

Children and Families Committee

Agenda

Date: Monday, 14th November, 2022
Time: 1.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision-making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings are uploaded to the Council's website.

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable 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 23 September 2022.

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.

Contact: Josie Lloyd
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E-Mail: josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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. **Children's Travel Support Review** (Pages 11 - 120)

To consider a report on the Children's Travel Support Review.

6. **Household Support Fund 3 Grant Delivery** (Pages 121 - 132)

To consider a report on the Household Support Fund.

7. **Financial Review 2022/23** (Pages 133 - 176)

To receive the Financial Review report for 2022/23.

8. **Children and Families Scorecard Q1** (Pages 177 - 186)

To receive the Children and Families quarter 1 scorecard for 2022/23.

9. **School Organisation: Academisation of Schools: Forward Plan** (Pages 187 - 192)

To note the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

10. **Committee Takeover for Children's Rights Month**

Committee takeover session by children and young people for November Children's Rights Month. To present their issues and take questions from committee.

11. **Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021-22**
(Pages 193 - 208)

To receive the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021-22.

12. **Work Programme** (Pages 209 - 212)

To consider the work programme and determine any required amendments.

13. **Minutes of Sub Committees** (Pages 213 - 216)

To note the minutes of the following sub committee meetings:

Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub Committee – 8 June 2022
Corporate Parenting Committee – 6 September 2022

14. **Crewe Youth Zone Project Update** (Pages 217 - 228)

To receive an update on progress for the development of the Crewe Youth Zone.

15. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The reports relating to the remaining items on the agenda have been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matters may be determined with the press and public excluded.

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

16. **Crewe Youth Zone Project Update - Appendix 1** (Pages 229 - 260)

To note the appendix to the report.

17. **Closure of Reach for the Stars Nurseries, Crewe** (Pages 261 - 266)

To consider the report on the closure of nurseries in Crewe.

Membership: Councillors M Addison, L Anderson, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman (Vice-Chair), K Flavell (Chair), A Gregory, 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 Friday, 23rd September, 2022 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 Buckley, S Handley, I Macfarlane,
J Saunders, L Smetham, R Bailey, D Edwardes, A Critchley and S Holland

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Claire Williamson, Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Intervention
Ceri Kay, Principal Lawyer (Childcare)
Steve Reading, Principal Accountant
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer
Shelley Brough, Acting Director of Commissioning and Integration

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Addison, Gregory, Hayes and Smith. Councillors Bailey, Edwardes, Holland and Critchley attended as substitutes.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

33 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

At the Chair's discretion, Ms Rebecca Parkinson attended the meeting to highlight an art project she was arranging for schools in Macclesfield to showcase their artwork within the community. The project was still in the initial stages but had support in place. The committee welcomed the project and would be keen to hear back on its progress.

34 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022/23 TO 2026/27

The committee received the report which sought the approval of the updated Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Officers gave assurances that this was a national issue and that intelligence and feedback from a range of sources, including members and residents, was factored into the mitigation plan.

Concerns were raised by some members which included not understanding the financial risks behind each area of mitigation and the impact if an area of mitigation fails. A motion was moved and seconded which sought to defer the plan until the committee had a full understanding of the financial implications, particularly having an understanding and assurance that there had been a line by line analysis of all planned expenditure. The motion was declared lost.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the DSG Management Plan for 2022/23 to 2026/27.
2. Note the need to pursue external capital funding and review the capital programme to identify additional projects within the DSG management plan as determined by the sufficiency statement.

(The council will be updating its SEN sufficiency statement in autumn 2022. This will set out the additional provision needed over the next five years to further mitigate the overspend and require significant capital investment to deliver).

3. To note that engagement has begun with the DfE's Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme.

35 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: UPDATE ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL, BASFORD EAST, SHAVINGTON, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

The committee received the report which provided an update to the previous committee paper, considered by the Children and Families Committee on 10 January 2022, on the establishment of a new primary school in Basford, Shavington.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. That the committee notes, the summary of the feedback received, including the proposed mitigations, following the 4-week informal representation period which is a required stage in the DfE free school presumption process to allow the opening of a new primary school at Basford East, Shavington.
2. That the committee agrees to the progression of the prescribed free school process in the generation and submission of the draft specification for the new school to the DfE.

36 HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND GRANT – OPEN PROCUREMENT 2022-2025

The committee received the report which sought approval to move to an open procurement procedure, as set out at Regulation 27 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, to spend up to the total amount of the holiday activity fund grant allocated by the Department for Education each financial year.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Approve the Holiday Activity Fund grant to providers to be delivered via the open procedure from the winter programme in 2022 to 2025.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director, Children's Services for the dispersal of funds and contract awards to providers for the delivery of the holiday activity and food programme up to the allocated Holiday Activity Fund grant amount each financial year.
3. Receive an annual report on impact and spend against the Holiday Activity Fund grant.

37 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Q4 SCORECARD 2021/22

The committee received the report which provided an overview of performance against the core indicator set within the three directorate areas of Children's Services.

A request was made for the national benchmark figure for the number of children in care. The Director of Children's Social Care advised that it is a complex position of when the data becomes available but that the data will be shared retrospectively as it had not been available at the time the meeting. It was requested that this information should be shared ahead of the next committee meeting if available.

A further request was made for the report to include links with the Corporate Plan and it was agreed that this would be taken forward.

A query was raised regarding dental checks within the last 12 months for cared for children as the quarterly figure appeared to vary from the annual figure. It was agreed that a written response would be provided.

Cllr Handley left the meeting during this item and did not return.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee note the performance of children's services for quarter 4.

38 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The committee received the report which detailed the progress and achievements over 2021-22 against the five pledges the Council has made to cared for children and care leavers in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee endorse the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2021-22 as set out at Appendix 1.

39 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS: FORWARD PLAN

The committee received the report which provided information on planned schools across the borough which were seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust. This was a standing item brought to each committee meeting.

It was noted that, since publication of the agenda, Oakfield Lodge had converted.

RESOLVED:

That the committee receives and notes the summary table (Appendix 1) showing the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

40 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

41 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the following sub committees be noted:

Local Authority School Governor Nomination Sub Committee 30 March 2022

Corporate Parenting Committee 15 March 2022

Corporate Parenting Committee 28 June 2022

42 REPORTING OF OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee note the officer delegated decision which had been taken since the previous meeting.

43 ALL AGE CARERS HUB

In accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to an additional item of business relating to the All Age Carers Hub on the grounds that the matter could not wait until the next meeting as the contract needed to be signed. This was dealt with as a verbal update.

On 6 October 2021, the Children and Families Committee received a report on the All Age Carers Hub and Strategy and gave approval for the recommission of the All Age Carers Hub contract, ending in December 2022, with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group. Since that decision was taken, it had not been possible to jointly commission in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council and, therefore, committee was being asked to note that the re-commissioning would no longer be a joint venture and give approval to continue with the delegation of authority to the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration to award the All Age Carers Hub contract.

It was noted that there had been no change to the budget or the model.

A query was raised as to whether there would be any compromise to the service delivered and assurances were given that there would be no change to the local provision in Cheshire East.

Concerns were raised regarding this urgent business being dealt with verbally and without a briefing paper. Cllr Bailey expressed a concern as she was in attendance as a substitute member and therefore did not have sufficient background information to support this and would have to vote against. Officers gave assurances that learning would be taken forward.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Acknowledge that the recommissioning of the All Age Carers Hub is no longer a joint venture with Cheshire West and Chester Council.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration to award the All Age Carers Hub contract.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 15:16

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 November 2022
Report Title:	Children's Travel Support Review
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services Jayne Traverse, Executive Director of Place
Report Reference No:	CF/22/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The current arrangements for providing travel support for children and young people are unsustainable. This report sets out the findings from an independent review of travel support for children and young people. It seeks endorsement and delegated authority from the children and families committee to roll out a three-year transformation and modernisation plan to respond to the review findings and recommendations.
- 1.2. The requirement for the review was set out in the council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS). This recognised the budget pressures as a result of the significant increase in pupil numbers, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The 2022/23 school transport budget was temporarily increased whilst a review was carried out to understand the ongoing demand led pressures and ensure appropriate strategies are in place to achieve a financially sustainable position.
- 1.3. Travel support is provided to some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children and young people. Whilst efficiencies must be made to reduce the pressures on the school transport budget, it is essential that these are developed together with parents, carers and other stakeholders to ensure that these maximise the opportunities to improve the experiences and

outcomes of our children and young people. A comprehensive communication, consultation and engagement plan is being developed.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The MTFs approved by full council in February 2022 recognised the budget pressure on home to school transport. Pupil numbers, particularly those with SEND, have significantly increased over recent years. In response £1.2m was added to the 2022/23 transport budget to help manage demand, with an additional amount of up to £1m of COVID-19 funding to be drawn down to support the service. Both of these allocations were one-off amounts.
- 2.2. The MTFs stated that during 2022/23 there would be a review of travel support for children and young people to understand the ongoing demand led pressures and ensure appropriate strategies are in place to achieve a financially sustainable position.
- 2.3. The company, Edge Public Solutions (Edge), was appointed to carry out the independent review. The review report, which is now complete, sets out a number of findings and identifies the recommendations and actions needed to reduce the budget pressures and improve the customer experience in relation to sustainable travel support for children and young people over the next three years.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:
 - a. Note and agree the report contents and the underlying principles and cultural change set out in the independent review of travel support for children and young people at Appendix 1.
 - b. Endorse the proposal to procure specialist professional capacity, funded from the children and families transformation fund, to drive the initial transformation plans, achievable savings and establishment of the integrated travel support team.
 - c. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children and Families, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, to make decisions in relation to:
 - i. The roll out of a three-year transformation and modernisation programme to deliver the recommendations in the report, including a new strategy and integrated travel team, supported by clear performance and budget management reporting and consultation, communication and engagement with stakeholders.
 - ii. Proposal to streamline and revise the school transport policy and process from application to delivery, including a new application, reassessment and appeals process and the immediate, in year

- (2022/23) development of alternative travel solutions, such as personal budgets and independent travel training.
- iii. Proposals to embark on a comprehensive exercise around the operational delivery and re-procurement of school transport to improve the effectiveness of routes, encourage and support new suppliers to Cheshire East, improve value-for-money and the experiences for families.
 - iv. Developing a business case for investment for small capital schemes to improve safe walking routes on potential high-volume routes, including the production of an agreed protocol and strategy for implementing safe walking routes and supporting the council's priority outcomes for active travel and decarbonisation.
- d. Agree to receive interim reports around specific actions that require committee approval, along with an initial update report within six months and annually thereafter.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The costs of travel support for children and young people have increased significantly over recent years and are continuing to put pressure on the council's budget. The MTFS approved by full council in February 2022 included a temporary uplift in the travel support budget to address the financial pressures in 2022-23 whilst an independent review is carried out.
- 4.2. The recommendations set out in this report respond to the findings and recommendations of the independent review, including the benefits of the proposed changes, eg, independent travel training and personal travel budgets, for children and young people.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. There are number of risks and impacts in doing nothing or implementing only some of the recommendations in the review report.
- 5.2. If the council does not carry out all the recommendations, then the ambitious savings set out by the review will not be achieved. The council would not be able to sustain the existing school transport arrangements due to budget pressures.
- 5.3. The full engagement with stakeholders is essential to make the cultural change needed to transform travel support services. It is expected that parental dissatisfaction would increase without their involvement which would lead to an increase in complaints.
- 5.4. Sufficient professional capacity will be required to lead and deliver transformation. This needs to be in addition to the staffing required to deliver the day-to-day operations. It is essential that those leading the change have the skills and practical knowledge travel support for children and young people to be effective.

6. Background

- 6.1. The local authority is required by both the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make travel arrangements for certain eligible children to attend school. This includes the duty to promote sustainable modes of travel for children and young people of compulsory school age.
- 6.2. In recent years there has been an increase in demand for school transport, in particular in relation to children with SEND. SEND passenger numbers grew 32% from March 2020 to March 2022; this had increased to 49% by October 2022. The increase in SEND passengers is forecast to increase by 180 new SEND passengers each year, based on the assumption that 30% of the 600 projected new EHCPs per year require transport. These are likely to require more costly out of borough placements. The increase in SEND pupils has been considered at length by committee and the overall strategy remains the same; to continue to increase local provision and enhance SEND support services to ensure needs are met in the most effective way.
- 6.3. The costs of providing transport have also increased significantly due to a reduction in the supply of transport providers and an increase in their running costs. The council approved a one-year increased budget for 2022-23, whilst a full review was carried out.
- 6.4. There were significant changes in the school transport arrangements in April 2022, when existing functions and staff from Transport Service Solutions (TSS) transferred to the council. There were risks associated with the smooth running of this transfer and so the review was commissioned as soon as possible following this.
- 6.5. EDGE Public Solutions was appointed to carry out the independent review. The terms of reference for the review were to identify improvements and actions that could lead to budget savings and better experiences for service users, in particular in the following areas:
- Statutory requirements of the local authority
 - Management and accountability around school transport
 - Supply of, and demand for, travel support for children and young people in Cheshire East
 - Budget and data management and information
 - Efficient use of resources, including where transport may be the most cost-effective solution
 - Cultural change required
- 6.6. The final review report is attached at Appendix 1. The Edge report includes an outline implementation plan, timeline and financial improvement plan

and sets out a number of findings and recommendations under the following key areas:

- Organisation – resources, systems and performance
- Policy, assessment and shifting the travel offer
- Delivery

Organisation – resources, systems and performance

- 6.7. The report sets out a number of proposals around the organisation and strategy for travel support (recommendations GS1 to GS5). These include a three-year transformation programme, which will require significant work with all stakeholders and the wider council to ensure cultural changes are embedded.
- 6.8. The report proposes that all aspects of travel delivery are integrated into a dedicated travel team with a joined-up strategy, corporate wide support and overall accountability for total expenditure. There are a number of options for how this team would be configured and where it would sit within the council.
- 6.9. We propose to procure the services of a suitably qualified and experienced person as soon as possible, funded through the children and families transformation funding for up to 18 months. The consultant will be tasked with bringing together the implementation plan with realistic timescales and savings targets from the baseline position in November 2022 (the date when contracts are stabilised for the school year). The consultant will also identify options and establish the new team and strategy required to embed the proposed changes. A ‘payment by results’ arrangement in the commission for the consultant will be considered, if appropriate.
- 6.10. Work is already underway to improve the performance and budget information to ensure that progress can be monitored and scrutinised.
- 6.11. We intend to work together with schools, parents and other stakeholders to develop our new ways of working. This includes exploring further delivery options, eg, working with schools on travel options for some children and young people.

Policy, Assessment and shifting the travel offer

- 6.12. The proposals around the policy, assessment and shifting the travel offer (recommendations P1 to P18) include streamlining and revising the school transport policy and process from application to delivery. This includes a new application, reassessment and appeals process and the development of alternative travel solutions, such as personal budgets and independent travel training.
- 6.13. It is important that we work closely with parents on the new policy to ensure clarity, transparency and consistency. We will also ensure that major

changes are carried out in a phased way that is sensitive to the impact of these changes on children and their families. Whilst it is important to make a cultural shift in the delivery of travel support, we also need to acknowledge that there will be some children who continue to need 'door to door' transport.

- 6.14. The promotion of alternative travel solutions will be a key part of the strategy, with the aim of preparing young people for adulthood and supporting parents with a more effective personal travel budget option. Assessment and reassessment processes will need to be carefully managed and have the support of schools and settings.
- 6.15. There is not currently an application process from parents for SEND transport as this is part of the EHCP process. Although this is a priority, this will be a significant piece of work and require closer working between the SEND and transport teams to align with existing processes,
- 6.16. With proposed changes in transport policy, appeals are likely to increase and it is essential that we have an effective group that understands the policy and can ensure that decision making aligns with this.
- 6.17. Independent travel training is tailored and practical help for disabled children and young people to travel by transport, on foot or by bike. It aims to help children and young people travel independently and without fear so they can get to school or college, work and for social and leisure activities. This training is not currently available in Cheshire East and we would want this to be a core part of our offer for those young people who would benefit in preparing for adulthood.
- 6.18. The development of personal budgets needs to be a priority as this has the potential to make savings and improve parental experiences quicker. We will need to work with parents and education settings to simplify the current process for these. We would aim to pilot this as an option as soon as possible for new applications.
- 6.19. The review recommends that the council harmonise the post-16, spare seat and bespoke scheme charges and bring into line with other authorities and reflect inflation. This would result in an increase in charges for these families. This will be done in a phased manner, sensitively and those affected will be consulted in line with statutory guidance. Eligible families will be signposted to the government's 16-19 bursary scheme, where appropriate.
- 6.20. The local authority is required by law to make school travel arrangements where a route is not available for a child to walk to school in reasonable safety. A number of children under the statutory distance from school in

Cheshire East are eligible for free school transport as a result of this. Cheshire East's available walking routes to school programme, established in 2016, proposed that a number of routes be re-assessed as available walking routes to school and free school transport for those routes be withdrawn. Following significant pressure from both parents and some members, not all of these routes were withdrawn.

