25,000
	Admin	£100,000
	Total:	£725,000

- 4.14.** Reporting requirements will be managed by the project manager with DWP reporting templates utilised in our returns. Reports will be checked and signed off by Cheshire East Council's 151 finance officer, and the senior responsible officer for the project before submissions will be made. Two management information returns are required on the 21 January 2021 (reporting period 6 October 21 to 31 December 2021) and 22 April 2022 (reporting period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022).

Holiday Activity Fund

- 4.15.** The Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) is now entering its final winter rollout. The winter rollout period will be delivered over the Christmas holidays, where providers are expected to deliver four days of sessions lasting four hours, including enriching activities, healthy meals (which meet DfE food standards) in largely an indoor setting or with special consideration for winter conditions. The grant is open for bids between 18 October and 5 November 2021. We are expecting to build upon established relationships with providers from summer, and forge new partnerships to strengthen our offer. Previous and current partners include Everybody Sport and Recreation, Cheshire East's Children Centres, the police, Congleton Education Partnership, many Cheshire East schools, specialist SEND providers and many others.
- 4.16.** Management of HAF is carried out by a project manager from the Children's Development and Partnerships Service within Early Help and Prevention. HAF is also assisted by one project officer from the same service and one HAF administrator. The steering group meets biweekly with a range of

partners, alongside the Household Support Fund project, to track and progress the fund.

- 4.17. Reporting requirements will be managed by the project manager, who will use the DfE reporting templates. Reports will be checked and signed off by the council's finance department and senior responsible officer for the project before submission. One report is due to the DfE on 29 January 2022 with a statement of grant usage alongside. This report will include details of the entire HAF programme from Easter 2021 to December 2021.

5. Implications

5.1. Legal

- 5.1.1. The Household Support Grant has been determined by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

- 5.1.2. The purpose of the grant is to provide support to certain local authorities in England for expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in accordance with the Grant Conditions to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency) this winter as the economy recovers.

- 5.1.3. Approval of a Supplementary Revenue Estimate requires adherence to the provisions of the Financial Procedure Rules as set out in the Constitution

Funded from Additional Grants

Directors may make applications for grants, where the application does not create a financial or any other commitment, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer. However, if the application is for a grant in excess of £1m, or if any match funding will be required, then CLT must be consulted in advance.

Successful grant applications will require a supplementary estimate to incur spending, in line with the approval limits set out in the table below.

If grant application or receipt commits expenditure outside of the Control Totals then a Virement or Other Supplementary Estimate will also be required.

Amount of grant to be received	Approval Level
Up to and including £100,000	Officers
Between £100,000 and £500,000	Relevant Member of CLT in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and Chair of Finance Sub-Committee
£500k and up to £1m	Committee
£1m and above	Council

and specifically the provisions of Chapter 3 Part 3 at para 19 shall apply: it being noted that the level of grant funding (£2,203,892.10) required Council approval. The relevant section from the Constitution is shown below:

- 5.1.4.** The determination by which the grant funds are awarded in exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 apply conditions. Legal have reviewed the conditions; it being noted that the conditions are directed to ensuring that the council acts to apply a scheme that ensures the council uses the grant funding “*to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency) this winter as the economy recovers.*” The conditions require the council to report its application of the funds in a Statement of Grant Usage; and requires the council to deliver additional information in the form of progress report and management information return as required. Overall, the council is obliged to maintain a sound system of internal governance and financial controls in relation to the grant.
- 5.1.5.** It should be noted that the conditions provide for clawback in the event of breach:

Breach of Conditions and Recovery of Grant

20. If the Authority fails to comply with any of these conditions, or if any overpayment or underpayment is made in relation to this grant or any amount is paid in error, or if any of the events set out in paragraph 21 occurs, the Secretary of State may reduce, suspend or withhold grant payments or require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant monies paid, as may be determined by the Secretary of State and notified in writing to the Authority. Such sum as has been notified will immediately become repayable to the Secretary of State who may set off the sum against any future amount due to the Authority from central government.

21. The events referred to in paragraph 20 are:

- a) the Authority purports to transfer or assign any rights, interests or obligations arising under this Determination without the prior agreement of the Secretary of State,
- b) any information provided in any application for grant monies payable under this Determination, or in any subsequent supporting correspondence is found to be significantly incorrect or incomplete in the opinion of the Secretary of State,
- c) it appears to the Secretary of State that other circumstances have arisen or events have occurred that are likely to significantly affect the Authority's ability to deliver the Scheme,
- d) the Authority's Section 151 officer is unable to provide reasonable assurance that the Statement of Grant Usage, in all material respects, fairly presents the eligible expenditure in the Grant Period in accordance with the definitions and conditions in this Determination, or
- e) the Authority fails to provide the Statement of Grant Usage and a Progress Report and Management Information Return in accordance with the Grant Conditions.

5.1.6 The Holiday Activities and Food Fund grant has been determined by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

5.1.7 The purpose of the grant is for local authorities to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays in 2021. This will be made available to children in the local authority area who are eligible for and receive benefits-related free school meals.

5.1.8 Approval of a Supplementary Revenue Estimate requires adherence to the provisions of the Financial Procedure Rules as set out in the Constitution and specifically the provisions of Chapter 3 Part 3 at para 19 as quoted above (5.1.3) shall apply.

5.1.9 The determination by which the grant funds are awarded in exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003

apply conditions. Legal have reviewed the conditions; it being noted that the conditions are directed to ensuring that the council acts to apply a scheme that ensures the council uses the grant funding “to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays 2021 to children in their local authority who receive benefits-related free school meals”. The conditions require the council to report its application of the funds in a Statement of Grant Usage; and requires the council to deliver additional information in the form of progress report and management information return as required. Overall, the council is obliged to maintain a sound system of internal governance and financial controls in relation to the grant.

- 5.1.10** It should be noted that the Conditions provide for clawback in the event of breach:

Recovery of Grant

24. If the Authority fails to comply with any of these conditions, or if any overpayment is made under this grant or any amount is paid in error, or if any of the events set out in paragraph 25 occurs, the Secretary of State may reduce, suspend or withhold grant payments or require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant monies paid, as may be determined by the Secretary of State and notified in writing to the Authority. Such sum as has been notified will immediately become repayable to the Secretary of State who may set off the sum against any future amount due to the Authority from central government.

5.1. Finance

- 5.2.1.** Expenditure on the Household Support Fund will be fully funded by a government grant of £2.2m. The duration of the scheme is from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The current understanding is that the grant can also be used to cover Easter 2022.
- 5.2.2.** The expectation is that the council will spend the grant in accordance with the conditions and not exceed the amount advised by the DWP. There will not be any unfunded ongoing commitments because of this expenditure. It is not yet known if any funding will be provided after 31 March 2022 to continue this scheme or something similar.
- 5.2.3.** The council will be required to provide two management information returns outlining their grant spend and the volume of awards as follows:

- An interim management information return for the period 6 October 2021 to 31 December 2021 will be due 21 January 2022.
- A final management information return for the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 will be due 22 April 2022.

5.2.4. Grant payments will be made in arrears on receipt of a fully completed and verified management information return.