Operational Delivery

- 6.21. The proposals around the operational delivery of travel support (recommendations TD1 to TD21) include proposals to embark on a comprehensive exercise around the operational delivery and re-procurement of school transport to maximise routes, encourage and support new suppliers to Cheshire East and improve the experiences for families.
- 6.22. Engaging and shaping the supply market around school travel will be an essential priority within the transformation programme. This includes a council wide approach to improving our systems and processes to commission and retain more operators into Cheshire East.
- 6.23. Whilst proposed changes to existing routing and procurement will achieve significant benefits in the longer term, it will involve significant work and upheaval for children, schools, parents, staff and operators to implement these recommendations. The review recommends an approach which includes batch tendering, for example, using batching to ensure all contracts receive more bids by placing potentially unpopular routes/contracts with more popular ones and stipulating bids will only be considered for all of them together. It also recommends reverse auctioning, which is a form of procurement whereby the council would approach transport operators for bids to provide a contract, with a specification of minimum requirements. Companies tendering for the contract would bid progressively lower prices, with the lowest priced bid winning the contract.
- 6.24. There will be challenges in re-routing, batching tenders and reverse auctioning that will need to be managed carefully with all those affected. The passenger charter will be essential in establishing expectations.
- 6.25. We are keen to build our relationships with suppliers and to regulate performance reviews. This includes ensuring that we have a two-way dialogue, and we can feedback from others, including schools. Having the right management information to measure the impact of this transformation programme will be key. Performance and other key information also need to be accessible in a user-friendly way to others such as parents, schools and operators.

Proposed governance arrangements

- 6.26. Strategic oversight for implementation of the review will be through the children and families directorate management team (DMT), in consultation with place DMT. The senior responsible officer is the Director of Education and Skills.
- 6.27. Directors and heads of service from the children and families and place directorates meet monthly to discuss and monitor any issues and risks in relation to the delivery of travel support for children and young people.
- 6.28. A steering group of key stakeholders was established to oversee the review. To date this has been chaired by the Director of Education and Skills includes staff from children and families, place and corporate services. The terms of reference and membership of this group will be reviewed to ensure that this is fit for purpose to inform the implementation of the review.
- 6.29. Future reports in relation to statutory consultations and six-monthly updates on progress against the implementation plan will be presented to the children and families committee.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1. TOGETHER is our shared definition of coproduction in Cheshire East and the review was carried out together with our key stakeholders, including parent/carers, young people, our staff and providers. Other stakeholders including transport operators, schools and settings were also be consulted as part of the review.
- 7.2. Implementation of the recommendations of the review will result in further consultation and engagement with all interested parties.
- 7.3. The DfE's home to school travel and transport statutory guidance states the following:

'Local authorities should consult widely on any proposed changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements with all interested parties. Consultations should last for at least 28 working days during term time. This period should be extended to take account of any school holidays that may occur during the period of consultation. Good practice suggests that the introduction of any such changes should be phased-in so that children who start under one set of transport arrangements continue to benefit from them until they either conclude their education at that school or choose to move to another school. Parents make school choices based on, amongst other things, the home to school transport arrangements for a particular school, and any changes might impact adversely on individual family budgets.'

7.4. Proposed changes to Cheshire East's arrangements will be carried out in line with national guidance. Cheshire East's revised policies will be reported back to the children and families committee, as required.

7.5. **Implications**

7.6. **Legal**

7.6.1. The local authority is required by both the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make suitable travel arrangements for eligible children to attend school. This includes the duty to promote sustainable modes of travel for children and young people of compulsory school age. The government has also issued statutory guidance called Home-to-school travel and transport guidance 2014.

7.6.2. This means that a local authority is under a duty to have regard to it when carrying out their duties in relation to home to school travel and transport and sustainable travel.

7.6.3. Legal services will be consulted with the review to ensure that statutory guidance is considered. If and to the extent that the transformation plan calls for the procurement of new transport services; or the re-procurement of existing services in line with the stated goals of the plan; the Legal Contracts and Procurement Team will support the procurement team with any required procurement activity. Pending finalisation of the plan, Legal has no other observations to make at this stage.

7.7. **Finance**

7.7.1. The Edge report is based on a consultant's forecast during the review period (March – July 2022) which members should consider against the latest financial position to be reported at mid-year review (MYR). The current indicative position is a £2.5m forecast overspend.

7.7.2. The budgetary pressures around school transport are increasing due to increasing numbers of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) requiring transport, the increased costs of contracts due to a reduced number of suppliers and the impact of fuel inflation.

7.7.3. As of September 2022, there are a number of contracts that have been handed back and the estimated £2.5m pressure is likely to increase by a further £1m. This will be confirmed later in 2022 when the contract costs have stabilised. This will provide a baseline position for 2022 from which the achievable savings can be agreed and reported back to committee.

7.7.4. The financial improvement plan suggested by the Edge report are set out at Appendix 2. The achievability of the £2.1m annual savings proposed at the end of the 3 years will have to be carefully considered to establish whether they are deliverable in the current climate of increased demand, national

inflationary increases and deflated market conditions. Either way the result is expected to be a net increase in transport costs.

7.7.5. It should be highlighted that SEND transport provision is anticipated to increase in future years, in line with EHCP referrals, which will significantly increase cost pressures. There is currently no further growth identified in the MTFS for an increase in transport provision for the next 3 years. This will place a significant pressure on base budget. An MTFS business case will be needed to include the investment (both capital and revenue) in order to secure an interim budget and deliver any agreed savings.

7.8. **Policy**

7.8.1. The review proposes a number of policy change in relation to travel support and school transport for children and young people. These will be carried out in line with relevant consultation and approval processes.

7.9. **Equality**

7.9.1. A significant number of existing travel arrangements are put in place for children with SEND and are accessible to meet their needs.

7.9.2. We will ensure that any changes to policies, services and practice do not discriminate against any particular groups and, where possible, we will promote equality of opportunity.

7.9.3. An initial equality impact assessment (EIA) around the overarching proposals is attached at Appendix 3. Detailed EIAs will also be completed to consider the impact of individual key changes on protected groups, where appropriate.

7.10. **Human Resources**

7.10.1. Additional capacity will be needed initially to support the implementation of the review and to establish the integrated team. It is proposed that this capacity is commissioned through the council's agreed frameworks. This will be through a competitive process to ensure that we commission those with the appropriate skills and expertise to deliver the proposed change programme in this specialist area.

7.10.2. Council processes will be followed in establishing the new team, including consultation with staff, unions etc, where appropriate.

7.11. **Risk Management**

7.11.1. There is a risk that, without additional capacity to drive the transformation programme, the pace and impact of change will not be achieved. The proposal to commission additional capacity with the skills and expertise to drive change in this specialist area it expected to mitigate against this risk.

- 7.11.2. There is a risk that the review does not mitigate against pressures on the school transport budgets and/or that costs associated with travel support for children and young people continue to rise. It is proposed that the children and families committee and senior managers within the council will regularly monitor and scrutinise this risk through performance and budget update reports.
- 7.11.3. There is a risk that with the continued increased demand for education, health and care plans means that the pressure on the budget continues. This is being addressed and reported separately through the DSG management plan.
- 7.11.4. There are risks to the current delivery of home to school provision due to the capacity for driver and vehicle availability locally being reached. This is being monitored and managed closely by teams within the council. The proposed changes to operational delivery and re-procurement of school transport set out in the review aim to increase the availability and supply of travel solutions in Cheshire East.
- 7.11.5. Changes to available walking routes have previously been highly contentious in Cheshire East and attempts to make changes have been met with political and parental resistance. As a result, there is a risk that members may be reluctant to endorse changes in relation to available walking routes.
- 7.11.6. A risk management framework will be established as part of the new governance arrangements to oversee implementation of the review's recommendations.

7.12. **Rural Communities**

- 7.12.1. Home to school transport provision has a significant impact in reducing the effects of rural isolation and access to learning. Therefore, any proposals to improve the delivery and customer experience for these services supports our rural communities.
- 7.12.2. The statutory provision of free home-to-school transport is based on minimum thresholds of distance-to-school at 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary pupils. These criteria mean that the pupils eligible for free home-to-school transport are disproportionately resident in rural areas of the borough.
- 7.12.3. Any options as a result of the review will take into consideration the current geography and accessibility of transport in Cheshire East.

7.13. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.13.1. Children, young people and their parents are key stakeholders in the review. Wherever possible, the proposed changes will aim to improve their experiences and/or mitigate against any negative impact.

7.14. Public Health

7.14.1. Supporting children, young people and their families to engage in physical activity helps people live well and for longer. The provision of walking and cycling routes to school and promoting active travel, including safer walking routes to school is in line with our Public Health priorities.

7.15. Climate Change

7.15.1. Wherever possible our re-procurement of travel support we will aim to benefit climate change through maximising shared transport arrangements, ie, larger vehicles, shared taxis etc. Initiatives such as independent travel training, cycle to school and available walking routes all make a positive contribution to the council’s carbon reduction ambition. However, this is not always possible, in particular where children with SEND need to travel to more specialist provision, sometimes outside of Cheshire East.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Travel support for children and young people: Independent review findings and recommendations Appendix 2 – Edge review financial improvement plan
Background Papers:	Report to children and families committee outlining proposed review, May 2022 Home to school travel and transport guidance. Statutory guidance for local authorities

Cheshire East Council
Travel Support for Children & Young People
Review findings and recommendations

Transport arrangements for children and young people have significantly changed over recent years.

A rise in those eligible for travel, in particular children with special educational needs (SEND), along with increasing challenges of identifying effective transport supply have impacted on both the cost of travel and the experiences of our children and young people who use these services.

The recent re-organisation of delivery with a return of the service from TSS, to a CEC managed service presents both an opportunity for improvement and a challenge to ensure effective organisation.

This review explored options to reduce the pressure on the travel support budget and improve the effectiveness and customer experience in relation to providing sustainable travel support.

The review gathered information and feedback to help understand the current position, identify options for change and make recommendations.

Richard Hall

July 2022

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1.0 OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

Overview

- 1.1 In March 2022, Cheshire East Council provided daily travel support for 3,557 children and young people with 2,609 attending mainstream schools and settings, 925 attending specialist provision and 23 in other settings. This vital service enables children and young people to attend a learning environment that meets their needs as close as possible to where they live.
- 1.2 The service has represented a challenge to manage effectively and forecast costs with certainty. Budgets are split across the Children and Families and Place directorates and the service is currently forecasting an overall funding requirement of £17.98million for 2022/23. However, the agreed budget, including additional medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) funding to mitigate some of the pressures, has been agreed as £15.29million, presenting the service with an in-year budget challenge of £2.69million.
- 1.3 The council has conducted some outline analysis to understand the reasons for the budget risks and challenges, which are largely explained by increases in the demand for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) transport and increasing contractor prices. In March 2022 the service was transporting 925 SEND passengers which was 83 more than in September 2021 and 32% more than pre pandemic levels in March 2020 when only 697 passengers were being transported.
- 1.4 According to a children and families departmental management team (DMT) report in January 2022, there has been a 32% increase in the average cost per SEND pupil from £6,028 per passenger per annum in March 2020 (pre-pandemic) to £7,928 as at October 2021.
- 1.5 Projections indicate that SEND pupils requiring transport will increase by 156 pupils each year. This is based on the council's designated schools grant (DSG) management plan assumption of 520 net new children with an education health and care plan (EHCP) each year and with 30% of these needing transport.
- 1.6 There is a view from some council officers that the service offer and the granting of entitlement for transport is 'generous' and that decisions are made which are risk averse and in the context of high parental expectation. The way that eligibility decisions are applied in practice are out of line with some

- other local authorities who have moved to a very clear offer of statutory minimum levels of service.
- 1.7 The council's transport arrangements were commissioned by Transport Service Solutions (TSS), an arms-length company of Cheshire East Council, up until April 2022 from when a new model was deployed which resulted in the strategic, planning, commissioning and procurement of services being delivered directly by the council and transferred the existing functions from TSS between the council's Children and Families Directorate and Place Directorate.
- 1.8 This return from TSS has presented the challenge of ensuring that accountability for key tasks sits in the right places and that resources applied are appropriate for the tasks. This has further coincided with the challenges of COVID-19 and its impact on the availability of supply; it is reported in an internal audit that there has been a 23.6% decline in licenced vehicles and a 21.7% decrease in licenced drivers in the borough over the last 3 years.
- 1.9 Whilst a key rationale for the return of the service from TSS was greater clarity of accountability and a better integrated approach, there are still evident concerns about how the organisation is set up to deliver travel effectively, in a coordinated fashion, and with clear accountability.

Scope & approach

- 1.10 This report is the culmination of a 3 months review of key areas including an examination of how Cheshire East Council (CEC) delivers its statutory travel support requirements to children and young people. Essentially this means an examination of travel provided to mainstream and SEND children travelling to school and provided travel support for social care reasons such as for contact visits, respite etc.
- 1.11 The review includes an examination of the organisation, roles and responsibilities, processes, supply market value, procurement practices, routing, systems used, performance culture and customer expectation and management. This necessitated a detailed review of end-to-end process from the identification of the initial travel need, policy, offer, delivery and overall strategy for the service.
- 1.12 The key to identifying opportunities for change has been the collection of financial data, route data, prices from suppliers as well as other empirical evidence through examining processes and interviewing key stakeholders involved in delivering the travel process.

- 1.13 A range of interviews, group feedback sessions and surveys have been conducted with schools, current and potential suppliers, parents, and users across a wide range of settings.
- 1.14 The geography of the area is largely rural and the council has a limited public transport network. Therefore, efforts have been made to develop a benchmark comparison with local authorities which are broadly comparable and using data that we have been able to verify. Comparison is a good starting point to indicate lines of enquiry and potential opportunities but cannot replace in depth analysis of the bespoke factors

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2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall findings

- 2.1 As of March 2022, the council provided daily home to school transport to 2,609 mainstream passengers to reach 51 different schools and establishments and 925 SEN passengers to 130 schools and establishments. This is delivered through 527 routes with suppliers drawn from an approved list on a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework which has 150 suppliers.
- 2.2 The total annual forecasted net cost of the service for 2022/23, which includes transport elements such as public bus and concessionary fares, is £17.98m. This is set against an agreed budget for 2022/23 of £15.29m. The table below outlines the headline requirement, budget agreed and the consequent budget pressures.

Place	Agreed 22/23 budget	22/23 forecasted requirement	In year pressure/net of extra funds to mitigate
Public bus	1,968,649		
Concessionary Fares	2,294,758		
Transport/Commissioning/Management	1,439,720		
Sub Total	5,179,280	5,703,127	523,847
Children and Families	Agreed 22/23 budget	22/23 forecasted requirement	In year pressure/net of extra funds to mitigate
Mainstream	2,777,460		
SEN	4,945,908		
LAC	405,418		
Post 16	1,175,772		
Admin	425,508		
Management/Flexi-link	376,295		
Sub Total	10,106,361	12,277,779	2,171,418
Total	15,285,641	17,980,906	2,695,265

- 2.3 The gross pressures on the budget include £3,348,252 of SEND passenger growth pressure and a necessity to reflect the Confederation of Passenger Transport inflationary factor of 3.7% on home to school contracts which amounts to £358,000 and 10% inflation applied to Local Bus which is £295,000. These pressures are partially mitigated by MTFs funding which leaves an overall net pressure of £2,695,265.
- 2.4 The final reality of an inflationary offer had not yet been confirmed by June 2022 but the options being considered indicated that a further pressure of around £300,000 is likely to be the result.
- 2.5 The forecasted costs for 2022/23 are based on sound assumptions, albeit a budget has not been set to accommodate all forecasted costs, and therefore efficiencies will need to be identified and delivered in year.
- 2.6 Overall SEND costs and the cost per SEND passenger are increasing rapidly. The total annual current contracted cost for SEND passengers is £8,463,000 for 925 passengers, extrapolated from current spend which has been carefully considered along with in-year growth to identify the pressures to the budget above. Current performance equates to a cost per SEND passenger on contracted transport per annum of £9,149, again from the current costs extrapolated, which is significantly higher than most other similar authorities and represents a considerable increase in recent years and has continued to rise since January 2022.
- 2.7 If comparisons are made to other local authority passenger transport operations, then CEC is challenged because of rural geography and a lack of public transport availability. This results in a larger than normal proportion of mainstream passengers being transported by more costly dedicated contracted supply rather than public bus routes. In recent years the number of licensed drivers has decreased at a greater rate than the average elsewhere. These factors present market supply and resultant procurement value challenges. However, we were able to compare with similar authorities and identify successfully implemented opportunities.
- 2.8 A clear strategy for travel is now imperative to ensure the delivery of a sustainable operation and it is essential that a plan to mitigate demand and supply pressures and improve service is developed.
- 2.9 The service must be cautious of continuing to perpetuate high user expectation if it aspires to reduce costs in line with available budgets and mitigate the costs of increasing demand. If the service does not commit to re-setting the culture of high expectation and to delivering an offer which is more closely aligned with minimum statutory obligations then it must be cognisant of the cost of this and of rising demand and the fact that the current approach is not best supporting the life-long needs of passengers in terms of independence.

- 2.10 **By embarking on a fundamental service transformation over the next 3 years then there is an opportunity to deliver significant savings against forecasted expenditure of at least £2.15million per annum and make improvements to quality of service and future proof the service to mitigate as much as possible the cost of future demand.**
- 2.11 Further cost avoidance is likely through improvements to the SEND transport assessment processes that will reduce potential future passenger demand. However, this cost avoidance is challenging to predict accurately.
- 2.12 The benefits of delivering the opportunities identified are set out in detail in a 3-year financial improvement plan in section 9. These should be considered in the context of the requirement for significant resources to deliver a transformation over 3 years and a sensible range of expected savings that are deliverable should be established.
- 2.13 Success will be dependent on fully implementing a range of initiatives across four critical themes,
- I. Better controlling and significantly developing the supply market. This includes introducing more competitive procurement processes and managing a complex engagement of potential new supply, re-engaging with current supply, and re-procuring all contracts. This will significantly benefit from a fundamental re-routing overhaul.
 - II. Tightening controls and decision making against clear eligibility criteria together with the re-setting of parental expectations. This will include moving to a service offering travel solutions such as personal budgets, travel training and the promotion of life-long independence. It will also require robust periodic re-assessment of passenger needs.
 - III. Improving integration of the roles and functions involved in the delivery of travel which will lead to a clear cross council strategy and tactical decision making. Creating clear accountability for strategy, policy, assessment, and cost of delivery will be key and can be supported by a reorganisation into an integrated team, better end-to-end data flow, communications, and improved use of the systems currently available.
 - IV. Introducing a passenger charter outlining what parents and passengers can expect from the Integrated Travel Team in terms of how service is delivered, service levels and how changes to travel arrangements will be delivered to help reduce anxiety and improve communication.

- 2.14 Detailing the above themes, this report will show how the formation of an Integrated Travel Team (ITT) will be a building block to success. The service must make better use of technological advances and exploit the functionality and resultant benefits of a seamless database and IT system.
- 2.15 Implementation of the review findings will present a significant challenge and require political support as well as the need to raise the profile of travel strategically across CEC to allow senior support for the changes required.
- 2.16 The provision of overall leadership and significant resources to implement a complex range of sustainable service improvement initiatives over the next 3 years will be critical. Care must be taken to ensure changes consider the impact on children. In this respect, careful communications and risk assessment will be critical. With significant change to arrangements and the acute impact this will have on children, then it is proposed that the full package of transformation be carefully communicated. This will include spelling out changes, commitments, and rationale with timelines to set expectation.
- 2.17 Following agreement to this reports' recommendations then detailed timelines and resource planning should be conducted along with identification of options to secure transformation resources with the skills and expertise required before commencement in January 2023.

Summary observations & recommendations

Service organisation

- 2.18 Travel management is not currently integrated, with small teams straddling the Children and Families and Place directorates. This has contributed to a lack of clear accountability for key aspects of travel such as total expenditure, ownership of a clear joined-up strategy, and an agreed direction for the future development of the service.
- 2.19 Assessment, entitlement decision making and policy ownership are detached from daily transport management and further detached from Contracts and Performance. Improved integration is recommended with the current Children's Transport, Transport Operations and the Contracts & Performance team coming together into one team. This is best achieved by a re-organisation to integrate the transport delivery functions into an Integrated Travel Team.

- 2.20 Analysis has determined that the current level of resource is slightly below the level required for an operation of this size and complexity and it is recommended that at least 2 further full time equivalent (FTE) staff are added. Resources should be re-aligned to reflect the additional focus areas required such as developing personal transport budgets (PTBs), travel training and forming one dedicated Head of Service level role for the new ITT.
- 2.21 Integration will be supported by better using data and systems. Efforts must be made to improve data quality and integrity contained in the system, Mobisoft Transport Centre (MTC) so that its full functionality is utilised. This includes its ability to forecast expenditure, produce performance reporting and be used as a fully integrated assessment system, and therefore mitigate clunky communication and manual re-entry of passenger data across the travel process.

Operational effectiveness

- 2.22 Around £11 million per annum is spent on contracted suppliers, but it is challenging to prove that this expenditure is good value. The average cost per SEN passenger is £9,108 per annum which is more than £3,000 per annum more than the average of the benchmark group of county councils. Whilst cost per passenger comparison with other local authorities provide only headline indications and does not consider potential mitigating reasons for poorer value, there is compelling evidence that contract prices are significantly more expensive per mile than those achieved in other comparable authorities.
- 2.23 Opportunity to improve contract value is shown to be most stark when contract prices are compared to the local standard tariff private hire market. Short journeys of around 10 miles cost three times as much across average contracted supply than the standard taxi tariff, and four times as much for journeys carried out of 20 miles or more. We normally expect only a 30% premium for contracted routes therefore 300% premium is extraordinary. This is likely to indicate how important council work is to suppliers in the area and an opportunity to achieve better prices.
- 2.24 Despite the challenges of proving value, by examining practices and processes there is clearly an opportunity make improvements which, from our experience and evidence, will improve value if implemented.

- 2.25 The Contracts and Performance team report that there are areas of fragile supply and therefore poor competition for some contracts. Despite rising prices and potential supply issues it has been challenging for the team, due to lack of resources, to deliver a mitigating strategy, to apply significant activity and focus to proactively identifying and engaging new suppliers to support increasing competition. The review identified 200 potential new suppliers of bus and private hire across only the nine main towns that could serve the Cheshire East area with a small number of companies that could serve more than one town, so some overlap.
- 2.26 Whilst the review concluded that there is an opportunity to better engage the supply market, it also evidenced that the council currently still performs better than the benchmark group with 150 active suppliers on a functioning dynamic purchasing system (DPS). Nevertheless, it is recommended that a concerted and strategic exercise is conducted to identify, ignite, and educate the supply market on the availability of work and the tendering process.
- 2.27 Better contract value will also be driven by using a more competitive procurement process. There is compelling evidence to indicate that the procurement process is not maximising value.
- 2.28 After successfully developing a healthier and better engaged number of suppliers on the DPS it is recommended that electronic reverse auctioning is utilised to evaluate bids for contracts. This will provide all bidders with information on the best priced bid and enable them further chances to bid their best possible price. When conducted well this is proven to drive much improved competitive value.
- 2.29 A critical initiative to enable an increase in competition is to further develop the tactical bundling of contracts where appropriate. Whilst the council does offer the ability for suppliers to offer prices for bundles this could be developed further to force bids for bundles, where appropriate to include unpopular routes. *Some* local authorities have experienced success with one school one provider arrangements. This is complex and does not always drive better value, therefore any further development must be progressed with caution, nevertheless there will certainly be opportunities to bundle some routes into one tender.

- 2.30 There is evidence that the contracting process could be stifling competition. Whilst there are 35 different contract end dates, these are largely batched into 6 different periods of time, and this may prevent many suppliers bidding for new work when contracts come up as they are working full capacity, therefore reducing the number of bidders and therefore competition. It is recommended that end dates are synchronised into 3 tranches of contract end dates on a geographic basis.
- 2.31 Whilst an open DPS is in place, suppliers report that it is not possible to access the DPS aside from in periods when a window opens for new applications. This frustrates suppliers who move on to find other work using their valuable capacity and therefore it is recommended to routinely allow new suppliers to apply at any time.
- 2.32 There has been a 23.6% decrease in licenced vehicles (higher than the 15.9% decrease in England since 2020). There has also been a 21.7% reduction in licenced drivers over the past 3 years in the council area. Efforts must be made to attract new drivers and make the licencing process as appealing as possible. There is evidence that CEC are more stringent than many councils, for example, insisting on a 5weeks college course to become licenced, and it is recommended that this is reviewed.
- 2.33 Engaging, developing, and understanding the supply market will provide the team with the confidence to take back control of driving competitive value through procurement and contract management and reduce the perceived risk of de-stabilising suppliers through a routing overhaul and other improvement initiatives. Providing extra resources to sensitively manage the changes for children and parents in the initial transformation phase will be a necessity.
- 2.34 By developing a range of initiatives to improve the supply base and competition there is a conservative opportunity to improve contract prices by an overall average of at least 5% which will deliver £590,000 per annum in better value. This opportunity has been reduced from normal expectations to reflect the current inflationary pressures and dwindling supply.
- 2.35 To manage the workload peaks associated with transforming this process, it is recommended that full re-procurement is carried out over three tranches coinciding with school term commencement dates, beginning in September 2023 and further tranches in readiness for January 2024 and April 2024 on a

- zonal basis. Notice will need to be given to suppliers to enable the re-procurement of contracts and is allowable contractually for reasons including the likelihood that improved value to the council will result from changes.
- 2.36 An overhaul of routing is carried out annually in some councils to mitigate the fact that new passengers allocated to existing routes quickly erode effectiveness. There is evidence of only partial re-route exercises in recent years and some limited experimentation with the MTC routing functionality. This is because of a combination of factors such as lack of resources to carry out a huge task, a reluctance to change arrangements for children and parents, parental sensitivity, perception of supplier fragility and a lack of support to make wholesale changes where there may be some resistance.
- 2.37 We ran all the routes to a selection of large SEND schools through similar software to MTC and clearly evidenced an opportunity to make significant reductions to routes required, whilst ensuring that maximum travel times were not increased.
- 2.38 We extrapolated a very conservative opportunity to reduce the number of routes by 12.5% to schools which have 5 or more routes coming in and excluding large coach and large bus routes. This equates to an opportunity to impact around 300 of current routes by 12.5% which represents a reduction of 37 routes and equates to around £814,000 saving per year. Representing an approximate carbon emission impact of 777 tonnes per year.
- 2.39 A significant extra benefit of this routing improvement will be the release of at least 37 vehicles into the supply market which will support increased vehicle availability and naturally improve competition.
- 2.40 The average cost to transport a SEND pupil to out of borough is £11,053 per annum. Since March 2020 there are 189 (92%) more children being transported to out of borough provision. It is recommended that this information be shared with school selection panels so that informed decision making and school planning can be carried out cognisant of transport costs.
- 2.41 The council appears in reasonable control of arranging single person journeys and is comparable with similar authorities. Nevertheless, single person journeys are expensive costing near to £17,000 per year to run and therefore a focus on their assessment and alternative arrangements, in particular a focus on whether these passengers are suitable for a personal transport budget (PTB).

- 2.42 Passenger assistants (PAs) deployment represents good control in CEC with only 41% of all SEND routes against a normal expected deployment of around 65%. This indicates good performance.

Policy & assessment

- 2.43 There is an opportunity to adapt the travel offer made and improve the process of how children are determined eligible. This can be done by introducing a more robust application and assessment process for all passengers, including implementing a clear re-assessment process. Critically this will rely on careful management of high parental expectation of entitlement. The service must recognise the importance of multi-agency early intervention and prevention and transport enabling educational inclusion is an important part of this. Bringing the service back into CEC will facilitate better integration of wider services.
- 2.44 All communications and guidance, including the thrust of policy wording can better and more clearly set out the offer and set out more clearly what parents and passengers should expect. Currently there is an expectation of expensive door-to-door transport, and an extremely low number of appeals indicates that parents/users are receiving exactly what they want.
- 2.45 Promoting a range of appropriate travel solutions which support child independence and the development of a travel offer will help move expectation away from 'door-to-door' transport. This cultural shift will be supported by use of consistent language and the effective re-branding of the service away from transport to a service offering travel-solutions.
- 2.46 Policy should clearly set out when re-assessment takes place, and the need to re-apply at transition and other changes.
- 2.47 There are opportunities to improve assessment by the application process capturing better information relating to SEND passengers to enable better decisions. All decisions should be made by a team dedicated to making travel eligibility decisions based on essential evidence, rather than it be by one of many case workers.
- 2.48 Opportunities also include setting realistic timeframes for processing applications to enable better decision making on travel solutions and capturing data and evidence.

- 2.49 It is recommended that all passengers are re-assessed for their entitlement to travel and the form of travel offered. Resources must be made available to do this task which will not be a business as usual burden if carried out as part of a routine process but will require additional resources to retrospectively re-assess all passengers as a starting point. This process should make a priority of examining expensive single person journeys and those travelling less than statutory distance who might not require door-to-door transport. This will include robustly considering public bus network options for each passenger currently travelling on dedicated transport.
- 2.50 As part of the initial process of assessing children's needs and the process of developing an EHCP, there are opportunities to incorporate an assessment of travel needs. This should include an assessment of whether a child could respond to travel training and is able to become more independent. When EHCPs are reviewed then travel needs should be reassessed too and information and evidence made available to support the ITT to make decisions.
- 2.51 Of the entitled 2,609 mainstream school passengers, 36% live under the statutory distance from school over which free transport is provided. We would normally expect to see only around 15% of children under statutory distance receiving transport for reasons such as the absence of a safe walking route, or low income. This high number is likely, in part, driven by the number of safe walking routes which have now been evidenced but not implemented because of parental and political pressure. It is recommended that a clear strategy and protocol be set out to manage expectation and implementation takes place in the interests of child health and independence.
- 2.52 Under section 508A of the Education Act 1996 local authorities must promote the use of sustainable travel and transport for all children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education in the local authority's area. Alternative travel solutions must be strategically developed and offered, such as private travel budgets and travel training. Both initiatives appear underdeveloped
- 2.53 We would normally expect to see more passengers that are entitled to travel benefitting from a PTB and in some local authorities this is as high as 12% of SEN passengers, however in CEC there are only 63 representing only 6% of SEN or 1.7% of all passengers. The main reason for this is that PTBs are not

- promoted and where they are made available there is limited flexibility in how the PTB is calculated and offered reducing its popularity and appeal.
- 2.54 Promotion of carefully agreed PTBs to attract take-up will contribute to significant financial savings estimated at least £375,000 per year and contribute to the development of independence and in many cases promote the better interaction of parent and school at daily drop and pick-up, and the re-setting of the expectation away from expensive door-to-door transport. However, this will be a long process of change and take up to 3 years to fully deliver.
- 2.55 Travel training will underpin the shift in the travel offer and there is a real opportunity to develop and promote this offer better.
- 2.56 Consideration of the availability of public bus routes will be key in the decision process, given that only 150 of 2,609 children are transported by public route. The service will benefit from better interaction to make decisions on adapting public routes to meet demand where changes are palatable.
- 2.57 There is an option to consider for all passengers where possible to consider better public route availability and use of PTBs.
- 2.58 Charges or parental contribution for post 16 and all other non-eligible spare seats including one bespoke high school scheme should be set at the same level to ensure equality across all students. There has been no change since 2018 and this were in line with other authorities and was set at similar level as Cheshire West and Chester who charge £880 per annum and this would generate extra income of around £70,000 per annum. Routine inflationary linked rises should occur every year. Increases of this level might need to be implemented in tranches over 3 years.
- 2.59 In respect of the bespoke high school scheme, this scheme should remain for many valid reasons such as lack of viable travel alternatives, but efforts should be made to establish whether public routes can be adapted or routes can be provided by private operator. The high school should be encouraged to cover the cost of any shortfall between cost and income of the scheme by renegotiation.
- 2.60 Efforts must be made to improve communication and set expectations of delivery standards. This will be helped by issuing a passenger charter to

outline what they can expect in terms of communication regarding changes to arrangements which is the item which causes most anxiety and dissatisfaction. The charter should include expected periods of notice before changes are made, details of new drivers and PAs and the introduction of a child passport to be shared with suppliers so that they fully understand their passenger needs.

Delivery of transformation

- 2.61 The initiatives required to deliver efficiencies, better manage demand, transform expectation, and re-organise services will require significant resources and leadership. A transformation of this type must be carefully planned and will take around 3 years to fully deliver in a sustainable way.
- 2.62 Transformation will benefit from corporate-wide support but cannot be done without adding resources to enable it to happen. The current resources engaged in travel are at full capacity delivering a demanding day to day operation. Capacity of capable resource with expertise in driving engagement and value across supplier networks, re-routing, managing expectation of users and supporting the re-assessment of passengers, does not appear readily available from across the rest of the council.
- 2.63 Careful consideration of the options available to provide leadership, deliver resource and expertise will be required. Options include identifying an internal team or partnering a niche provider of travel transformation where outputs can be underwritten at the partners risk. From our experience there will be significant investments associated with each option, but these will be imperative and will deliver significant financial returns in each year of the transformation.
- 2.64 It is recommended that the programme of change begins in January 2023, allowing time for approvals and to secure resources for commencement. For changes to the travel offer then a period of consultation and agreement will be necessary before options and direction are finalised and taken for approval. However, there are many aspects of transformation that can begin quickly in 2023. This momentum will be critical to enable maximisation of potential benefits, and implementation at time sensitive points such as the start of the new school terms. A headline implementation plan is provided in section 7.0 and it is recommended that the transformation programme and its benefits be considered as a whole and not broken up into parts. This

approach should also be taken for any cost benefit analysis required to secure resource to support the overall programme.