5.2.5. If the council has not spent the grant in accordance with the conditions, then there is scope for clawback. The service will manage that risk.

5.2.6. The supplementary revenue estimate for Holiday Activity Fund was approved at Cabinet on 13 April 2021. The council will spend their HAF allocation in full, including administrative costs as planned and this will be fully funded by the grant.

5.3. Human Resources

5.3.1. There will be a need for additional capacity to administer both grants. Reasonable administration costs are funded as part of the grant funding and we will ensure that the full costs of any additional staffing are offset against the grant.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Doug Hubbert Douglas.hubbert@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Summer Grant Impact Report
Background Papers:	Report to Cabinet where the supplementary revenue estimate for the Holiday Activity Fund was approved Report to Full Council where the supplementary revenue estimate for the Household Support Grant was approved

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Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Children and Families Grant Support

Summer 2021



Executive Summary

2020/21 has presented unique challenges for families, central government, and local government. The central government response provided high levels of grant funding to local authorities to mobilise efficient and targeted responses. As part of the wider poverty package, the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) 'COVID Support Grant' and Department for Education's (DfE) 'Holiday Activity Fund' were targeted at supporting children and families with combating food poverty, with wider support and education included. A total of £1.9m was provided from the DWP and DfE to Cheshire East between 16 April 2021 and 31 December 2021.

- The COVID Support Grant (CSG) was a DWP funded programme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable households and families with children. The CSG ran from 16 April 2021 until 30 September 2021. The national value of the CSG was £200m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £1,035,849.45.
- The Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) programme has run in the Easter, summer and will run in the Christmas holidays 2021. The programme is a DfE government scheme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. The national value of the HAF programme was £220m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £881,340.

The CSG and HAF schemes were complimentary, both providing food support to individuals, with the CSG supporting children and families with vouchers and wider essentials to support them from the direct risk of winter poverty. Whilst HAF provided food, it also addressed education (food/physical/enriching) to produce sustainable impacts. Implementation of both schemes required support from a range of partners.

Both schemes had closely considered eligibility criteria and were designed to be as targeted and inclusive as possible. The HAF programme was targeted at benefit related FSM eligible, with some flexibility for the inclusion of other identified vulnerable young people. The CSG eligibility included FSM eligible young people, with a wider parameter for inclusivity as decreed by grant conditions, this included: are in receipt of early years pupil premium and two-year funding, care leavers up to age 25, NEET 16-18, young carers for their parents/carers, known to domestic abuse services, or identified by a registered professional as requiring additional support.

Summary of CSG Summer	Summary of HAF Summer
- 42,294 total vouchers/payments	- 1667 eligible young people attended
- 41,956 total food vouchers	- 40 providers funded over summer programmes
- 286 total utilities inquiries	- 70 locations
- 52 total white goods inquiries	
- 1,094 additional food inquires (EA included)	
- £1,035,839.45 total spend	- £474,815.17 was awarded to providers

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1. Introduction

The COVID Support Grant (CSG) was a DWP funded programme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable households and families with children who have been affected by the pandemic. The CSG ran from 16 April 2021 until 30 September 2021, at which point the scheme was then officially closed. The national value of the CSG was £200m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £1,035,849.45. The funding guidelines required a minimum of 80% of the funding to target both food and utilities, with a 20% discretion for essentials such as white goods. Reflecting these parameters, the funding guidelines also ring-fenced a minimum of 80% of the funding for children and families, with a further 20% allocation to vulnerable households.

To implement this programme, Cheshire East Council targeted approximately 10,000 known vulnerable/at risk children and families who would automatically receive their vouchers.

On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme had provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, with Cheshire East being invited onto the scheme in 2021. The programme has scope to cover the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, with eligibility specifically targeted at benefit related free school meal (FSM) eligible young people.

Local authorities were tasked with ensuring their offer of free holiday club provision matched demand for all children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in their area, for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, six weeks a year. This offer equates to four weeks over the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021. The HAF monies provided to local authorities were eligible to fund the provision of free holiday places (both creation of new clubs and extension of existing) and coordination of the programme locally.

The goal of the programme was to encourage young people to eat more healthily over the school holidays, be more active during the school holidays, take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment, be safe and not to be socially isolated, have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition, and be more engaged with school and other local services. There was also a desire for families to participate to develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and signpost them towards other information and support, for example: health, employment, and education.

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2. Cheshire East Council's Implementation

2.1 Grant Mobilisation

2.1.1 COVID Support Grant Planning and Mobilisation

Cheshire East's CSG implementation began on the 16 April 2021 and ran until the final day of the grant period, 30 September 2021. The project had three significant rollout periods; the 2020 Christmas holidays; February half term; and the Easter holidays. In addition to these rollout periods, inquiry forms were available for families to access support.

The CSG steering group first met on the 22 April 2021. The group had representatives from Early Help, Children's Social Care, Commissioning, Education, Finance, Internal Audit, Legal, Public Sector Transformation, Benefits and Communities. The senior responsible officer (SRO) for the project was the Director of Prevention and Support, Ali Stathers-Tracey.

The project was managed in-house to retain continuity in our offer and facilitate a targeted approach which allowed the council to develop its knowledge of our vulnerable young people and families, to provide an opportunity for the council to develop a relationship with our most vulnerable, to highlight the highest risk families and individuals for further support and to provide the opportunity to compose comprehensive data on the project's recipients.

The in-house method followed a process of identifying a range of eligibility criteria to include all at risk cohorts, and those whose risk was particularly affected by the pandemic during the winter months. Once these groups were identified a mapping process was conducted, heat maps were produced to illustrate the geographical distribution of our target children and families. This allowed us to identify delivery partners to support the delivery of vouchers to families, including schools, colleges, early years settings, Cheshire East staff working in early help and social care. Financial forecasting was conducted to appropriately proportion and distribute the funding between eligible cohorts, and to provide assurance the grant would be implemented and delivered within grant funding parameters.

2.1.2 Holiday Activity Fund Planning and Mobilisation

Cheshire East's HAF implementation began on 1 March 2021 and the last holiday period covered will be Christmas 2021, with expected final government reporting required on 29 January 2022. The programme has three significant rollout phases: Easter holidays 2 April 2021 to 16 April 2021, Summer holidays 22 July 2021 to 31



August 2021, Christmas holidays 20 December 2021 to 3 January 2022. To date, both the Easter and Summer implementation periods have been completed.

The HAF steering group first met on the 20 May 2021. The group had representatives from Early Help, Children’s Social Care, Commissioning, Education, Finance, Internal Audit, Legal, Public Sector Transformation, Benefits and Communities. The senior responsible officer (SRO) for the project was the Director of Prevention and Support, Ali Stathers-Tracey.

The project team initially conducted an expression of interest (EOI) process communicated to all known private, public and third sector children’s providers in Cheshire East. The EOIs captured the engagement of providers across Cheshire East, whilst accurately modelling provision. We were then able to compare our data against our free school meal mapping to ensure the appropriate commission and distribution of clubs to match our population’s needs. This allowed us to network between providers who were only able to make partial offers regarding, food or activity length, and connect providers who required support with facilities/venues. Once appropriate arrangements had been put in place, we opened our grants process where we were able to finalise the model. Providers from the public, private and third sectors were invited to apply for a maximum of £20,000 per bid via the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Grant.