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3.0 ORGANISATION – RESOURCES, SYSTEMS & PERFORMANCE

Structure, accountability, and resource levels

Overview

- 3.1 Transport arrangements were commissioned by Transport Service Solutions (TSS), an arms-length company of Cheshire East Council up until April 2022 from when a new model has been deployed which results in the strategic, planning, commissioning and procurement of services being delivered directly by CEC. This resulted in the transfer of the existing functions from TSS to the council's Children and Families Directorate and Place Directorate and Ansa.
- 3.2 Audit in 2017 makes clear observations that each element of the service operated independently, that there were clunky communications and that clear transparent reporting was not in place. As a result, it was difficult to understand the value achieved, particularly as the budget split between Place and Children and Families and the influence of TSS in delivery, did not allow for clear accountability for whole expenditure.
- 3.3 This return of the services from TSS has presented the foundations for an opportunity, but also the challenge of ensuring that accountability for key tasks is clear and that resource levels are appropriate for the tasks. Indeed, we have evidenced in this review that the main findings of the 2017 Audit are still relevant in that the travel function is currently delivered in a fragmented fashion across the council with various teams and roles involved across the process and sitting in both the Children and Families and Place directorate.
- 3.4 The organisation of travel in headline simple terms can be described as follows
 1. Case workers in the Children and Families Directorate including social care make decisions on travel eligibility for SEND and social care reasons when it is straight forward to do so.
 2. A School Transport team in Children and Families owns the policy and makes decisions on eligibility when more complex.
 3. The school transport operations team in Children and Families receives mainstream transport applications direct from parents and validates their entitlement before arranging transport. The Transport Operations team processes requests for travel, risk assesses high need arrangements, allocates to best available route, commissions new routes from the Contract and Performance Team and liaises daily with parents, schools, and suppliers.

4. A Contract and Performance team (Place Directorate), manages supplier compliance and procures and contracts new supply arrangements.
 5. Social care case workers across Children and Families make decisions and request transport for children for social care reasons, operating in a detached manner from Transport operations, before passing the request through.
 6. Ansa provide a small fleet of vehicles and organise their deployment. Whilst this is part of the wider Ansa partnership arrangement and not a typical supplier contract, they no longer deliver any intrinsic role in the management of the travel process.
- 3.5 This organisational approach is not unusual, and the recent change represents a significant move in the right direction towards integration and better control, but it does still represent a fundamental absence of clear accountability and a level of dis-integration for some key aspects of travel. In this respect, observations include
- I. An absence of a clear joined up strategy for the service. This includes the setting of the offer, and whilst ownership of the policy is clear and is reviewed, it is in isolation of an overall strategy for delivery and the direction of the service and how user expectations are managed.
 - II. Accountability for expenditure is not clear and therefore the value achieved by the service is lacking. This is common where separate departments manage demand and manage delivery value. This usually manifests in there being a lack of a clear strategy to mitigate increases in demand for expensive door to door services and to adapt towards other travel options which support independence. Without overall accountability it is commonly not easy to drive improved value of delivery and allow the consideration of the most effective forms of delivery as costs are often clouded by new demand.
 - III. Whilst Children and Families have responsibility for determining EHCPs, and as a result determine the number of SEND children that are entitled to transport, it is not clear where type of travel is determined. Decisions are made across various teams and therefore no one team has accountability for overall demand and how travel is then to be provided.
 - IV. The specific cost of new demand is not easy to determine from the cost of the existing passenger cohort. This will never be possible without good quality data, so finding an explanation for increasing costs is challenging. Eligibility decisions being made in isolation from delivery for SEND means no part of the service can be truly

accountable for delivering the most effective solution. This problem is magnified as there is a lack of an overall travel strategy that is supportive of promoting alternative travel support solutions and controlling demand for expensive door-to-door transport for some children.

3.6 In CEC we evidenced many examples of accountability not being clear

- I. Lack of joined up ownership of a strategy for how travel is be delivered
- II. Poor data availability, difficulty in forecasting demand and costs.
- III. Meetings to understand growth have broken down in recent years
- IV. The recognition of transport growth and escalating costs has not until recently been recognised corporately, maybe because TSS was arms-length and fragmented with little voice
- V. Social care has a lack of gatekeeping of transport requests and decision makers have no budget visibility and therefore accountability

3.7 Clearly there is an absence of accountability for each aspect of delivering an effective service, the table below summarises CEC's fragmented service, detailing resources. NB resource levels do not include overseeing management roles with other wider responsibilities.

Directorate	Children and Families	Children and Families	Children and Families	Place
Team	Case workers in Children and Families	School Transport	Transport Operations	Contracts and performance
Resources	x13 roles involved in SEND x6 roles involved in SC	x3.8FTE	x9.6 FTE	x5 FTE
Role/Accountabilities	Decisions on SEN eligibility when straightforward	Policy Decisions on eligibility Appeals	Allocation Risk assessment Customer relations Routing	Procure Compliance

Unclear Accountabilities and areas for development	Re-assessment of passengers
	Overall expenditure
	Overall strategy
	Development of the supply marketplace
	Ownership of user expectation
	Travel training and alternative transport

- 3.8 There are two options for re-organising, which operate well in other local authorities, both of which present a platform for greater accountability for the council's travel offer
- I. Full Integration - Reorganise all parts of the travel operation and place them together in the same team. This should include a dedicated team taking ownership of travel policy, assessment, eligibility, and delivery in both SEND and social care as well as mainstream. Contracts and performance can form part of the team although it is recognised that there are synergies between this team and wider public bus and transportation network. Elements of resource dedicated to public bus could remain in Place alongside the wider transportation strategy. This would allow for one entity to be accountable for total expenditure.
 - II. Partial Integration- Overall accountability will be delivered and be dependent on a Travel Board to oversee all travel functions. The board would ensure a clear strategy and accountability and govern the whole operational process and outputs. The board being accountable for policy, strategic delivery, overall expenditure, and budgeting. This could be combined with other hybrid alternatives such as combining transport operations and school transport only.
- 3.9 The Travel Board approach is usually implemented in local authorities when travel is wholly delivered in a different directorate to the key client, Children and Families. This is not the case in CEC where the travel operations team now sits in this directorate. Therefore, by far the more effective option is full integration and this is recommended. This would benefit from
- I. Improved control on eligibility by the integrated travel team (ITT) controlling all decisions on eligibility for all types of transport. Case workers would work with parents to formally apply for transport in each category of travel and not make decisions. This includes social care transport requests.
 - II. Joined up accountability and ownership of all parts of the service from strategy and direction, assessment to delivery. Therefore, one

team would be accountable for overall expenditure, budget, and service standards.

III. One team would aid the process through assessment to delivery being much slicker using available technologies.

- 3.10 However a Board approach may be taken if it is not possible to integrate the Contracts and Performance team into the ITT.
- 3.11 The location for an ITT makes sense to be wholly in Children and Families which will then be accountable for the end- to-end process and value achieved.
- 3.12 Part of an integrated recommendation is to bolster the assessment of eligibility with the development of a robust application process feeding into a thorough review against policy of each application which will be best done by a team to consider eligibility based on a parental application form. (Next section) Consideration much also be given to the need to robustly re-assess travel entitlement on a regular basis.

Overall resource levels

- 3.13 The determination by comparison, of management and officer resource levels required to deliver an effective travel service cannot be a precise science because of the bespoke nature of geography and make up of client groups.
- 3.14 However, a headline comparison with other local authorities where the number of FTE is known provides a useful gauge. We have found that the most effective determining factor of resource required is the number of contracted routes.
- 3.15 The table below compares CEC resource allocation for travel management, coordination, and procurement with some other local authority operations. This comparison does not consider assessment.

Councils	Contracted routes	FTE	Contracted route/vehicles per FTE
A	622	18	34
B	711	22	32
C	304	11	27
D	700	21	

				33	
	E	1304	38	31	
3.16	The of	CEC	527	15.6	34

overall level resources allocated

appears slightly under resourced with comparators to a level of at least 2 FTE. (NB this does not include assessment resource in the Children’s Transport team)

3.17 However the analysis above does not provide surety that all key functions are being carried out effectively and resourced to the right level. It is important to examine the alignment and focusing of resources.

Resource alignment and focus

3.18 We compared the CEC operation to a basket of other authorities to determine level of resources applied to key functions or important categories of task in a typical travel operation. Whilst this analysis is not a precise science it does highlight some critical deficiencies which need attention. These findings support anecdotal feedback and review observation that resources in the Transport Operations team are lacking.

	Basket average % of total resource	Current		Recommended	
		%	FTE	%	FTE
Management	10%	5%	0	5%	1
Supply, procurement, and compliance	20%	30%	5	27%	6
Co-ordination/daily management	45%	49%	9.6	42%	9.6
Travel training and PTBs	10%	0%	0	9%	2
Dedicated assessment and re-assessment	15%	20%	3.8	18%	4
Total	100%	100%	19.4	100%	22.6

3.19 The table above indicates some comparators of CEC against a basket of operations. The CEC service has some key observations

- I. Appears to have the right level of resources in general coordination and daily management of travel service.
 - II. Appears to have a higher proportion of resources, assigned to the contract and performance than expected.
 - III. Has no dedicated focus on alternative travel solutions (such as travel training and PTBs) there is more rationale for more focus on this area in later section
 - IV. Has a dedicated assessment function which is resourced at a level capable of making all transport eligibility decisions and owning policy supported by better systems and database.
 - V. There is at least one role in the Contracts and Performance team which has intrinsic expertise on public bus relationships and transport network. This could be kept separate from the ITU however it should be noted that better integration in how public routes link with home to school need is required.
- 3.20 The comparison table enables the identification of how resources could be better applied and is referred to in other sections of this report. It is recommended that the services structure and resources are fully evaluated and clearly defined to meet the deficiencies indicated. To fully integrate the service then we expect that a small number of extra resources will need to be identified and a Head of Service created from the resources currently identified across all teams.

Systems and database

- 3.21 The current process and system is a mixture of using Liquid Logic, email, excel and a Mobi-soft database to capture data and communicate requests. This operates slightly differently dependent on whether passengers are SEN, mainstream, or social care.

Process	SEN	Mainstream	Social Care
Application	Parent verbally or email to case worker	Parent completes application form which goes to Transport Ops team	Case worker emails Transport Ops team
Referral if eligible	If obvious then SEN team complete Liquid Logic transport form and an email to alert	Transport Ops team check using Mobi-soft assessment	Transport Ops check

	Transport Operations Team If it needs clarity then Transport Assessment Panel decide before entering onto Liquid Logic		
Decision communication with parents	Liquid Logic generated letter	Email/letter to parent	n/a
Logging transport arrangements	Transport Ops team manually input of details from LL and the arrangements on Mobi-soft	Transport Ops team enter details on Mobi-soft through data download	Transport Ops team enter details on Mobi-soft
Communicating arrangements with parents and suppliers	Email/ letter	Email/ letter	Email/ letter
Requesting new contract route	Email to Contracts and Performance team	Email to Contracts and Performance team	Email to Contracts and Performance team
Tender process advertisement	CHEST but now email for ease	CHEST but some now by email for ease	CHEST but some now by email for ease

3.22 There are many observations and pitfalls of these processes which are not helped by lack of integration in the systems that are used. The issues include

- I. Lack of consistency in assessment protocols (subject of the next section)
- II. SEND re-work and manual entry of data, for example Liquid Logic data needing inputting on Mobi-soft
- III. Communications are clunky, for example Travel Operations team needing to be alerted by email that a new request has been sent using Liquid Logic
- IV. Mobi-soft has much functionality which is not used to potential.

- 3.23 MTC is a good system and has many facilities which are not used or fully deployed including
- I. Routing capability, including scenario planning on routes, visual representation of routes and passengers on maps, the ability to look at a whole school, multiple schools or individual passengers or vehicles.
 - II. Ability to communicate quickly and effectively – SMS messaging is available to individual parents, or groups of parents on the same route etc. Also, an ability to survey users all by the push of a button.
 - III. Data on vehicle type, capacity available and current fill, passenger seating type etc. (passengers needing extra space) which will assist with route planning and scheduling.
 - IV. Facility to calculate journey times and mileages – especially useful when considering adding passengers. Mileages were not available for this review and are useful to assess route price value.
 - V. Capability to interface with other systems
 - VI. Potential for school, provider, and customer web-based portal to enhance communications.
 - VII. Ability to forecast expenditure accurately which in the case of CEC would mitigate the time spent doing this manually
 - VIII. The ability to produce MI reports of performance across the travel process. Mobi-soft has excellent reporting packages and will allow excel downloads for specific drill down. But it must be ensured that data input is meaningful, and granularity of data is key.
 - IX. The system has an assessment module which could be utilised by those making assessments in SEND to record data and decisions which will integrate with the delivery database mitigating the need for clunky communications and manual re-entry of data
- 3.24 However, there are some important considerations to ensure that the system works effectively. Several observations have been made in CEC with accompanying recommendations
- I. Staff training has been poor and conducted remotely during the difficult Covid time. There appears no clear owner of the system from a technical compliance perspective or a data integrity perspective. Users are using the system like the Route-wise system which was in place before. It is recommended that ownership of the system is put in place.

- II. Some of the data in the system is not accurate, there is duplicated data, out of date data, and error messages which are not rectified. Passengers have not always been removed when their transport ceases etc. This results in lost confidence to use the system for forecasting, running reports or routing. It is recommended that a process of stripping obsolete data, checking contract values, rectifying error messages, and removing duplicates takes place. But most importantly that the team using the system begin to input data accurately and properly supported by a system owner who can gatekeep issues or the system will slip back again. This is likely to take several months to conduct.
- III. Only when confidence in the data is re-gained can the system begin to be used to generate meaningful reports, forecast, and used as a full routing system.
- IV. It is recommended that the Mobi-soft assessment model be considered. It is used well elsewhere and would provide an end-to-end solution. The module is available and been purchased as part of the wider product. The module should be used for all categories of passenger and can be developed to
 - a. Integrate with liquid logic so that data can be easily transferred where appropriate
 - b. Integrate with on-line/electronic application forms to prevent re-work and data will automatically populate MTC
 - c. Support decision making with protocols based on data
 - d. Eradicate the need for clunky communication and allow the new ITT to have one end-to-end system therefore supporting the full integration of travel

Performance measurement and management.

- 3.25 Generation of bespoke performance reporting to manage transport/travel and forecast costs will be key to success and will support individual performance appraisals of all team members.
- 3.26 The teams do not appear to clearly measure performance other than monthly wide departmental budgeting meetings attended by principal officers. Metrics and indicators are largely produced reactively or as part of analysis of increasing spend. There appears to be a lack of confidence in the metrics produced.
- 3.27 The table below, whilst not exhaustive, outlines typical measures across each function of an ITT which can be used for setting targets and monthly

performance appraisals. It is recommended that a small number of routine metrics are produced which are key to measuring performance.

Category	Common measures	Function
Overall team	Cost per passenger. Demand increase, each category of passenger Demand decrease, each category of passenger Length of journey, each category of passenger	Overall
Supplier value	Cost per passenger. Cost per mile. Cost per vehicle type. Cost per supplier (based on passengers) Number of suppliers Variance (uplift) to base contract of each supplier	Procurement function
Day to day	New allocations Single person journeys per total (separated by reason) PA per passenger route Complaints Number passengers allocated to existing routes. New routes procured. Short term quotes Invoice issues	Day to day management function
Alternative travel	Identified for travel training. Travel trained. Cost per travel trained. Saving per travel trained Identified for PB. Moved to PB. Saving per PB	Travel training and PB focus functions

Assessment	Applications received.	Assessment function
	Applications processed	
	Applications approved for Travel support.	
	Appeals/ successful appeals.	
	Re-assessments completed v planned.	
	Applications suitable for travel training	
	Applications suitable for PBs	

3.28 More granularity from the assessment process will be critical. An example from Leicestershire shows the level of data that should be expected to manage the process.

Current Progress of Transport Applications

STADS SEN APPLICATIONS STATUS 2022/23

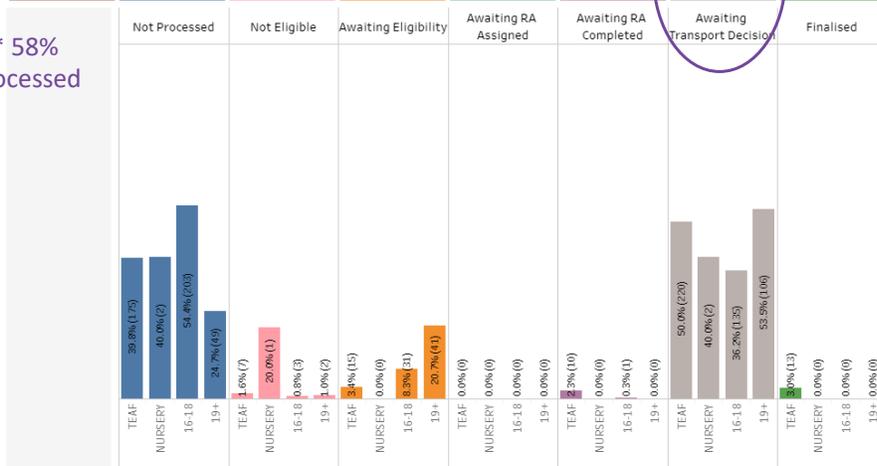
Status of SEN transport applications
Source: STADS Database - Data Updated on 17/05/2022

Academic Year: 2022/23 | Transport Type: All | Application Type: All

Applications	Not Processed	Not Eligible	Awaiting Eligibility	Awaiting RA Assigned	Awaiting RA Completed	Awaiting Transport Decision	Finalised
100.0% (1,016)	42.2% (429)	1.3% (13)	8.6% (87)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (11)	45.6% (463)	1.3% (13)

* Explore this area further

* 58% processed



Think customer.
Think digital.

3.29 The service has not yet developed robust reporting and measures although a template has been evidenced. It is recommended that reports are specified so that monthly and live data can be produced for use in managing performance as soon as possible.

- 3.30 The provision of reports with agreed targets and direction will provide confidence and evidence of value for money being achieved and aid greater clarity in understanding the key drivers of costs and therefore the ability to forecast more accurately. This will help in a move towards a forward thinking, performance culture with Corporately understood strategic aims.

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4.0 POLICY, ASSESSMENT & SHIFTING THE TRAVEL OFFER

Challenges

- 4.1 Demand for children and young people's travel in CEC has been significantly increasing with SEND passenger numbers growing by 32% since March 2020. Based on the councils dedicated schools grant (DSG) management plan assumptions there is also a predicted increase of 156 new SEND passengers each year, based on the assumption that 30% of the 520 new EHCPs per year which are predicted require transport. Mainstream transport appears consistent in demand.
- 4.2 Whilst there is headline evidence of a robust policy which is reviewed regularly and an EHCP plan to transport entitled ratio of 30%, which is lower than most other authorities, we were able to evidence some fundamental opportunities to make improvements in the application, assessment, and decision-making process.
- 4.3 The key observations included
- I. There is no transport application form required for SEND children. An application form represents good practice as it facilitates consistent evidence gathering to support applications and supports consistent decision making. There appears to be a lack of evidence used in making decisions.
 - II. The options outlined in policy and decision making on type of travel to be offered does not fully consider the opportunities for alternative travel arrangements such as (PTB) personal transport budgets, also known as cash grants.
 - III. There are limited travel training options and resources applied to allow travel training so that other forms of travel can be better utilised such as public buses or walking.
 - IV. There has been little gatekeeping and control/accountability of social care transport which is granted and then requested by case workers. This is improving in some areas.
 - V. There are more mainstream and SEND children who travel less statutory distance than expected versus comparators and further investigation found many of these children to have safe walking routes.
 - VI. There is no routine re-assessment process deployed for all passengers which has contributed to the embedding a culture and expectation that transport entitlement is for the whole school life.

- VII. Expectation of a door-to-door transport service is high with little focus on child independence and regular re-assessment to determine if needs or capabilities have changed.
- VIII. There is little focus on determining opportunities to use the public bus network to transport SEN passengers. This might require passengers to walk to nearest stops.
- IX. In respect of VIII, there is an opportunity to improve the integration between the passenger transport team and the public bus network team to adapt the routes with minor changes to accommodate passengers currently receiving dedicated services. Most public network routes receive some level of funding support and therefore this will be effective in maximising value from this funding.
- X. User surveys report frustration at last minute arrangements, especially at term commencement and in 2020 28% of those surveyed said transport was confirmed at 'last minute' with 9% saying after the start of term. These results were worse than the survey in 2018.

SEND policy and application process

- 4.4 The policy is robust and clear and was updated in 2018. There are aspirations to update it again soon. There are further opportunities to use policy to promote a shift of the travel offer away from expensive door-to door transport to a range of travel solutions which will support independence. Under section 508A of the Education Act 1996 local authorities must promote the use of sustainable travel and transport for all children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education in the local authority's area
- 4.5 A policy review is recommended to include the following changes
 - I. Reference to reassessment and reviews in general. The policy should be clear that travel is not granted for life and regular assessment will be conducted.
 - II. Emphasis on other travel solutions that will be considered, such as the offer of PTBs where appropriate and travel training as core elements to the travel support which is offered.
 - III. That the independence of the child is core to the travel policy and strategy
 - IV. A review of post 16 policy in terms of clarifying entitlement and bringing charges into line with comparators and to reflect annual inflation

- 4.6 The launch of a reviewed policy represents an opportunity to re-launch the service, setting clear expectations and being a pre-cursor for change.
- 4.7 In respect of the entitlement decision-making process some headline observations were made
- I. SEND entitlement decisions are made by case workers of which there can be around 13 roles making decisions. Whilst efforts have been made to issue training and guidance our experience is that this approach can result in in-consistency and lack of control of the offer and the type of travel offered. More difficult decisions are made by a dedicated transport team. It is recommended that all SEN decisions are considered by the dedicated team in the newly formed ITT.
 - II. A full on-line application form for SEND is recommended and to be completed by parents. This is the common practice in most other authorities. The application form should gather evidence of low income, child's needs, wheelchair details, asking whether parent would consider a PTB, asking whether child might respond to travel training, detail on child's ability to walk etc. This detail will allow better decisions on the form of travel and aid the making of travel arrangements.
 - III. Once the application form is on-line then the details can integrate into the Mobi-soft assessment system and prevent the need for manual entry of details. Currently this happens twice as a transport request is entered into Liquid Logic and then re-entered into Mobi-soft. Mobi-soft has the assessment function and the council is currently paying for this but it is not in use for SEND.
 - IV. Reassessment of all passengers is not carried out for SEND, there is no evidence of data being set or kept of re-assessment dates or data kept of reassessment result. It is recommended that re-assessments are conducted as a one-off exercise as part of transformation exercise and then processes put in place to manage on-going reassessments to a plan. Re-assessment should be at least annually and transport should be re-applied for at school transition or if any changes occur such as a move of address. One of the impacts of no re-assessment was reflected in the Headteacher feedback that eligibility for transport is not equitable as decision protocols have changed over the years leaving some children receiving transport for much lower needs than would currently be deemed as entitled. Further, transport should be discussed as part of the annual EHCP process. Transport is often a

very important element of a child's day and changing needs discussed in an EHCP review can have an impact on transport requirements.

- V. Late application forms, especially for beginning of term commencement dates, cause bottle necks, it is recommended that clear deadlines are set for applications and that this is managed robustly with users. These recommendations will support a theme of resetting expectation.
- VI. It is recommended that the assessment process identifies those children who will be capable of responding to travel training, being able to walk, and those passengers where the parent is willing to consider being compensated for transporting their own child or making their own arrangements if it is deemed appropriate.

Mainstream passengers

4.8 The process for mainstream and catchment schools is different to SEND, with an application form which feeds directly into the Transport operations team for validation (against mainly distance) and then route allocation. Some key observations were made

- I. Only 150 pupils are transported by public bus. This is unusual and we recommend a re-appraisal of the arrangements and availability of public bus for all passengers. The protocol in place for insisting ambulant passengers walk up to 1 mile to reach a pick up point should be properly implemented and utilised in place of dedicated transport.
- II. There is little interaction between Transport Operations and Public Bus network team to overlay demand and routes available to examine if there is potential for alterations to public routes to be available for young people. This is a resource hungry task but will bear fruit if done robustly as a one-off exercise and then on a periodic basis.
- III. Consideration of availability of public bus and other options such as PTBs should be made further up the line in school placement decisions so that expectation of parents can begin to be managed. Dedicated transport provision should not be offered at this stage.

Statutory distance and safe walking routes for all passengers

4.9 In simple terms CEC is statutorily obligated to provide transport to those over 2 or 3 miles walking distance (dependent on age) from their nearest school unless there is an absence of a safe walking route which can be taken, accompanied as necessary. The council is further obligated to put in place transport arrangements for SEN passengers that cannot walk to school if under these distances.

- 4.10 The table below shows that 36% of mainstream passengers receive transport when under statutory distance and 12% of SEND passengers. In respect of SEND this is in line with what we see in other authorities, nevertheless, whilst many of these passengers may indeed require door-to-door transport there is no obligation to provide it if an appropriate alternative form of travel is available, and this can include walking if the passenger is ambulant and the route is safe.

	Under statutory walking distance	% Of total passengers
Mainstream	977	36%
SEN	110	12%

- 4.11 In respect of mainstream and making comparison to our work with other rural and county local authorities we commonly see around 15-20% of passengers provided transport when under statutory distance for reasons such as the absence of a safe walking route or for low-income. The table outlines the much higher number of passengers under statutory distance in CEC. Indeed, there are at least 102 passengers that are transported despite there being a safe route. This was determined by a dedicated project in 2016 which categorised reasons for all passengers under statutory distance.
- 4.12 It is expected that many routes could be deemed safe and that with an expectation that parents accompany children as necessary, like in other local authorities then there is an opportunity to reduce door to door transport. However, CEC has experienced many challenges to implement safe walking routes and there is much political involvement in each specific route examined.
- 4.13 It is recommended that a strategy and protocol is agreed for the service to implement safe walking routes as appropriate and under the banner of what is right for the child in terms of health and independence. Parental and political expectation will have to be carefully re-set along with the implementation of
- I. An up-to-date available walking route database and re-invigoration of the 2016/17 project to identify routes which were safe
 - II. Re-assessment of all 740 pupils who receive transport due to their walking route not being safe
 - III. An identification exercise of remedial works which would open-up safe walking routes. The number and cost of the passengers transported should be calculated against each of the schemes to determine annualised cost to the Council. This can then be weighed up against

costs of rectification to determine if work should go ahead and in what priority

- IV. Members should agree the general strategy/policy and protocol and leave it for the transport team to implement. Removal of transport should be part of re-assessment.

Appeals against decision making

- 4.14 There are on average only around 6-8 second stage appeals per annum. This is significantly lower than most authorities which commonly receive 10 times as many for a similar sized cohort of applications. This could indicate that the council is lenient in granting transport and not re-assessing.
- 4.15 It is also noted that second stage appeals panels are attended by political members. It is recommended that these be officer led so that decisions are consistent and follow clear protocols based on statutory guidelines.

Shifting the travel offer.

Overview

- 4.16 Changing user expectation in SEND and mainstream from expensive door-to-door transport to travel alternatives will be essential to underpin the objectives of reducing future costs, meeting future demand, and driving independence of children. There is also a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to and from school. This covers walking, cycling and public transport options and these modes should be made easier and more pleasant and accessible for everyone. In turn, this will support wider local authority objectives of improving air quality, carbon reduction and tackling congestion, and help provide a more equitable transport network, as set out in the Local Transport Plan and other transport policies.
- 4.17 It is recommended that policy and communications support this concept and that the offer and branding of the service be aligned to 'Travel' solutions rather than 'Transport'.
- 4.18 This shift will be supported by the development of travel training and PTBs as offers.
- 4.19 Identifying travel support needs and the management of parent expectations should begin at the point of initial assessment and in the development and then re-assessment of EHCPs.

Independent travel training

- 4.20 The long-term transport process for mainstream school children is that they attain increasing levels of travel independence as they develop and learn to either walk to school or catch public transport.
- 4.21 For children with SEND this is not always possible. In many cases they receive door-to-door transport from the time they start school until the time they leave College such that they do not gain the necessary travel skills that other children do. However, whilst many children with SEND will never be able to travel independently, those that can, should be given the opportunity to do so.
- 4.22 In many authorities funding is provided for travel training. Methods of coaching include tuition in timetable reading and practical coaching in catching buses. The scheme can be extremely successful and in some authorities over 50 children every year are helped to travel independently. CEC appears to be out of kilter with the benchmark group in not making the offer of travel training.
- 4.23 Funding of Independent Travel Training is a long-term commitment which will produce better outcomes for children over the long term and will have benefits for their future mobility, social integration, and employability.
- 4.24 Other authorities either conduct travel training with in-house resources or have an external partnership with a provider such as Mencap who provide travel training, or they have a mix of the two. The table below compares resource levels across a range of other authorities.

Authorities	CEC	A	B	C	D
SEN passengers	925	600	755	341	900
FTE	0	5	1	4	3
Support contract	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Trained per year	0	30	40	22	50

- 4.25 There are some key observations in respect of travel training in CEC
- I. In respect of policy or offer, there is no focus on ITT or promotion of it.

-
- II. Those capable of receiving travel training are not routinely identified in the application process, the EHCP or the assessment process, nor are schools encouraged to identify them.
 - III. Some local authorities have made travel training the travel 'offer.' If children are capable of being trained, then this is the offer and there is no alternative. It is recommended that as a first step those who are travel trainable need to be identified at EHCP development stage, the application for travel stage and as part of the re-assessment process.
 - IV. Where schools are engaged and on board then great success has been delivered. Schools play an important role in identifying capable children, facilitating training and motivating children and parents to want to achieve independence. However, it is evident that schools are not properly engaged. This appears to be the result of little resource applied to generating interest and no focus on travel training in the strategic direction for the service. Successful travel training generally needs strategic focus, energy, resource, and engagement of schools.
- 4.26 With successful school engagement, improved identification of candidates, and an enhanced training resource model then, if results are compared to other local authorities, CEC should successfully train at least 50 children per year.
- 4.27 To support delivery of this the following initiatives are recommended to be implemented,
- I. Identify resources to focus on developing relationships with schools, with the backing of strategic support including efforts to raise the profile of travel training across all stakeholders both within the council and across schools.
 - II. Investigate and develop a business plan for engaging a support model from a training partner with clear commitments of successful outputs for fees. In high level terms and based on experience from elsewhere a training partnership will approximately be cost neutral in year 1 of the model. i.e., there will be enough children trained that generate transport savings to pay for the training resource and savings for those trained will be recurring and have a life-long impact on reliance on council services.
 - III. By way of a simple illustration. If at least 50 children are trained these will generally result in savings of 30% of their average transport costs, given that some children will be converted from individual transport but some from group transport in minibuses and shared vehicles.
- Therefore 50 x (£3,200 average cost per passenger) x50% = £80,000 per year

We typically see training partnerships costing around £30,000 to train 30-50 children per year.

- IV. The real financial benefits kick in from year 2 and beyond where the benefit of the trained children in year 1 are totally net of costs. Also, the momentum of freed up minibus spaces and shared car spaces prevents additional cost of new passengers, which are harder to estimate benefits.
- V. It is recommended that a training support partnership model is engaged because this can be flexed up and down depending on demand and number of identified children over time, which may dwindle after a few years of easy identification of candidates. It also allows internal resource to focus on school engagement and identification of children which a support model will be dependent on to deliver training to. It is common from our experience for local authorities to engage a delivery partner for a fixed price and then not focus on identification of candidates for them to train. This is a risk to avoid.

Private travel budgets/parent grants/ cash grants

- 4.28 PTBs or cash grants provide flexibility to parents to make their own arrangements and represent an opportunity for a council to reduce its cost burden and management time for day-to-day arrangements, in many cases travel arrangements can typically be made for significantly reduced cost.
- 4.29 In most local authorities PTBs are typically offered to SEND passengers as they largely represent those in receipt of special door to door transport arrangements which are costly. However, in CEC there is much more opportunity than is the norm to offer PTBs given the higher number of mainstream passengers travelling by specially arranged contracted transport because of geography/ rurality.
- 4.30 The council has put in place only 63 (SEN passengers) by March 2022 which is 6% of SEN or 1.7% of total passengers.
- 4.31 As a comparison, Dudley Metropolitan Council and Enfield Council both offer PTBs to at least 12% of their total SEN passengers many councils achieve 6% of total passengers, and unlike CEC, apply dedicated roles to developing and identifying offers.

Local authority	PTBs as % of passengers
Council A	6% of total
Council B	12% of SEN
Council C	12% of SEN

Council D

6% of total

- 4.32 Anecdotally and from our experience the likely reasons for the lack of take up of PTBs include,
- I. The amounts offered are not enough to be appealing and are typically based on HMRC mileage allowances. This is broadly the case in CEC where 25 pence per mile is offered for the outward and return leg of each journey.
 - II. There is little resource and focus applied strategically to generating interest, identifying, influencing, and negotiating with likely candidates.
 - III. Parents could be concerned about the impact on their tax or benefits.
- 4.33 It is recommended that PTB opportunities are pursued with clear drive and with resource applied. Not least because the potential for savings on some route costs will be significant.
- 4.34 From our experience, where the following factors are implemented, then there will be significant benefits,
- I. Some level of dedicated role/resource for at least a 2 year period to evaluate the current cohort of passengers.
 - II. Target offers to single person journeys as a priority and then move strategically onto routes with vehicles with valuable spaces which can be filled.
 - III. Negotiate the payments with parents and carers with the knowledge of what the current real cost of transporting the child is to ensure a saving is made.
- 4.35 There are 163 single person SEND journeys to focus upon which is a significant number and the average cost of a single person contracted journey is at least c£15,000 per annum.
- 4.36 In other councils we typically expect to successfully negotiate a PTB for 50%-60% of the cost of a procured transport route. Therefore, being conservative and basing calculations on a saving of 50% then there is potential for a saving of £7,500 per annum for every PTB secured and much more for a single person route.
- 4.37 It is perhaps not sensible to target the number of passengers in line with other authorities because there are likely be some level of impact of the demographics of the region.