2.2 Mobilisation Periods

2.2.1 COVID Support Grant Mobilisation Periods

May Half Term –
16 April 2021 – CSG conditions received
6 May 2021 – CSG go live communications released
17 May 2021 – 21 May 2021 – Vouchers provided to schools/settings
30 May 2021 – 3 June 2021 - May half term
7 June 2021- Inquiry forms go live
9 July 2021 – CSG mid-term MI return
Summer Holidays –
5 July 2021 – 9 July 2021 – Vouchers provided to schools/settings
25 July 2021 – 31 August 2021 – Summer holidays
22 October 2021 – DWP CSG MI return date



2.2.2 Holiday Activity Fund Summer Mobilisation Period

- 21 May 2021 – Grant applications went live
- 21 May 2021 – 27 June 2021 - Rolling assessment of applications
- 27 June 2021 – Funding round closed
- 18 June 2021 – 29 March 2021 - Grant offer letters provided to successful applicants
- 25 June 2021 – Grant brochures provided to HAF stakeholders
- 25 June 2021 – Grant reporting templates provided to successful grant applicants
- 26 July 2021 – Providers began summer delivery
- 9 July 2021 – First 50% summer payment made upon successful grant application
- 10 September 2021 – Summer evaluation return date
- 17 September 2021 – Second 50% Easter payment made upon return of evaluation

2.3 Grant Participation and Eligibility

2.3.1 COVID Support Grant Eligibility

Cheshire East adopted the following eligibility criteria:

- those in receipt of income related free school meals
- those in receipt of early years pupil premium and two-year old funding
- care leavers up to age 25
- young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) aged 16-18
- young carers
- those known to domestic abuse services
- those identified as vulnerable by a trusted professional.

The above groups amounted to over 10,000 children and young people and were identified as pre-existing groups who would receive food support automatically via their school or setting. In addition to these groups, referrals were accepted via trusted professionals for the following categories:

- those known to children's social care and early help services
- parents/carers who are experiencing financial hardship due to being unable to work as their children are self-isolating
- those who were vulnerable due to financial hardship and can be referred by a partner agency (e.g. GP, teacher, support worker).



2.3.2 Holiday Activity Fund: Determining a Successful Application

Analysis and evaluation of prospective bids was vital to ensuring the success of the programme. The grant application aimed to provide us with enough evidence to decide on the provider's inclusion in the programme, however in some cases additional clarity was required. The application forms required providers to include the following information: details on how they identified a need in their area/setting, how they would meet the key principles of the programme, how they would advertise to free school meal young people, what the service would provide, locations of delivery, how many children they intended to target/accommodate, detailed breakdown of projected costs, sustainability of project post HAF funding, evidence of mandatory policies.

All completed applications were assessed using the above criteria to determine level of need and the providers ability to deliver a suitable programme in the key principle areas set out by funding guidelines.

2.4 Grant Implementation

2.4.1 COVID Support Grant Implementation

Eligible cohorts for the COVID Support Grant were able to access support in three targeted categories: food, utilities, and white goods.

Food was provided via food vouchers. These were available from 17 April until 30 September 2021. Targeted releases to pre-existing known cohorts were provided for one week during the May half term (30 May to 3 June 2021) and three weeks during the summer holidays (25 July to 2 Sept 2021). Additional vouchers were available via the inquiry form, where registered professionals were able to apply for additional funding for one week per application. Applications were assessed based on the trusted professional's identification of need. The vouchers were purchased from Blackhawk Network which were valid for Tesco, Morrisons, Aldi, Sainsburys, Asda, Waitrose, M&S and Aldi. During both the May and summer rollouts, the vouchers were worth £20, per week, per child.

Utilities were available for electric, gas and water to the value of £49 per household via the online enquiry form. Referrals were accepted via trusted professionals. Both credit and prepaid meter households were supported. Utilities vouchers were purchased from Green Doctor Energy Consultants who provided additional energy



advice to households referred. Utilities vouchers were available from 17 April and vouchers were supplied until the scheme closed on 30 September 2021.

White goods were supplied via Cheshire East's Emergency Assistance Team, based within the Benefits department. The Benefits department had existing commissioned services called Click and St Paul's which were able to extend their support to the CSG. The white goods were accessible once per household on a needs basis, with households able to access electric cooker, fridge, washing machine or microwave. Most goods supplied were recycled or refurbished but in some rare cases a new item would be provided. White goods were available from 20 of June until the 30 September 2021.

2.4.2 Holiday Activity Fund Implementation

Once successful bids were identified, outcome letters were sent to all providers detailing they had been successful in securing funding for their clubs and how much funding they would receive.

The scheme was advertised to ensure maximum exposure. An online brochure was developed by the HAF team which was communicated to all children facing council services and to schools. In addition, a poster was provided to children's focused council service areas and distributed to schools and settings in the Cheshire East area, a communications piece was entered into the Schools Bulletin, a webpage was established with links to the online brochure and further information regarding the HAF and what it has to offer. In addition to internal exposure, successful providers were required to advertise their activities via agreed marketing strategies included in their bids. A decentralised marketing strategy proved to be an effective method of efficient mobilisation and targeted communications, providing emphasised awareness in our desired cohorts.

A 50% grant payment was made to all successful providers on the 9 July 2021 and a further 50% payment would be made once completed evaluations were received after the clubs had ran over the summer holidays.

Monitoring visits were conducted by the HAF team throughout the summer to gauge the uptake of free school meal children and if the clubs were running successfully. A feedback session and workshop was held on 25 September to reflect over summer activities and consider winter implementation.



3. Impacts of Cheshire East Summer Grants

3.1 COVID Support Grant Impacts and Benefits

Impacts

The impacts of the COVID Support Grant can be viewed in Appendix A. In summary, the impacts of the project were considerable, working with over 10,000 young people and families across Cheshire East, with a small percentage of young people from out of area (< 1%). A total of 42,294 vouchers/payments were provided across all support variants. In total, 41,956 food vouchers were provided to young people and families; 10,670 in May half term; 30,192 in the summer holidays 2021; 1,044 via inquiry forms and 50 via the emergency assistance.

Appendix B illustrates our key partners in the inquiry form process, with the main geographical areas of need demonstrated in Appendix C. In summary, these partners were Cheshire East officers from the Family Service, schools, DWP and third sector providers, with the main areas of need being Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Congleton, Sandbach, Wilmslow, Knutsford, Alsager and Poynton.

In addition to food, the project also supported utilities and white good referrals from trusted professionals. 286 utility vouchers were provided over the course of the project, which equates to 120 pre-payment meter vouchers and 166 cash vouchers.

In terms of white goods, the project supported a total of 52 households. The main goods requested were cookers (11), washing machines (13), fridge (6) and microwaves (2), with 20 claims yet to be provided. The main geographical areas of need (in descending order) were Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Congleton, Sandbach, Wilmslow, Knutsford, Alsager and Poynton.

When compared to the previous scheme, the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which ran from December 2020 to April 2021, the programme demonstrates some interesting comparisons. The bulk food provision showed a growth from December 2020, as Cheshire East free school meal numbers grew from 7,511 (December 2020) to 8,313 (July 2021) - an increase of 10%. This influenced our overall pre-existing cohort number, which increased from 9,197 in December 2020, to 10,064 - an increase of 8.6%.