4.38 However, by way of an example if a modest target of 50 passengers can be moved to a PTB and these are from the priority group of single person journeys then the saving will build to be £375,000 per annum.

4.39 Concern about a PTB being a benefit and therefore subject to taxation is a common query. However, it is our understanding that the payment is in respect of the child and is in lieu of funding an individual child's travel entitlement and could often be paid wholly or in part to a provider and is therefore not income for the recipient. Some example statements from other authorities support this,

Kent CC

Source: Personal Transport Budgets - An informative guide for parents (kent.gov.uk)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will the payments be taxed?

A. The budget is a payment made in relation to the child not the parent and so should not affect your tax situation. It is used to enable your child to get to and from school each day in a safe and legal way and should not be used for any other purpose. If you have concerns that it may impact on your tax situation, you will need to seek your own advice from a tax expert in relation to your personal circumstances.

East Riding

Source: Personal Travel Budgets (PTB) (eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk)

Statement from East Riding local offer

Personal Travel Budgets are not a benefit. Any income from a Personal Travel Budget is neither taxable nor will it affect any benefit claim for parents or carers participating in the scheme. However, it is the responsibility of the recipient of the Personal Travel Budget to check with any relevant services that this is the case for their own personal circumstances.

4.40 Other common concerns include ensuring that the scheme is equitable across parents. This is sometimes achieved by payments made in bands according to circumstances, however, to be most effective the scheme must consider that every circumstance is different dependent on factors such as the other children in the household, vehicles at the parent's disposal, distance, needs of the child etc. and therefore ultimately the council will be best able to negotiate a mutually acceptable payment.

- 4.41 It is recommended that clear arrangements are agreed with parents for payment. These will normally be based on the number of times children are taken to school and not be linked to investments and other commitments made such as investments in vehicles. As a specific example there would therefore be no liability for payment when schools are closed for reasons such as Covid-19.
- 4.42 Feedback from parents indicated frustration in time taken to be paid their grant/PTB. This appears to be caused by waiting for attendance confirmation data before authorisation of payment and the manual nature of the payment processing. It is recommended that payments are automated and are not held waiting for attendance data. Trust in the payment system will be critical for the scheme to be taken up.

Exceptional travel for social care reasons

- 4.43 There has been a growing trend for requests for 'exceptional' travel arrangements to be put into place. Exceptional travel arrangements are often at short notice, for short terms spells and therefore very expensive in comparison with routine routes.
- 4.44 Transport arrangements typically include situations where parents cannot transport children to school due to illness or other domestic circumstances or for other social care reasons such as respite care, contact visits etc. Covid could have been a contributing factor.
- 4.45 This provision falls outside statutory obligations, is discretionary, and would typically not be considered in a mainstream or SEND policy. In 2020/21 c£0.5million was spent and the forecast for 2021/22 is similar. Whilst there are likely to be some good social care reasons for offering this transport it recommended that controls and checks put in place to ensure clear understanding of causes and accountability for decision maker.
- I. Analysis log kept with clear reason code for decision
 - II. Guidance notes developed for when these requests will be considered
 - III. Bespoke budget code and budget identified to consider these requests so as to provide accountability to decision makers.
 - IV. Clear end dates for the transport, or at least dates for when it is to be reassessed.
 - V. A clear protocol for making decisions which falls outside those covered by other travel policies such as SEN

- 4.46 Social workers are not aware of the fiscal impact of some decisions and there has been little understanding that it is parent/carer or establishment responsibility to organise travel which does not fall into the wider statutory duties to provide care/placements.
- 4.47 Exceptional transport requests are not unusual in local authorities. However, it is key that clear agreement on when it is to be provided and accountability for decision making is in place, which it is not across the board in CEC, however disability services have recently put in place a panel to make decisions and gain understanding of costs/travel decisions, sign off any exceptional travel.
- 4.48 Social Care transport is often requested without notice which naturally results in higher prices. Efforts should be made to understand the benefits of a longer lead time to secure better prices from the market.

Other discretionary travel provided

Post 16 provision

- 4.49 For Post 16 passengers there is no statutory obligation for CEC to provide door to door transport, but there is a duty to ensure that provision for travel to an educational setting for SEND students is made where necessary and to outline this in policy.
- 4.50 It is acceptable to ensure travel is available with other forms of provision such as a public route at the students cost or a financial payment made in lieu of transport made to the passenger.
- 4.51 Where CEC provides post 16 transport it makes a charge of £450 per year. However, this is mitigated by offering a reduced contribution where there is evidence of low income. There has been no increase to charges for at least 4 years.
- 4.52 In the main CEC offers post 16 transport to SEND passengers and 176 post 16 SEND passengers are provided transport with 107 contributing by payment of £450 per year. Only a handful of Post 16 mainstream passengers are provided transport.
- 4.53 The average cost of transporting a post 16 student is more than a compulsory school age pupil with SEND expenditure for post 16 costing around c£1million per year. There has been an increase of 35 students with an EHCP who are eligible for travel assistance between December 2020 and November 2021 and this is expected to increase as the total number of young people with EHCPs continues to increase across the borough.
- 4.54 Any changes will require communications through the Parent Carer Forum and individual conversations with families will be required to make changes to

this policy. This makes it impossible to make a new offer for September 2022 and therefore any changes are recommended for September 2023.

Spare seats

4.55 CEC offers a spare seat scheme for pupils who are not eligible for free transport and may attend a school which is not their nearest. Generally, children who do not attend their local school, are responsible for making their own transport arrangement. Support for these passengers may include:

- Paid/charged for seats on our school transport
- commercial bus services
- Trave-line - journey planner, apps, and telephone help line
- disabled person's bus or rail pass
- 16/17 saver railcard
- 16-25 railcard

4.56 There are very few spare seats sold and there is currently c27 passengers buying seats which does not include the bespoke high school scheme.

4.57 The price for a spare seat is £460 per year and this has not increased since 2018.

Changes to Post 16 and spare seat schemes

4.58 CEC have set out options for change to charges in post 16 and spare seat travel, these are set out in the table below

No	Policy changes option	Mitigation	Cost Implications
1	Increase the parental Contribution for post 16 from £450 per year	£450 since 1/9/2018. Other LAs charge more than this	An increase to £900 which would be in line with neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester and would increase income by £48,100
2	Increase the Spare Seat cost from £460	Must be in line with post 16 for equity reasons. In 2017/18 £920 charge was piloted. Other LAs charge higher rate and some LAs do not offer parents the opportunity to buy a "spare seat"	Small impact, only a handful of seats

4.59 A comparison to other Local Authorities indicates that CEC charges are out of line. When combined with the facts that the current scheme charges fall significantly short of the cost of providing each seat and there has been no inflationary rise since 2018 it creates a powerful rationale to increase charges. We recommend that charges at least in line with neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester would appear sensible.

	Post 16 2021	Spare Seat 2021	Bespoke scheme
Cheshire East	£450	£460	£700
Council A		£880	
Council B	£625		
Council C	£1,000		
Council D	£779	£779	

Bespoke school scheme

- 4.60 There is also a scheme for ineligible passengers which has been contracted by a high school via TSS and now CEC, which are subsidised by contributions by charging parents.
- 4.61 Transport Service Solutions (TSS) previously held a contract with the high school to provide a school transport service for children who are not eligible for free school transport. When TSS ended in March 2022, the contract novated to the council, who have continued with the same transport providers and arrangements until the end of the academic year (end of July 2022). A decision now needs to be made around whether this arrangement continues from September 2022 onward.
- 4.62 When services provided by TSS were transferred to the council from 1 April 2022, the bespoke contract was novated to Cheshire East Council up to the end of term (July 2022), whilst a decision was made on the longer-term viability of this provision.
- 4.63 Eligible and ineligible pupils are transported to the school on the same vehicles. Those pupils who are not entitled to free transport must carry a travel ticket, purchased prior to travel. The buses operate a cashless system and drivers do not accept money.
- 4.64 A total of 289 pupils are currently transported to the high school as at May 2022
- 221 pupils are Cheshire East mainstream eligible children
 - 66 pupils purchase a travel ticket for a spare seat
 - 3 pupils are receiving transport via SEND and travel on contracted services.
- 4.65 In addition to the above some pupils also buy ad-hoc tickets issued by the school.

Clear overall recommendations for all scheme

- 4.66 In the main any changes to these schemes are unlikely to generate many benefits but have the potential to create significant noise. If charges are re-set to around £900 per annum, then the following increases are projected

Passengers paying	No	Increased income £
Bespoke scheme	66	13,200
Spare	27	11,880
Post 16	107	48,150
		73,230

- 4.67 Nevertheless, CEC is recommended to implement the following initiatives

- 1- All scheme seat charges should be equitable and consistent and be subjected to similar inflationary increases.
- 2- Spare seat/ post 16 and the bespoke scheme fares should rise in line with inflation each year, routine protocol, and be re-set to mitigate more of the cost of delivering the schemes and be in line with other neighbouring authorities. This is recommended to be around £900 per annum. Implementation for current paying passengers is recommended to take place over 3 tranches of increase to be affordable.
- 3- The bespoke scheme should be continued for the reasons outlined in the options appraisal but individual routes should be considered for private operator take-up. (a combination of option 1 and option 3)
- 4- The dedicated school scheme should not be expanded to other schools, schemes are unlikely to avoid adding to the cost burden for non-statutory travel.
- 5- In line with post 16 and spare seats, it is recommended that the contribution paid by the high is reviewed to reflect the increase in tender prices and the fact that CEC has no statutory obligation to continue providing the scheme.
- 6- Negotiations with the school are recommended to consider their annual payment to mitigate the shortfall in income to the cost of the scheme.
- 7- Ticketing software should be explored to assess loads and capacity to offer more spare seats/ bespoke seats where appropriate given

mainstream routes rarely operate at 100% loading and capacity and spare seat charges represents valuable income.

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5.0 TRANSPORT (TRAVEL) DELIVERY

General overview

- 5.1 The home to school transport service provides daily transport for 2,609 mainstream passengers and 925 SEND passengers to reach 195 different schools. This is delivered on 527 routes utilising 150 different contracted suppliers. In addition, there are a small number of bus passes given for those passengers using public bus routes.
- 5.2 The table over provides headline metrics which can be a useful starting point to understand performance, to compare client groups and to compare CEC with the average metrics of other similar, county authorities where we can be sure of comparable data. Benchmarks present many challenges and pitfalls because of different geography, demand demographics and supply markets and therefore we do not use it to calculate opportunity, they can nevertheless indicate where investigations should be made to qualify opportunities
- 5.3 The data raises some headline observations and lines of enquiry which provide direction for the review of performance. These include,
- I. The cost per SEND passenger appears significantly higher than other authorities. It will be important to understand the value from the prices achieved, also to examine factors which determine costs per passenger such as the utilisation of each vehicle and the distance of journeys.
 - II. Vehicle utilisation, or passengers per vehicle indicators, appear to be low. This is a key driver of cost. Geography and degree of rural isolation of passengers might be contributing factors but comparators are arguably similar or more challenging geography. It will be critical to assess the effectiveness of routing and the process of allocating new passengers to routes.
 - III. The number of PA's used on SEND routes is lower than normally expected. This could represent tight controls or be an indicator of difficulty in recruiting this role.
 - IV. The offer of travel training and PTBs are very low. This was covered in the last section

Ref:	Item:	CEC	Council A	Council B	Council C	Council D	Council E	Council F	UNITARY BASKET (5)	AVERAGE
1	School System:									
A	Number of Special Schools served by transport	130	72	176	20	39	26	110	35	
B	Number of mainstream schools with transport provided	65	96	n/k	81	142	108	189	40	
C	Number of EHCP's	3,000	3,500	8,500	n/k	n/k	1,870	5,900	1,700	
***	% of EHCP receiving transport	31%	42%	41%	n/k	n/k	50%	56%	42%	46%
2	Pupils Receiving Transport:									
A	Number of mainstream children with transport provided	2,609	3,369	15,000	4,700	3,575	1,542	14,657	3,900	
B	Number of SEN pupils with transport provided	925	1,474	3,501	1,144	2,421	929	3,281	719	
C	How many first stage appeals received per year	83	300	90	n/k	n/k	n/k	60	32	
D	Number receiving Personal Transport Budgets (PTB's) SEN and mainstream	63	10	400	334	148	54	98	118	
***	% PTBS offered of total passengers	0.20%	0.20%	2.10%	5.70%	2.50%	2.20%	0.50%	2.50%	2.24%
3	Operations:									
A	Mainstream - number of routes (not public bus routes)	172	265	n/k	139	190	44	915	38	
***	Mainstream passssengers per route	15	13	n/k	34	19	35	16	103	36
B	SEN - number of routes	355	501	713	555	678	476	689	208	
***	SEN - passengers per route	2.61	2.94	4.91	2.06	3.57	1.95	4.76	3.46	3.37
C	SEN- number of single passenger routes	163	204	281	248	269	174	280	54	
***	SEN - number of total routes with single passengers	46%	41%	39%	45%	40%	37%	41%	26%	38%
D	SEN- number of passenger assistants (escorts)	145	467	476	114	568	281	410	139	
***	SEN routes with escorts %	41%	93%	67%	21%	84%	59%	60%	67%	64%
E	Number of seats sold on a discretionary basis (spare seats sold to parents)	27	3,113	n/k	236	127	110	n/k	11	
F	How many pupils receive Independent Travel Training each year?	0	0	64	0	32	18	30	28	
4	Contracted Transport									
A	Total number of individual suppliers available for use on DPS or approved list	150	307	114	85	112	135	259	162	
B	Number of suppliers providing between 5 and 10 routes	22	41	24	19	17	8	33	11	
C	Number of suppliers providing more than 10 routes	16	21	15	13	22	6	45	9	
D	Number of contracted buses (over 8 seats)	67	349	n/k	40	10	38	228	112	
E	Number of contracted saloons and MPVS	342	774	628	654	1077	482	960	135	
F	Number of passenger assistants	155	527	3	115	568	281	410	165	
5	Transport Costs									
A	Total SEN direct route cost per annum (contract + internal fleet if used) £	8,400,000	10,800,000	13,105,000	8,436,364	13,908,492	9,479,000	13,400,000	2,782,000	
***	SEN cost per child per year	9,081	7,327	3,743	7,374	5,745	10,203	4,084	3,869	6,049
B	Total mainstream direct route costs (contract + internal fleet if used) £	6,000,000	4,000,000	n/k	5,187,057	2,361,408	3,480,000	13,800,000	2,890,999	
***	Mainstream cost per child per year	2,300	1,187	n/k	1,104	661	2,257	942	741	1,148
6	Question:									
A	Approximate geographical size of the Local Authority?	1,165km2	2,230km2	3,075km2	3,150km2	1,643km2	1,792km2	5,921 km2		
B	Rural classification	Largely rural	Largely rural	Rural with significant urban	Largely rural	Urban with significant rural	Largely rural	Mainly rural		
C	Population	386,700	527,000	1,495,000	633,000	1,195,000	558,000	756,000		
***	% of population receiving mainstream transport	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.3	0.3	1.9		
***	% of population receiving SEN transport	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4		
***	Population per km2 (density)	332	236	486	201	727	311	128	NA	348
D	Spare seats offered and sold?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no		
E	Transport provided to social care passengers?	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes		
F	Vehicles / routes shared across adults and children's transport?	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no		
G	Route optimisation system in place?	partial	no	yes	no	yes	no	no		
H	Evidence of robust annual or periodic reassessment?	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no		

Procurement, development, and management of supply

Overview & background

- 5.4 Contracted costs are high and are rising. The service explains rising costs of providing transport as reducing levels of supply and inflation associated with a faltering supply market. These are the key reasons for contract prices rising on re-tender.
- 5.5 Rather than provide analysis of the impact of each factor, which will typically not clearly conclude the impact of each, this review has sought to highlight opportunities to make improvements to the way suppliers are procured, and to work with suppliers to improve the value from contracts.