With regards to inquiry forms, our applications are shown as significantly lower than the COVID Winter Grant Scheme:

- total inquiries for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme 5,450; COVID Support Grant inquiries 1,382 (decrease of 74.6%)

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- food inquiries totalling 3,893 for COVID Winter Grant Scheme and 1,044 for COVID Support Grant (decrease of 73.2%)
- utilities for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme totalled 1,453 and 286 for the COVID Support Grant (decrease of 80.3%)
- White goods totalling 104 for COVID Winter Grant Scheme and 52 for the COVID Support Grant (decrease of 50%)

Evidence from wider social circumstances does not suggest demand has dropped, rather the omission of referrers from schools during the summer holidays (provided over 2,000 referrals during the previous scheme). Other potential factors included the fact families received funding for three weeks of food during the summer which would have reduced demand, and we are aware referrers increased their criteria for families with the intention of not creating dependence. A final consideration, with specific direction for the utilities portion, is during the summer period heating costs pressures are lessened.

Benefits

The above impacts illustrate a continued need within Cheshire East for individuals requiring support with food, utilities, white goods, and other essentials. The support for food was consistently the highest requirement for families in Cheshire East. The gap in food provision for our most disadvantaged has always provided a challenge for welfare support. 2020 and 2021 have provided particular challenges, as a result of inflation ([consumer price index UK](#) rising 4.5% since June 2020), [increased unemployment](#) (spiking at 5.2% Dec 2020, mean 4.7% since March 2020), [reduced earnings from furlough](#) (families receiving 80% - 90% of their standard income), the recontinuation of evictions and the removal of the universal credit £20 top up. When placed in a backdrop of social isolation, the previous scenario illustrates a difficult period for families, with a sliding scale of unique challenges placing pressure on finances.

Supply pressures have also been felt in the utilities world, with supply/demand issues leading to price swelling, with households paying over 50% more on utilities compared to pre-pandemic prices (Ofgem state electricity bills increased from [£53 per week to £115](#)). This placed additional pressures on families and justified the continued support with utilities that the programme provided.

Wider benefits include the project's capacity to develop and embed it within a poverty support package environment. This includes recipients of the grant, schools, settings, and colleges. In the process of doing this, we also developed a wealth of data which can now be used to develop our understanding of our most vulnerable and map out need in Cheshire East. Alongside the established relationships, a working group positioned to swiftly deal with future grants with direct lines of communications has also been created and tested. Project engagement with our at-risk cohort has also allowed the signposting for further services to be completed,



including free school meal sign up and emergency assistance. Further data benefits include being able to update our free school meal eligible list from our data.

3.1.1 Holiday Activity Fund Impacts and Benefits

Impacts

A total of 40 providers across Cheshire East delivered to 1,667 young people over the summer period as part of the HAF programme, equating to 93% of the initial target of 1,750, or as a proportion of free school meal eligible in Cheshire East, this is approximately 20%. In terms of hours, the programme received a total of approximately 56,918 hours of sessions booked onto, with a total of approximately 50,758 hours attended (approximately 84% attendance).

Each of these programmes offered at least one healthy meal, with some offering two, coupled with healthy snacks equating to a total of 16,388 meals provided. In terms of sessions, 905 sessions were held, with a total of 86,845 hours delivered. The average number of sessions attended was approximately 11, with each participant attending an average of approximately 52 hours of activities. In addition to face-to-face provision, virtual provision was also provided. 18 virtual sessions took place, with a total of 116 hours provided virtually.

Special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) inclusion in the programme was a priority of the programme with all providers offering provision to SEND young people. Of our three SEND specific clubs available, 375 SEND young people attended over 19,500 hours of SEND provision and received 3,665 healthy meals.

Benefits

The 1,667 free school meal children attending holiday activities through the programme were provided with access to a healthy daily meal and snacks, take part in enriching and engaging activities with peers and improve mental health and wellbeing. The programme focused on local providers, to maximise the impact of the funding – encouraging sustainable impacts and to support and stimulate the children's activity sector in Cheshire East during the pandemic. Sustainability was a core value of the programme, not limited to provider/economic recovery, but also inclusive of the club activities. Our club activities targeted the core outcomes of the programme by offering healthy food and physical activities across all our delivery locations, including football, archery, cricket, orienteering, yoga, arts and crafts, badminton, gardening, drama, music, gymnastics, soft play, cooking, swimming and much more. In addition to the face-to-face offer, we also ensured the availability of an online virtual offer for young people unable to attend clubs for any reason, these included activity packs (including one from Disney) and kits, and access to online activities and recipe packs.



We strove to provide optionality for families, with a wide range of activities and locations on offer. In addition to short term impact, we also targeted our funding to providers who offered long term educational impacts to our attendees. This included educational materials provided to parents to develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting; nutritional education for children on where food comes from, what healthy food and balanced diets are, food diaries, ways to make healthy food fun and tasty, and food hygiene. Providers also offered improved awareness and mental wellbeing for young people by including wellness/mindfulness sessions such as yoga, meditation, and time to talk sessions. The wider package of support was vital to optimising the funding’s impact, with children leaving with the improved tools to approach their lives and supported to organise themselves. The programme also increased young people’s exposure to other services, with one referral to the front door being reported during the summer period, and their interaction with these services – with anecdotal evidence showing HAF attendees having increased attendance and enthusiasm for their school subjects.

3.2 COVID Support Grant feedback from providers and recipients

Provider	Comment
Grant Recipient	The vouchers were amazing and came at the perfect time
Grant Recipient	The vouchers have helped me buy food for my kids at a time when things were really hard, thank you!
Cheshire East Officer - Referrer	The vouchers have helped ease my families’ anxieties around food, the utilities vouchers were also very useful at providing support to families and helping them
Cheshire East Officer - Referrer	All of my families have been extremely grateful for this support so thank you very much!
School - Referrer	Being able to access the vouchers has great for supporting our free school meal kids



3.2.1 Holiday Activity Fund feedback from providers and attendees

Provider	Comment
Hall Star Education & Sport	Fabulous, my daughter had the best time making new friends
Monks Coppenhall	I really love coming to the club - I wish it was on at the weekend too
Scholar Green	My child is really enjoying the holiday club. They are full of joy when I collect them at the end of the session.
St Mary's Middlewich	I have been working this week and it's great to know the girls are having fun and keeping active.
St Mary's Catholic Primary School	I can't explain how much he has enjoyed his time with you, which is lovely for me to see, he will never go anywhere because his tics/ autism etc I'm so happy thank you so much
Brereton Primary	My children attended this and really enjoyed it. They were excited to come each day.
Space4Autism	Thank you for having this as an option for us. Having a weekly club over the summer that is inclusive is fantastic and for me gives me a much-needed break and the boys love it!