Supply/market engagement observations

- 5.6 There are over 150 suppliers on the existing DPS which appears to be a good base for healthy competition and represents laudable performance since its inception. This good base is also indicated by the spread of contracts across suppliers. In CEC 14 suppliers carry out 50% of the total demand which compares well to many other authorities where only 3 or 4 suppliers have evolved into providing majority of the supply.
- 5.7 Despite reported supply issues the team have resisted the currently typical reaction to re-negotiate or extend contracts as they come to an end, which is common across other authorities attempting to mitigate potentially higher prices by re-tender.
- 5.8 Despite some good practices in recent years by successfully engaging 150 suppliers, there are indications highlighting that even better and more focussed engagement with existing and new suppliers could be achieved.
- 5.9 There does not appear to be a clear whole service strategy in place to rectify escalating costs or mitigate the risks of further escalating costs. There is a real opportunity to better provide dedicated effort to manage and understand and develop the supply market.
- 5.10 Key metrics and information were not available and evidenced. As an example, there was no plan for routinely targeting more suppliers, and limited data on route costs using cost per mile indicators which is useful in indicating the value of a contract.
- 5.11 The work has not yet been carried out to identify where new suppliers might be and whilst there have been supplier engagement days and training offered on procurement processes, the approach of targeting and influencing those suppliers that are not engaging has been limited. This is a resource hungry activity and the team has struggled to identify resources to conduct this work

- 5.12 We carried out a basic task to identify suppliers in each of the key towns/areas in the region and whilst some of these may not be suitable suppliers it represents evidence of the presence of a larger supply market, with at least 200 additional suppliers over those already used identified in the largest 9 towns that serve Cheshire East, although please note that there may be small number of double counts where towns are close together.

Town	Current DPS	Within 2 miles	Within 5 miles
Congleton	7	20	24
Crewe	17	34	53
Macc	12	25	25
Nantwich	4	3	38
Northwich	12	25	50
Sandbach	8	13	54
Stoke	16	26	60
Wilmslow	2	25	48
Winsford	3	13	51
Total	81	184	403

- 5.13 We carried out a confidential telephone survey with a random selection of suppliers who were not on the current approved DPS. The results indicated some key reasons and common perceptions for them not engaging. From experience these can be typically easily overcome with engagement. The key themes to the reasons for not currently engaging include:

- I. There are too many hurdles to secure council work.
- II. Work is given to a few regular suppliers.
- III. Would be keen, but do not understand how to go about it.

Other reasons which the Contracts and Performance team commonly experience include the following, and are issues which engagement and influencing suppliers may help overcome

- I. They will not agree to terms and conditions
- II. They are not able to guarantee supply as they do not have a back-up option (i.e., if their vehicle is broken/staff sickness)
- III. They are unwilling to undertake the clearance process for their staff

-
- IV. They make more income from airport runs/party hire etc therefore tying vehicle up 2 x a day not viable
 - V. Not willing to commit to long term contracts
 - VI. Technically challenged and not even willing to take up the offer of support on The Chest
- 5.14 In terms of current suppliers, it was evident that whilst there are some annual forums and periodic supplier days there is an opportunity for greater engagement of individual suppliers where a greater understanding of the business could be gleaned, confidence given, and innovation sought in new ways of tendering, including how batches of routes might be best developed.
- 5.15 Feedback from current suppliers included that it was not made easy for new suppliers to join the DPS and windows were open only at certain times which put many off. The processes insisted upon by licensing such as a 5 weeks course to support tests, was unusual and prevented many new drivers engaging. It is recommended that if anything can change to make the process more appealing, it should be considered.
- 5.16 Contracts are for a variety of durations but commonly 4 years duration and are reasonably well written with suitable performance clarity and penalty regime. However, the following points were noted for improvement
- I. A re-refresh of the contract will provide greater clarity in respect of the contracts appear to be written with a leaning toward bigger bus contracts. Important to reference smaller vehicles.
 - II. The notice periods are not balanced. The council must give 30 days of notice for changes to routes with smaller than 16 seaters and 90 days for 16 seat and above. This is unusual and requires termination clause for convenience.
 - III. No mention of electronic tendering. This will be important in the future.
 - IV. Contracts have not been digitalised.
- 5.17 The existing DPS contracted to by TSS will now need to be replaced by CEC and efforts now must be focussed on this process. This work can be done in parallel to engaging more suppliers for the new DPS in the lead up to procurement for September 2023.
- 5.18 The very nature of a DPS is an open contract which can allow new suppliers to join at any time. However, there is evidence that TSS and now CEC only allow windows of access to the DPS. This is restrictive and every effort should be made to make access for suppliers easier.

Competition and value achieved from the current procurement process,

- 5.19 A critical observation when examining how competitive the procurement process is, is that contract end dates are not synchronized. The 530 contracts have over 35 different end dates roughly organised in 6 different periods of time. This is a fundamental issue can stifle competition because suppliers are unable to bid for new contracts and provide better prices because they are already at capacity providing another contract or contracts which are not yet ready to end. It is recommended that contracts are synchronised on a geographic basis to one of 3 end dates.

Competition and value achieved from the current procurement process,

- 5.20 Assessing the value achieved from competitive bids is challenging in this marketplace because comparisons of cost per passenger are impacted by geography. However, where route mileage data is available, we can compare the cost per mile charged by suppliers and compare this to other similar authorities and we can also compare the cost of CEC contracted routes against the cost per mile that the licensed taxi tariff charges in the area. However, the council does not routinely identify and keep data on route mileage, and this plays no part in any routine evaluation of the value that contracts deliver. Capturing this data will be an opportunity for the future and enable more robust route value and procurement assessment. For the purposes of this review, we were able to generate and secure route mileage data.
- 5.21 By examining saloon car contracts for the route sample, the table below shows CEC has one of the highest overall costs per mile and highest cost per mile over the longer distances. The comparisons are made against other authorities' routes.

	Overall £ per mile	£ per mile for a 5-15 mile journey	£ per mile for a 15-25 mile journey
Council A	4.74	6.20	4.05
Council B	5.10	6.70	4.60
Council C	3.11	3.50	2.53
Council D	6.89	8.50	4.56
Council E	5.50	5.50	5.50
CEC	6.10	7.10	5.88

Average costs per mile on contracted transport

- 5.22 We can also examine the cost of a journey using CEC's contracted cost per mile for saloons versus the rate that would be achieved by calling a private hire taxi and charging the licensed tariff. The council's standard tariff is a £3.20 for the first half mile and £2.00 per mile thereafter.

	10 mile journey	20 mile journey
Licensed Tariff cost £	22.20	41.20
Average CEC Contracted cost £	71.00	118.00

- 5.23 It is quite normal to see higher contracted prices for home to school type of work as suppliers add a premium as this work can stifle their ability to take customers in the lead up to collection times and there is often waiting time on collection and drop-off. However, the difference in price is not usually so marked, we expect to see premiums of around 20-25% for contracted supply but in CEC a 10miles journey is nearly four times as much and a 20 mile journey three times as much. This indicates that there is likely to be an opportunity to competitively secure better prices and it also indicates the importance that suppliers will likely place on securing profitable council work, this evidence shows that council work is still lucrative and is likely to be highly valued as well as an opportunity to secure improved prices.

Other observations in respect of managing bids and suppliers.

- 5.24 There is little analysis of how contract prices have moved after original award, it is recommended that these measures are monitored as they are essential to aid understanding of the cost of new demand, and to ensure all avenues are taken to ensure best competitive value. This will be important in trying to rationalise recent escalations in the cost of children and young people's travel.
- 5.25 Consideration should be given to setting out a standard fixed mechanism of price adjustment to control variations mid contract term, which all suppliers will be requested to contract to.
- 5.26 Batches of contracts are not commonly issued. It is recommended where tactically appropriate that batches of routes are only biddable as a composite. There is an opportunity to be much more tactical. For example, using batching to ensure all contracts receive many bids by placing a potentially unpopular route/contract with popular ones and stipulating bids will only be considered for all of them together.

- 5.27 There appears to be a deficiency in focused contract management and monitoring of suppliers. Whilst there are provisions in the contract to penalise suppliers and there is some evidence of this happening, it is recommended that performance reviews and performance summaries are developed which will support the objective of understanding suppliers better and helping them to develop for the future

Recommendations for effective market engagement and procurement

- 5.28 Good work has taken place to generate participation in a DPS and develop the supply base. It is noted that temporary arrangements are in place whilst a new DPS is developed. However, there is an opportunity to develop the supply base further, and competition can be improved if more suppliers are engaged and trained to access the DPS and bid electronically, and then further to encourage more engagement in procurement/bidding activities for available work. It is therefore recommended that a comprehensive engagement exercise is undertaken to encourage suppliers to bid for council work and an effort to educate them in how to do so. Areas of poor supply and low numbers of bids have been identified and now need focus on for supplier identification. The effort to set up the current DPS with the number of suppliers is recognised and this compares well versus other authorities.
- 5.29 The Contracts and Performance team have concerns over the low number of bids received for some tenders. However, analysis of the recent tender round in May 2022 shows an average 5.8 bids per tender, which is comparable to analysis done for the 2017 internal audit. Nevertheless, there are 13 lots with 3 bids or lower although there are explanations for those with 1 bid such as a more remote area and a large coach for a short journey.

Bids	No of lots
1 bid	3
2 bids	2
3 bids	8
4 bids	5
5 bids	13
6 bids	6
7 bids	6
8 bids	3
9 bids	4
10 bids	2
11 bids	1
12 bids	2
Total lots	55

May 2022 tender round

- 5.30 Whilst comparable to 2017, there still appears to be a low number of bidders than we would normally see and all efforts to increase suppliers is a sensible course of action.
- 5.31 Electronic reverse auctioning will add competition to the bidding process with suppliers able to see where their bid sits, see the winning bid, and consider bidding an improved price. The exercise will require significant resources to offer engagement, training, and support to suppliers as well as manage the electronic reverse auction process
- 5.32 There may be reservations about using electronic reverse auction on the grounds that the Contracts and Performance team are unsure about the evidence of potential savings opportunity level against the level of resources that will be required to educate suppliers and manage the process.
- 5.33 However, there are likely to be significant benefits and evidence of success in local authorities where electronic auctioning has been deployed is provided later in this section.

Recommendation

- 5.34 It is recommended that a full re-procurement is carried out in three tranches to coincide with September 2023, January 2024, and April 2024 term commencement. Carrying this out in three tranches will allow careful management of the workload, and better communications regarding the changes with schools, parents, and suppliers. Commencing the transformation in January 2023 will allow time to engage, educate and train the supply market, re-route, and create tenders, communicate with schools and parents, and implement and train staff in the required systems. Notice will need to be given to allow changes to contracts to enable their synchronisation into one of the 3 procurement events. The tranches are recommended to be designed geographically to further increase competition.
- 5.35 An exercise of re-procurement will be a huge task requiring careful supplier and user/parent communications and management. The task has some clear interdependencies with other key recommendations in this report including,
- I. Exercise to identify and engage the supply market.
 - II. Evaluation of new supplier bids to access the DPS.
 - III. Varying with agreement or retender the proposed new DPS to accommodate process of reverse auction
 - IV. Re-routing of all areas and development of new contracts and tender batches.

- V. Implementing procurement software that supports electronic reverse auctioning and ensure suppliers are educated and coached to engage and engage effectively.
- 5.36 Competition will be improved by better routing. A routing overhaul, explained later, will release vehicles into the supply market and therefore provide greater competition for routes.

Benefits of procurement improvements.

- 5.37 Significant savings are expected by increasing competition and procuring using the initiatives recommended. The table below summarises the impact made where local authorities had similar circumstances to CEC, such as opportunities to engage the supply market, to coach in the use of electronic tendering, and benefit more from a healthy DPS and use reverse auctioning. Sustainable savings will be the result after the operation has settled down and any initial hand-backs have been managed.
- 5.38 Whilst there are significant opportunities to improve value from suppliers in CEC from the current position there are likely limitations which are bespoke to this area on the remaining size of the supply market and other factors such as suppliers having the potential to bid for work in arguably more lucrative surrounding local authorities.
- 5.39 These factors have been carefully considered and we have conservatively reduced the typically expected minimum returns of a full re-procurement exercise. Therefore, we expect a full re-procurement exercise will realise at least 5% saving of current supplier costs. These savings will be phased given the recommended tranches of implementation
- 5.40 The table below summarises the benefits achieved in councils with similar circumstances and provides good evidence and surety that the benefits outlined for are conservative, achievable, and sustainable.

	Increase to suppliers used on framework	System before	System after	Saving %
Council A	12%	Tender per route from approved list	DPS and electronic reverse auction per route	15%
Council B	16%	Paper pence per mile	Electronic reverse auction per route	22%
Council C	24%	Paper tender per routes	Electronic reverse auction per route	19%
Council D	34%	Full tender prices per route	Electronic reverse auction per route	18%
Council E	8%	DPS but no electronic tendering	Electronic reverse auction per route	17%

Routing and logistics

Headline observations

- 5.41 In most local authority operations, it is common practice to continually evaluate, on top of the initial overhaul, all opportunities to re-route throughout the year to reflect changes in demand and to carry out a fundamental route overhaul periodically and sometimes annually. Many authorities have some form of routing software to support this activity.
- 5.42 Detailed below are some key observations made of the services routing,
- I. CEC has procured routing software in MTC and experimented with using it on some routes.
 - II. There is an apparent apprehension to conduct a major route overhaul. This is because of a lack of capacity and the potential to upset parents and schools of the children who have been transported consistently on routes for long periods of time and the perceived potential for a lack of support from CEC for an overhaul which has the potential to create disturbance. This hesitancy extends to upsetting suppliers who may have been carrying out set routes for long periods of time and are struggling to trade at a difficult time.

- III. Whilst routing software is available and has been used in part, there is currently no clear plan to how a more fundamental routing exercise might take place.

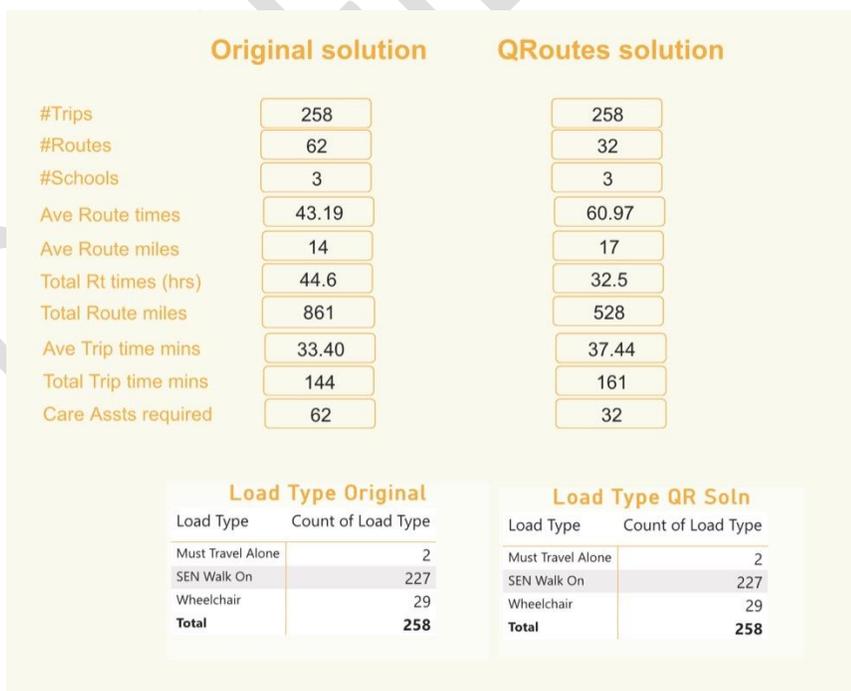
The scale of the opportunity

5.43 We used ‘Q-Routes’ a comparable routing software to examine the opportunity to re-route. We conducted a re-routing exercise on all routes to 3 large SEN schools.

5.44 With some clear assumptions and by ensuring that the following parameters were adhered we confidently and empirically gauge that there is a significant opportunity to conduct a fundamental re-routing exercise

- I. New routes were calibrated against existing routes on the same software (we effectively applied current routes to the system to be the benchmark) so a like for like comparison could be made, and peak travel time was calibrated at Monday mornings.
- II. New routes were never allowed to take longer than 75 mins for any passenger
- III. PA, wheelchair space and data on which children needed to travel alone was incorporated into the analysis.

5.45 The exercise resulted in some significant opportunities to reduce the current number of routes (currently 62 routes carrying 258 children) by half.



- 5.46 When we do this exercise with similar assumptions in other authorities, we commonly highlight an opportunity route reduction of around 25% so there is certainly a big opportunity in CEC.
- 5.47 Naturally there will be specific operational reasons why the refined routes may not be exactly possible to implement such as particular requirements of passengers needing to be picked up in a certain order or children that need to be transported independently. There may be a shortage in supply of larger vehicles. For these reasons, we have assumed a conservative route reduction potential of 12.5%.
- 5.48 From experience, we are confident that we can apply the route reduction opportunity to schools/destinations which have 5 or more routes into them and not including routes which are serviced by coaches, large buses, and double-deckers as reductions in these routes are less likely to be possible.
- 5.49 By doing this extrapolation we conclude that around 300 routes are impactable from the 527 (ignoring cash grants) total routes in CEC. At an average cost of £22,000 per route per annum. A 12.5% reduction is 37 routes which would save £814,000 per annum over 3 phases in line with the re-procurement programme.
- 5.50 An important benefit would be the release of 37 vehicles which would serve to improve competition on tendering and reduce vehicles on the roads at peak times. Whilst a headline assumption, this is a powerful point. 37 vehicles reduction would also broadly equate to a reduction of 777 tonnes of carbon reduction.
- 5.51 It is recommended that Mobi-soft is used to plot the total solution and using cleansed and complete data. This will present the opportunity which can be further adapted with operational knowledge. Implementation will be complex exercise to co-ordinate, especially as it is best to coincide with re-procurement events and therefore it is recommended to be planned over 3 tranches.
- 5.52 Efforts to increase the supply of larger vehicle availability should be pursued, which will allow higher levels of re-routing efficiency.