Feedback from the young people who attended Holiday Activities

What was the best part?	
'Chilling with people' 'being here' 'Cooking' 'Being here' 'Drama and adding music' 'Hammocks'	'Drama, outdoor' 'To play with friends' 'learning new things and just being here' 'setting up and setting the fire'



What was the hardest part?	
'the caterpillar' 'the tent' 'keeping the fire going' 'making props n doing artwork for drama' 'nothing'	'performing but I liked it' 'keeping the fire going' 'not really hard' 'trying not to snap the willow'
What could we do better next time?	
'nothing, it was good/great' 'was great as is' 'nothing' 'more hammocks' 'more time'	'no, do it next year' 'music, art and painting' 'have marshmallows' 'more cooking'
What did you learn?	
'teamwork' 'life skills' 'how to make brownies' 'fun, trust'	'talking to others' 'how to make a camp' 'drama is cool' 'fun and trusting each other'
Other Feedback	
'absolutely fantastic' 'loved every part and hope on next year' 'fantastic day' 'the helpers were great'	'Enthusiastic and engaging' 'adults were fantastic' 'kindness' 'I would come again'



4. COVID Support Grant Challenges and Future Learning

The main learning outcomes from the programme were around its staffing requirements. The project is embedded within the offer in Cheshire East, with staff and partners highly aware of the project, referral routes and accessibility. Therefore referrals to the programme are high which results in a high staffing cost. The programme has been redeploying staff from other areas of the council which has impacted work in other areas. If the programme is going to continue to offer the level of service it currently does, special consideration will be required to be placed upon the staffing offer supporting the programme. Although this is a concern, the project team have amalgamated the learning and experience from the previous 12 months and are now in a strong position to deliver future work of this kind.

In terms of the voucher offer, project feedback indicated vouchers made immediate short-term improvements to young people and families' outcomes. With the existence of the vouchers lasting over 12 months, the local authority will benefit from sensitively handling any removal of vouching funding as concerns of dependency grow.

5. HAF Challenges and Future Learning

This summer delivery was the second delivery period of the Holiday Activity Fund in Cheshire East. We are systematically reflecting on strategic and logistical decisions, to identify efficiencies and improve future activities and experiences. A demonstration of our improvisational methods includes the commitment to improve our data collection methods and for increased clarity in our project document. We used this feedback from Easter and worked alongside providers to improve our data and document design. This provided unforeseen benefits for the HAF programme as increased proximity with providers developed an increased understanding between provider and commissioner.

Challenges of the summer programme include the scope and scale of the programme, as well as the timescales expected to delivery. These challenges are inherent to any delivery of this scale and were overcome as and when they were faced. The design and management of the programme is to credit for the mitigation and resilience of the delivery, and the achievement of remaining on brief. This is in part to the credit of providers in Cheshire East, who enthusiastically established high quality provision, worked flexibly and understandably with Cheshire East, to allow us to use them as delivery vehicles for the HAF programme. Providers and the programme team were regularly working in partnership when attendance gaps were identified, often pushing further communications, supporting the HAF programme to achieving commendatory attendance levels, many of which are akin to areas who have delivered for over two years as part of the pilot. In addition to the above, the programme also had a gap of provision in the Poynton area, because of low provider engagement. To address this,

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we ensured individuals in the area had access to our virtual offers, as well as access to clubs in the Wilmslow area.

Going forward, the programme has aimed to build upon previous feedback and new feedback from providers. We have built a project timeline which includes more provider feedback opportunities, increased provider support (bid support sessions, locality delivery support sessions, HAF provider briefings, evaluation, and data return sessions). The previous actions have been ongoing and will continue to the end of the project in January 2022, it has already begun developing provider/central team awareness and HAF programme team branding. We are also exploring providers who can deliver in the Poynton area, coupled with a pilot which will provide physical activities to young people referred into the programme by schools in the area.

Since the project has been expanded for three years, we feel the decision to model the programme as we have and to build relationships with local providers and develop their offer will pay dividends for the programme into 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 delivery. We now have an archive of providers that we will be able to confidently commission to provide to our children and families over a longer-term period (up to 3 years). Providers with less developed offers may be commissioned over smaller periods, to allow them to pilot and develop improvements into their offer.

6. Conclusions

COVID Support Grant

In conclusion, the COVID Support Grant had a major impact on the recipients of the grant. The grant has been far reaching and had a significant impact on those families in need during the pandemic. The grant provided over 40,000 vouchers to our most vulnerable during one of the most difficult and challenging years this country has faced. Although the impact and scope of the grant has been notable, it is worth considering the long-term impact of providing voucher support to families from short term central government funding pots, with no asserted sustainability.

The grant closed on 30 September 2021; however, a follow up grant called the Household Support Fund began implementation on 6 October 2021, which will utilise the data and learning from the CSG to benefit those families in need in Cheshire East. The Household Support Fund programme also has increased scope to include adults.

Holiday Activity Fund

In conclusion, the Holiday Activity Fund has had a great impact to free school meal children in the Cheshire East area so far. The grant enabled 1,667 children to access a free holiday provision over the summer period, enabling them to engage with peers and access enriching activities in a stimulating environment. Where children had become

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socially isolated due to COVID restrictions, these children were able to access this provision, which has helped with social interaction, mental health, and wellbeing as well as offering parents and carers respite. The main geographical areas where the need was identified were Macclesfield, Crewe, Nantwich and Congleton. Clubs were offered in other areas such as Sandbach, Alsager and Middlewich.

The winter stage of the HAF programme has been started, developing on learning from the summer programme. Overall, the programme has received a strong tranche of initial bids, which are largely thanks to the work between the team and providers. The programme is also excited about the opportunities of 2022-2025 delivery, and the future amendments and improvements we conduct to deliver the highest level of service possible to our most vulnerable.

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7. Appendices

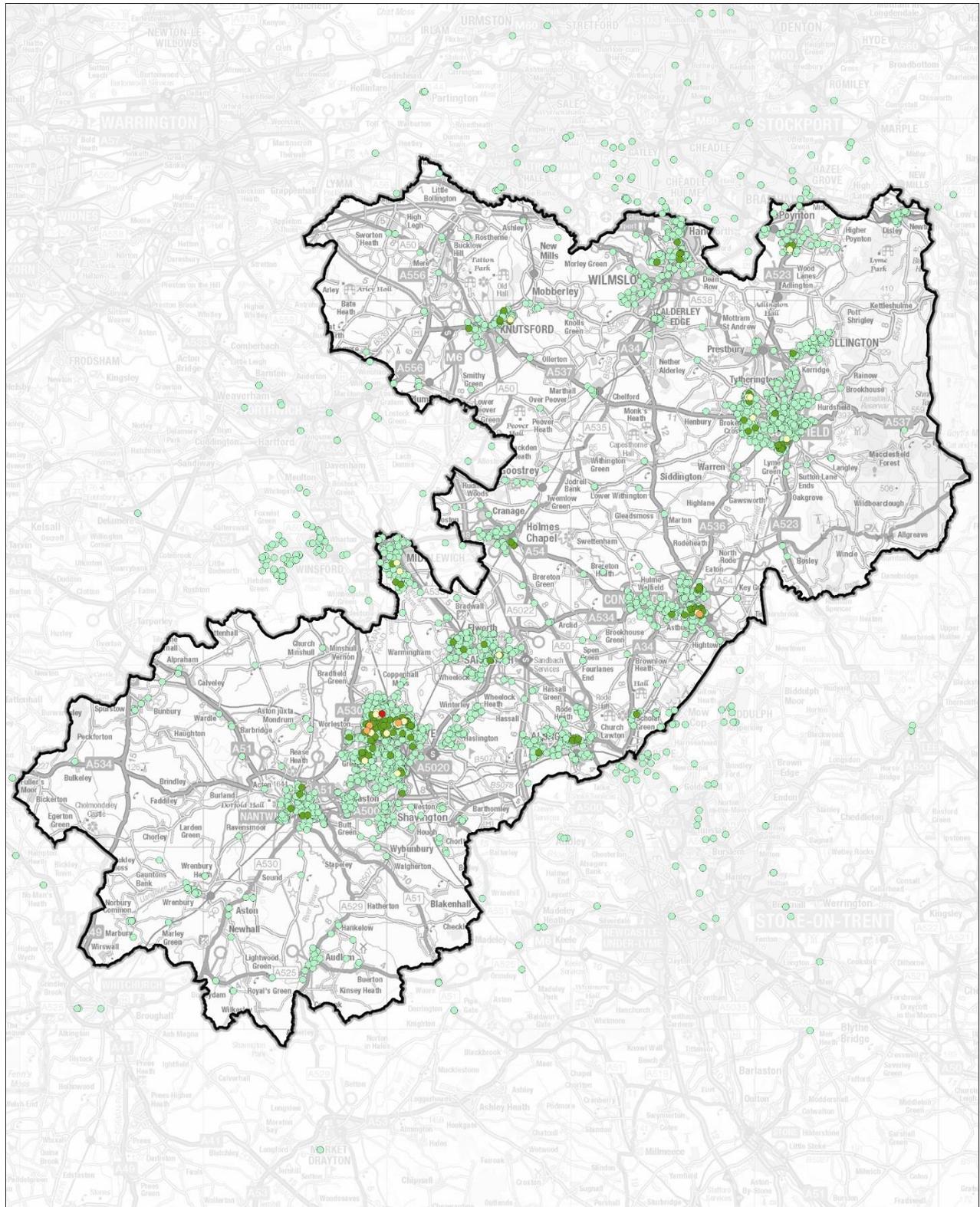
Appendix A – COVID Support Grant Impact Table

	30 September 2021	
Inquiry Forms Received (per child)		
Food	1,157 (includes duplicates)	
Utilities	806 (includes duplicates)	
White Goods	122 (includes duplicates)	
Total number on inquiry forms	2,085	
Vouchers Issued		
May Half Term	10,670	
Benefits - food vouchers	50	
Summer Break	30,192	10,064 (people)
Inquiry Forms Completed		
Food	1,044	
Ground Work (households) (sent to Ground Work)	286	
White Goods (households) sent	52	
Total	1,382	

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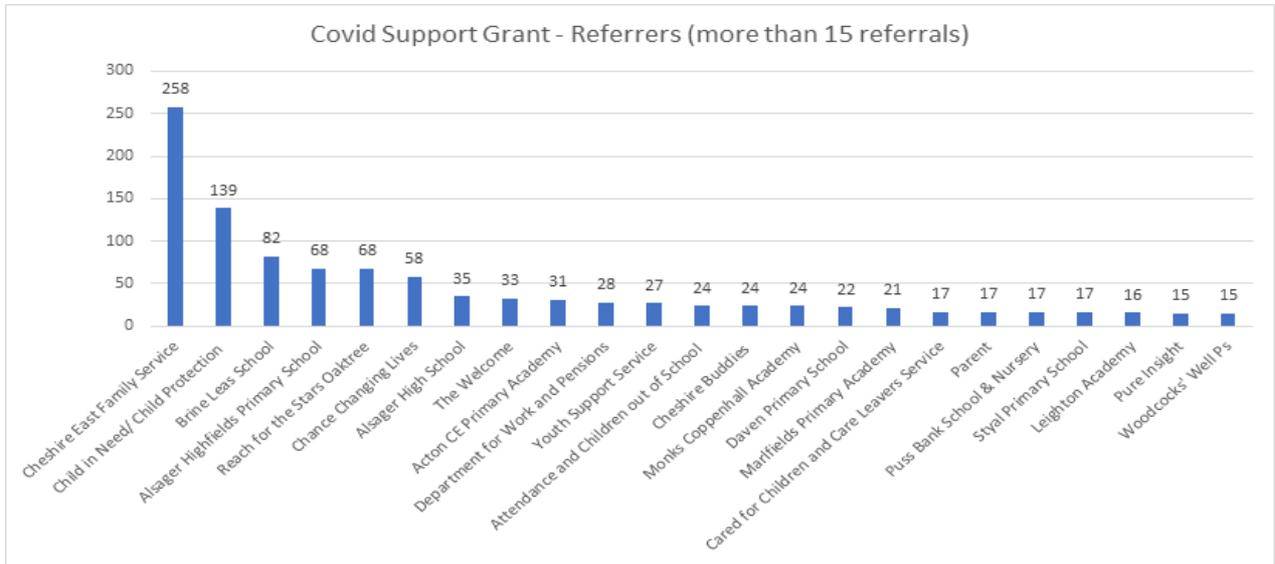
Appendix B – Map of COVID Support Grant delivery



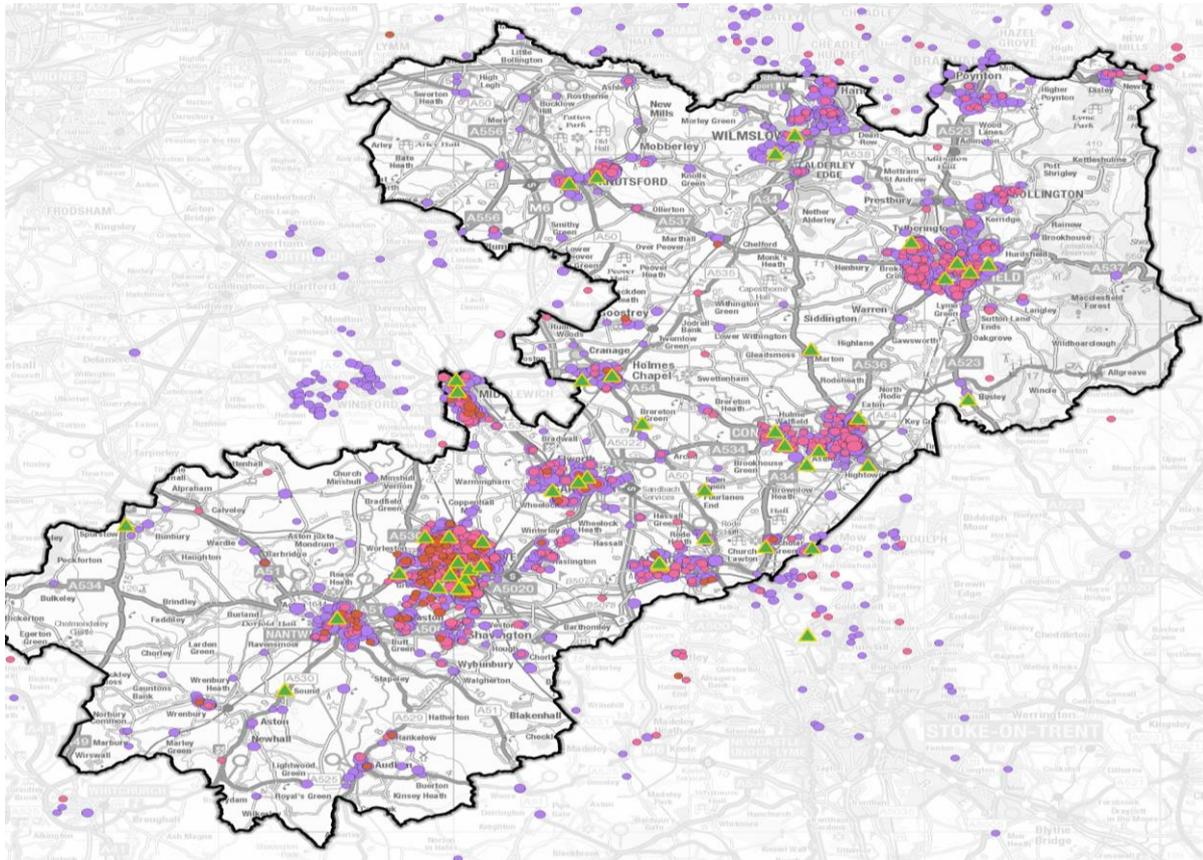
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Appendix C – COVID Support Grant inquiry form referrers



Appendix D – Holiday Activity Fund provider map



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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	10 January 2022
Report Title:	Children and Families Performance Report Quarter 2 2021-22
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/22/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report sets out the performance for Children's Services for quarter 2 of 2021-22.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report sets out the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on performance, and the arrangements that have been in place during this time and gives an overview of performance across the Children and Families service for quarter 2 of 2021-22

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is asked to:
- 3.2. Note the performance of children's services for quarter 2.
- 3.3. Provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. One of the key areas of focus for the Children and Families Committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for children and young people.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Background

6.1. This quarterly report provides the Committee with an overview of performance across Children's Services. This report relates to quarter 2 of 2021-22 (1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021).

6.2. There still remains some ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and residual isolation/ social distancing guidelines, which include

- Contacts and referrals to the front door showing some unusual trends due to school closures which makes quarter on quarter analysis more complex. Quarter 2 is traditionally much lower due to school summer terms but it remains difficult to understand what are seasonal trends as opposed to the ongoing impact of bubble arrangements and isolation guidelines.
- Delivery of frontline services, especially in terms of face to face visiting and routine reviews, have been adapted to reflect the various isolation requirements to protect both workers and the families we work with.
- Attendance at Children's Centres and Youth Support, whilst initially impacted during the pandemic, are now being delivered within COVID safe guidelines and face to face services are being delivered with increased numbers attending.
- Work around Education and Health Care Plans – especially when assessing children in their "school environment" and "routine" has been increasingly complex and difficult.

6.3. Senior leaders and managers continue to remain sighted on service performance and impact on children and young people through the following:

- A core data set provided to CEMART which includes key measures for Children's Services
- A weekly social care and safeguarding data set from the beginning of February 2020 comparing core data sets with the same week in 2019/20. This has continued into quarter 2 2021-22.
- Weekly attendance at early years settings Department for Education (DfE) dashboard
- National local authority data set submitted to the DfE – originally on a fortnightly basis commencing in May 2020, but this reduced to monthly in Spring 2021.
- Daily dashboard data around school attendance with weekly national comparator data and summary.
- Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Power BI reporting platform that enables the service to have timely information on assessment timescales and reviews due enabling the service to prioritise case loads and requirements.
- A National SEND local authority data set submitted to the DfE on a monthly basis.

- 6.4.** This report contains the indicator set and summary commentary around any areas of concern together with highlighting any different provision/ support that has been put in place during this time.

Children's Social Care

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22
Number of referrals	2273	467	601	454
Percentage of repeat referrals	16%	17%	18%	15%
Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	74%	74%	79%	68%
Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	27.8%	28%	27%	20%
Number of children in need	2082 (Cin census outturn)	1713	1739	1887
Number of children with a child protection plan	236	244	220	234
% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	93.1%	93%	93%	96%
Number of cared for children	518	517	527	519
% of cared for children reviewed within timescales	96%	99%	96%	99%
% of cared for children in internal foster care (including friends and family placements)	35%	35%	35%	34%
% of children living in external foster homes	28%	28%	22%	28%
% of children living in residential homes	8%	8%	7%	6%
% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	28%	28%	28%	27%
% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	48%	51%	47%	48%
% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation	98%	97%	97%	98%
Total number of children with a court endorsed plan of adoption (snapshot figure)	30	30	30	33
Number of children adopted (YTD)	26	26	3	5
Average caseload of social workers	19	19	20	19

- 6.5.** Compared to quarter 1 (Q1) there has been a significant decrease in referrals to social care, which is also substantially lower than the numbers seen in Q2 of 2020/21 at 676. It is difficult however to compare with last year as Q2 last year saw a relaxation of the more stringent COVID-19 isolation rules. Ongoing audit activity suggests that we are seeing appropriate contacts and referrals to the front door and the rate of conversion remains consistent.
- 6.6.** There has been a positive reduction in the re-referral rate in Q2 which is an indicator of sustained change in cases we have previously worked with. The year to date performance of 15% is also significantly better than the latest published North West position of 22.2% and National position of 22.7% (based on the 2020-21 released CIN census data). Re-referrals are regularly audited for any recurring themes.

- 6.7.** Although there was a reduction in the timeliness of assessments being completed within 45 days in Q2, audit activity indicates that this was not to the detriment of individuals being provided with support at an early stage. There was a proactive decision to focus on improved quality of assessment and management oversight which meant that some cases went slightly over the 45 days for formal sign off.
- 6.8.** There is a positive downward trend in the rolling year for the percentage of repeat child protection plans with the actual position for the half year of 2021-22 standing at 11%. Those returning within two years is even lower at only 5.5%. This again is an indicator of more timely and focused intervention with planning and support leading to lasting positive results for families.
- 6.9.** There has been a small reduction in the number of children in care at the end of quarter 2. There are a wide range of approaches being utilised with individuals on the edge of care to provide networks of support and enabling individuals to stay living within their family units.
- 6.10.** Number of adoptions continue to slowly increase with a further 17 individuals living in their adoption placements.

Education and Skills

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22
Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	92%	Not available	Not available	92%
Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	Not available	Not available	80%
Percentage good or outstanding special schools	60%	Not available	Not available	50%
Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date	96%	96%	97%	Not reported for Sept
Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date	93%	93%	93%	Not reported for Sept
Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date	83%	83%	90%	Not reported for Sept
Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest half term available)	5	5	6	Not reported for Sept
Current Number of pupils educated at home	457	457	509	435
Current number of children missing from education.	62	62	58	74
Percentage of Good/ Outstanding PEPs (reported termly)	82%	82%	89%	Not reported for Sept
Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	3013	3013	3142	3277
% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	59%	87%	98%	89%
Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cumulative yr - NB Q4 represents new year - see comments at point 5.19)	37%	85%	86%	75%
Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	19.0	19.0	19.4	20.3
% EHCP annual review completed in timescales	67%	67%	58%	66%

- 6.11.** Whilst it appears that the percentage of special schools judged good or outstanding has reduced this is in fact because there is now an additional school which has not yet been inspected. The local authority now has six schools operating. Of the five that have been inspected 60% are good or outstanding.
- 6.12.** Q2 data is not available for attendance due to the fact that the bulk of the period is during the extended summer break. Attendance at secondary schools is further impacted in July with no year 11 or year 13 attendance following the exam period ending.
- 6.13.** Likewise exclusions data is not available as the latest half term data will relate to the first half of the autumn terms that doesn't end until late October. The exclusions data for Q1 relates to the half term ending July 2021.
- 6.14.** There are a small number of schools that are unable to report currently to the DfE and the Education Service remains in close contact with them to ensure that pupils are attending and any additional support required is identified.
- 6.15.** There has been a reduction in the number of electively home educated individuals (EHE). We implemented a multi-agency pre-deregistration meeting in September 2020, requesting schools to invite the child, parents, professionals involved with the child and local authority to meet to discuss reasons for de-registration and set our local authority expectations, ensuring parents were making an informed choice to electively home educate.
- 6.16.** Although there is an increase in the number of individuals missing from education this is not an immediate cause for concern as there is often an increase in the autumn term as we establish where families have moved away during the summer and not enrolled where expected, together with those who have elected private education. The team works closely with the families and schools concerned to establish where individuals have enrolled.
- 6.17.** Despite a small reduction, quarter 2 performance still demonstrates the success of the work that has been ongoing to increase the availability of Educational Psychologists (EP). We would always expect a small reduction in the summer term due to family availability with holidays and restricted school time to observe individuals in school and routine settings.
- 6.18.** The year end timeliness for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans of 37% represents the outturn reported in January as part of the SEN2 statutory return to the DfE. Q2 performance of 75% therefore reflects the position from January – September 2021. The average time for completion of new plans increased slightly in Q2 but remains in line with national requirements.

- 6.19.** Timely reviews of EHC plans remains a priority and despite the increasing numbers of plans together with new requests there has been a pleasing improvement in the number completed in timescales.

Prevention and Early Help

Measure	Year end 2020/21	Quarter 4 2020/21	Quarter 1 2021/22	Quarter 2 2021/22
Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans (excluding short breaks)	1085	1085	1031	1105
% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	69%	69%	65%	66%
% 0-2 yrs engaged at children centres (most vulnerable i.e. CIN/CP/LAC that have attended 3 or more times in the last 12 months)	23%	21%	20%	29%
% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)	68%	68%	71%	71%
% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)	94%	94%	93%	93%
Number of Families meeting the Supporting People (previously family focus) criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	318 target achieved	74	87	129
Number of young people accessing the youth support service		872	1634	2,050
Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	174	174	172	71
% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	0.95%

- 6.20.** Despite the difficulties services are facing, compared to the same point last year we are supporting more families and young people with an early help assessment. This means that individuals are getting support as soon as possible and we can target help and equip individuals with tools and techniques before issues escalate. Longer term this will hopefully contribute to reduced numbers of individuals requiring specialist interventions and services.
- 6.21.** The number of early help assessments that are led by Cheshire East staff remains static despite the increased numbers with partners now increasingly able to undertake the lead where they are the most appropriate agency. This is in part due to schools being fully opened together with other partner agencies opening more face to face services.
- 6.22.** The take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer reflects the summer position and an updated rate will only be available at the end of the autumn term. Enabling social interaction and group learning at a young age is crucial to development and ensuring that this being supported and provided by our teams and partners has remained a priority.
- 6.23.** The Supporting People Programme (formally family focus programme) has continued following a further 12 month extension to the programme

with a 2021/22 target of 332 payment by results. As at Q2 216 families had been successfully supported and as such we are well ahead in terms of delivering against target.

- 6.24.** Q2 continues to show a significant increase in the number of individuals receiving support from the youth service. This is primarily due to being able to open up more of the group sessions within the revised guidelines and as such a range of summer activities were well attended. Where virtual services have proved successful we will continue to offer a blended approach to maximise the support available.
- 6.25.** The NEET figure is extremely low as at the end of September which reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training. There is always some movement in the autumn term as individuals decide their initial plans may not be the best fit for them personally and we will continue to work closely with all individuals to secure the best outcome.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. There are no direct legal implications.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFS as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of where more or less funding is needed at a service level.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. There are no direct policy implications.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. This report does not impact on climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager Bev.Harding@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None

Work Programme – Children and Families 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
CF/46/21-22	14 Feb 2022	Covid-19 Schools Update (Verbal Update)	To receive a verbal update on the Covid-19 situation in schools.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/15/21-22	14 Feb 2022	Mental Health Spotlight Review - 12 Month Review of Progress	To receive an update on progress against the Mental Health Spotlight review completed by Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Director of Early Help and Prevention	N/A	N/A	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/43/21-22	14 Feb 2022	School Capital/ Organisation - New School/ Expansions	To consider and approve proposals around school capital/ organisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	TBC	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/24/21-22	14 Feb 2022	Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula	To approve the schools funding formula and early years funding formula.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	TBC	TBC	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/30/21-22	24 Mar 2022	12 Month Report on Member Frontline Visits to Safeguarding Teams	To receive an update on the findings from member frontline visits carried out over the last 12 months.	Director of Children's Social Care	N/A	N/A	N/A	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/44/21-22	24 Mar 2022	All Age Carers Strategy	To approve the All Age Carers Strategy.	Director of Commissioning	Yes	Yes	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/28/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Annual report on SEND Recovery Plan	To receive an update on the impact of work over the last 6 months in regards to SEND.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	N/A	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	

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
CF/26/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Children and Families Scorecard Q3	To consider key performance measures.	Interim Director of Children's Services	N/A	N/A	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/48/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Children's Care at Home Re-commission	To approve the arrangements to re-commission Care at Home services.	Director of Commissioning	TBC	Yes	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/47/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Covid-19 Schools Update (Verbal Update)	To receive a verbal update on the Covid-19 situation in schools.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/27/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Home to School Transport Policy	To approve the operational home to school transport policy.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	TBC	TBC	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/25/21-22	24 Mar 2022	School Capital/Organisation - New School/Expansions	To consider and approve proposals around school capital/ organisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	TBC	TBC	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/23/21-22	24 Mar 2022	Self-Evaluation of Children's Services	To receive the self-evaluation of services which shows the quality and impact of services.	Interim Director of Children's Services	N/A	N/A	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/18/21-22	TBC	DSG Management Plan	To receive an update and monitor delivery of the high needs management plan.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	N/A	No	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/39/21-22	TBC	Transition - Support the Council Gives to Disabled Young Adults	To approve the proposal around transition and the support the Council gives to disabled young adults.	Director of Adult Social Services	N/A	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	
CF/52/21-22	May 2022	Family Hub Bid	To receive a report on the Family Hub Bid.	Executive Director Children's Services.	TBC	TBC	TBC	A council which empowers and cares about people	

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
CF/51/21-22	May 2022	Corporate Parenting Strategy	To receive the Corporate Parenting Strategy.	Director of Children's Social Care	TBC	TBC	TBC	A council which empowers and cares about people	

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