Single person journeys

- 5.53 There are often good reasons for needing single person journeys such as the needs of the passenger mean that they cannot mix with others, or that the passenger cannot be placed on group transport for geographical/logistical reasons, and sometimes contractor drivers may refuse to carry mis-behaving or challenging children on group transport.

- 5.54 Examination of the key metric of the 'number of single journeys as a % of total journeys', can indicate leniency (more risk averse approach) to allocating journeys, poorer routing or geography necessitating single person vehicles.
- 5.55 In discussions with the team, it was evident that resources to continually re-appraise and re-consider single person journeys retrospectively are stretched, however initiatives to re-evaluate every single passenger have taken place and is further recommended as part of the change project.
- 5.56 In CEC 163 of the 355 SEN routes are single person journeys which represents 45%. Whilst this does not represent poor performance against the benchmarks it is still worth re-assessing and focussing on whether more single passengers can be combined into group transport or considered for a PTB.
- 5.57 The cost of transporting single passengers is always significantly higher and averages at c£17,000 per annum. Therefore, it should always be an important initiative to continually consider ways of routing passengers on group routes by better logistics and challenging the need for a single journey.
- 5.58 For mainstream the benchmark average is 10% with some authorities having none. CEC does not have an evident problem, with numbers negligible.

Customer/user focus

- 5.59 Customer focus forums with parents and Headteachers and survey of parents highlighted that there was a need for improvements to resolve the following issues and/or perceptions. Feedback is detailed in Appendix C however the headlines include
- I. Who to contact is not always clear and this extended to not having confidence that any one part of the travel organisation is going to take accountability for resolving an issue.
 - II. Communications in respect of changes to transport are commonly last-minute causing anxiety. Information on the needs of the child were not always passed to the new contractor.
 - III. Parents are not sure what to expect in respect of changes to routes and when changes may happen. Their expectations were not being managed.

It is recommended that the following actions are considered and implemented

- I. Publish the complaints process and make alterations to CEC website where complaints in respect of transport can be confused with public bus complaints.

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- II. Publish clear contact information with times of the day when someone will be available to resolve issues. The team are now looking at including clear contact details on the footers of all correspondence.
 - III. Whilst subcontracting is permitted it must be reinforced that CEC must be made aware of the arrangement and the details of the arrangement so that ownership of vetted driver and P.A is evidenced. New/ changed arrangements must be communicated to parents up front. To this end, guidance to suppliers and appropriate sanctions should be strengthened. The same conditions and tests should be levied to sub-contractors used such as English Language tests.
 - IV. Ensure a child 'passport' is developed containing all relevant information about a passenger, including needs and this is shared with the driver/PA.
 - V. Put into place a clear protocol for changes to routes and new routes. This should include
 - a. Aspirational notice period for parents to know a change is coming. The team do currently send 'out to tender' letters
 - b. Details including photo of new driver/PA within a time span before the change
 - c. A re-focus on pre day 1 meet and greets with parents and re-introduction of the 'meet and greet' performance measure to enable management of suppliers.
 - d. Include clear measures of performance in overall reporting. Such as % of meet and greets achieved.
- 5.59 It is recommended that a passenger charter is developed in co-production with parent groups, published and shared to outline what parents can expect to see in respect of their arrangements and how change of driver/route will be implemented. This should include some commitments to users and parents which should include
- I. Changes to routes/drivers will be communicated in advance and with notice
 - II. Likely dates for changes resulting from known re-procurement events will be communicated
 - III. New drivers and PA's will meet and greet passengers before first pick up and if this is not possible then photos and details of the people and vehicle sent to passengers

- IV. Drivers/PA's will have details of each passenger on the route
- V. Drivers and PA's will have a good command of English
- VI. Subcontracting transport will not make any of the points above any less imperative to comply with.

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6.0 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

General strategy, organisation

GS1	Embark on a 3 year transformation programme to deliver recommendations in this report and commence in early 2023. For the remainder of 2022 commence detailed timeline plans and identify additional capacity and capability required to support implementation.
GS2	Re-launch the CYP Travel service with branding, strategy and focus on travel support, child independence and reduced reliance on 'door to door' transport and towards alternative travel solutions.
GS3	Integrate all aspects of travel delivery into a dedicated and integrated travel team and ensure a joined-up strategy and direction for travel with Corporate wide support and overall accountability for total expenditure
GS4	Implement clear performance management reporting on costs and delivery performance to allow more accurate forecasting and management.
GS5	Provide communications and engagement to schools, parents and users of transformation and culture shift, re-setting expectations and importance of the changes required.

Policy, Assessment & Demand management

P1	Combine service and integrate systems, extend use of Mobi-soft to assessment and therefore streamline the process from application to delivery. Carry out in a modular fashion beginning with improving Mobi-soft data integrity, ownership, and user training on the system.
P2	Introduce controls on social care, gatekeeping of requests and reporting use against available budget and reason codes. Work with social care decision makers on costs and importance of notice period to allow effective procurement of supply.
P3	Ensure policy wording re-sets expectations of travel, independence at the core, provides clarity, and ensures robust application of entitlement.
P4	Re-brand policy and all assessment and delivery process into 'Travel solutions' and away from transport and implication of a 'door to door' transport offer being the norm.
P5	Highlight and develop alternative travel solutions through the policy, assessment process and resources dedicated to promotion, such as private budgets and travel training. Integrate travel needs into assessment and reassessment process for EHCPs.
P6	Highlight that travel is not granted for life and will be robustly re-assessed periodically. Put re-assessment process in place and bring back from school accountability.
P7	Ensure application forms are completed for SEN by parents with full evidence of circumstances requested and checked
P8	Enhance the application process to draw out more supporting evidence required for entitlement to be determined and highlight opportunities to offer alternative travel offers such as PB's and travel training.
P9	Ensure resources are made available to re-assess all passengers as a one-off exercise and then on a routine basis and ensure record of review and outcome is kept. Prioritise those under statutory distance and lacking distance data, and expensive single person journeys. Ensure transport is discussed as part of the annual EHCP review to reflect changing needs that may impact transport requirements.

P10	Clarify clear grounds for appeal in the policy and ensure appeal process is not used for dealing with service delivery complaints.
P11	Approve business case and implement strategic effort to promote travel training across all schools, re-set expectation. Develop model of training delivery based on commissioning service from a partner and using in-house resources to lead on promotion and identification of candidates
P12	Develop a flexible and negotiated offer of PTBs for all appropriate passengers. Re-assess all passengers for PTB in line with prioritising expensive single passenger routes
P13	Automate PTB payments and eradicate process of waiting for attendance data before approval
P14	Re-assess passengers, prioritising those under statutory distance and agree protocols for implementation of changes with services and members.
P15	Conduct programme of identification of small capital schemes to improve safe walking routes on potential high-volume routes. Agree protocol and strategy for implementing safe walking routes.
P16	Harmonise the post 16, spare seat and bespoke scheme charges and bring into line with other authorities and reflect inflation. Annual routine inflation protocol implemented for all schemes.
P17	Continue the bespoke scheme but re-negotiate contribution from the high school, examine possibility of private route take-up of the largely ineligible routes
P18	Do not expand the dedicated scheme, but use spare seats and larger vehicles on the basis of being economical advantageous to do so and ensuring there are no long-term obligations to continue providing (avoid legacy schemes)

Operational Delivery

TD1	Embark on a comprehensive supply market engagement exercise to better understand the market and encourage new suppliers to access the DPS and bid for work
TD2	Consider improvements to the licensing process to make entry for new applicants more appealing.
TD3	Ensure DPS window for new applicants is always open
TD4	Synchronise contract end dates
TD5	Update contracts with re-balanced notice periods, more specific to smaller vehicles etc
TD6	Put into place a system of reverse auctioning for all contracts to increase competition and conduct re-procurement exercise over three tranches commencing September 2023
TD7	Develop use of tactical batching of tenders

TD8	Re-route using software for each school, prioritising schools with more than 5 vehicle routes, ensure re-routing over 3 tranches before development of new route tenders for re-procurement using reverse auctioning
TD9	Provide coaching and support to suppliers to use electronic and reverse auctioning. Focus on communications to schools and users.
TD10	Capture data on route mileage and test value on a cost per mile basis during tender process and during lifetime of contract.
TD11	Embark on MTC data cleanse exercise
TD12	Encourage participation from suppliers in neighbouring councils for work on the county borders.
TD13	Ensure all routes are tendered using electronic reverse auctioning, even routes commencing mid-term or where changes are required. Utilise an ad-hoc/ emergency framework of prices for short term requirements.
TD14	Continue the process of appraising all single passenger journeys for alternative solutions including group travel or PTBs
TD15	Engage with suppliers with regular performance reviews where aspirations and concerns can be understood, confidence provided for growth. Understand the supply market better
TD16	Develop suite of performance reports and performance regime
TD17	Develop improved database functionality ability to communicate, send messages, forecast, and develop reporting
TD18	Share clear complaints procedure and report complaint numbers, update website to provide clarity on how to make a complaint for the service
TD19	Implement clear protocols for change to routes including an aspirational timeframe of notice for parent, child 'passport' outlining information to needs to supplier, detail of driver (photo) to family before day 1.
TD20	Begin to manage expectation of change so families know when the retender events are likely to happen for their route. This will be easier with synchronisation of contract end dates on a zonal basis. Publish a passenger charter to outline what they can expect to see in respect of delivery and when changes are made.
TD21	Clarify and manage conditions for subcontracting by suppliers

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

- 7.1 The recommended strategy and initiatives now required to achieve this transformation will need support across the council including strong political leadership with the proposed transformation programme delivering the following critical themes
- I. Creating an Integrated Travel Team that delivers a joined-up travel offer, policy, strategic direction and which performs effectively and has clear accountability for overall costs and service levels.
 - II. Overhauled and effective routes that best consider the individual needs of passengers, best use of suppliers, and benefits from newly developed routing software
 - III. A better developed and ignited supply market with improved competition. Through effective and innovative procurement therefore maximising value.
 - IV. An effective travel service with robust Governance and clear accountabilities, benefitting from an enhanced performance culture supported by improved data, systems, reporting and measurement.
 - V. A shift of the travel offering to one with improved management of the expectations of parents, schools, and users so that the offer moves to the provision of 'travel solutions' in the most cost-effective way and in a manner that promotes life-long independence through better use of private travel budgets and supported by policy re-branding.
- 7.2 The programme will be complex and intensive, will likely take around 3 years to fully deliver and will require robust planning, and complex stakeholder communications. Successful implementation will be dependent on significant additional resources, strong leadership, and Governance.
- 7.3 Momentum and speed are now key to maximise the benefits outlined in the transport review. For every month of delay there is a lost saving opportunity of approx. £175,000 which will be the sustainable monthly saving benefit at the end of the programme, and the lost benefits of improved services and greater independence for some of your most vulnerable children.
- 7.4 It is recommended that the programme is considered as one programme of initiatives which combine to produce overall benefits. Any cost benefit proposals to secure funding for resources to support delivery should consider

the transformation as one programme not least because there are many initiatives that are dependent on one another and have a common theme of culture change, performance improvement and managing expectation of users.

Resources

- 7.5 The review could not easily identify the required resources and expertise to carry out this transformation from internal teams and therefore it is recommended that the council appraises a range of options to secure the resources required. This may be from an in-house source or engaging the services of a niche provider of expertise in a partnership arrangement.

Leadership & capacity

- 7.6 Resources will be required to lead and deliver transformation and must supplement those required to deliver the day-to-day operation and will not be insignificant. It is imperative that these resources possess the skills and practical knowledge of a Children and Young People travel service, to be effective.
- 7.7 Generic managers, project managers or general consultants/interim managers are not normally successful and specific abilities and skills will be required such as those detailed below (not exhaustive).
- I. Programme leadership, transformation leadership, not just project but hands-on change leadership and complex planning of re-procurement
 - II. Ability to influence and inspire confidence whilst fronting supplier forums and coaching suppliers through bidding
 - III. Experience in developing transport tenders, tactical batches, development of lots and re-procuring using e-auctions
 - IV. Experience of re-routing using software and then understanding local knowledge and talking, influencing, and consulting with parents and schools
 - V. Making performance culture changes, influencing teams, implementing performance regimes
 - VI. Developing and making systems work for users, transport database and routing capability.

- VII. Assessing children for travel entitlement and best form of travel using EHCP, application forms and other evidence to support Assessment teams
 - VIII. Supporting a re-assessment programme and implementing decisions in an effective and low risk way
- 7.8 Additional resources will need to flex to meet peaks and troughs in demand for the programme and may be as high as 6 FTE in peak periods. This flexibility requirement usually is a key factor in favour of a support partnership.
- 7.9 A support partnership is sometimes more effective with a risk contract. This is where a provider will commit to deliver the outputs or risk their fees from not delivering targets.
- 7.10 The table on the next page seeks to compare the different options available to secure the resources which will be required.

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	Support partnership	In-house team	Rationale
Cost over 3 years		£0.75m	In house team would not have ability to fluctuate
Flexibility of resources	YES	NO	Resources flex between peaks and troughs in the programme in partnership but challenging for in-house team
Fixed cost	YES	NO	Support partnership is procured to deliver outputs and will add resources to meet the outputs if required
Downsize implications	NO	YES	There will be a need after the programme to return to normal staffing levels
Knowledge & expertise in travel	YES	UNLIKELY	Experience of doing this before
Skills to deliver	YES	UNLIKELY	Vey specific skills in developing supply, influencing culture of parents and schools
Guarantee of delivery	YES	NO	Partner can offer risk model to protect council and guarantee savings
Leadership	YES	CHALLENGING	Support partnership can work alongside delivery team taking a leadership role, in-house team likely to be subsumed
Independence	YES	NO	Significant experience and understanding of changing the culture of expectation is crucial and influencing decision making across stakeholders
Time to mobilise	IMMEDIATE	3-6 MONTHS	The Council loses guaranteed savings of £200,000-250,000 for every month of delay

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Efficiency	Rationale	Potential annual returns				Risk
		23/24	24/25	25/26	On-going	
1	Reprocurement of current supply contracts	148,000	590,000	590,000	590,000	
2	Re-route	204,000	814,000	814,000	814,000	
TOTAL		352,000	1,404,000	1,404,000	1,404,000	

Demand, income, alternative, cost	Rationale	Annual returns				Risk
		23/24	24/25	25/26	On-going	
3	Re-assessment	52,602	105,204	157,806	157,806	
4	Introduce travel training	50,000	130,000	210,000	210,000	
5	Promotion of PTB's	125,000	250,000	375,000	375,000	
6	Post 16/ spare seats/ PHS	35,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	
7	Extra staffing	-70,000	-70,000	-70,000	-70,000	
TOTAL		192,602	485,204	742,806	742,806	

TOTAL	544,602	1,889,204	2,146,806	2,146,806
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Appendix A Summary feedback - current suppliers

1	CEC must rectify licence process. It compares as very stringent to other authorities. A 5week college course and knowledge test. This is putting drivers off. It can take 6 months to get a licence.
2	Must rectify the access to DPS/ approved list. They do not allow open access apart from at specific times. New drivers are walking away. Must make it easier to sign up.
3	Poor communications on big ticket issues such as inflation. Nobody replies and we lose trust which means we are inclined to let the work dwindle and focus on other stuff
4	No development work and understanding our business with us. If I knew availability and trusted direction I would invest in vehicle. Come and talk to us.
5	They are making too many planning and routing mistakes such as: 1- 6th formers just roll through into transport, we know and see it happen 2- they include kids that have left on the route sheets, their records are poor, meanwhile I am providing too bigger vehicle for the number of kids 3- they don't have the knowledge to route effectively so I push back a lot
6	Chest is a nonsense and too complex.....just use email which they are doing right now
7	There is a big problem in them being able to sort issues as they are not together in the office. Decisions do not get made and they have to email one another which sometimes creates delays when the situation is urgent. Phones ring out.
8	Not enough staff in the transport ops team to handle the queries and understand us.

Appendix B Summary feedback - suppliers not currently engaged

Discipline	Summary response
Taxi/Minibus	Worked for CEC in the past. Looks out for tenders. Is interested but not sure how to look forward and to get bids in on time. Would welcome advice on how to get on current framework/ approval list
Taxis	It appears to be the usual few providers who have contacts in the council and are savvy with their computers
Taxi/Minibus	You need an army of pen pushers to keep up with their requirements.
Coach hire	Too much paperwork, also not sure if work type suited their business model but were interested in what type of rates were on offer
Taxis	Have worked before but too awkward. Having said that it would be good to have it to fall back on at the moment.
Taxis	They know it pays well if you can get a good contract, used to work for a council, but seems sewn up with regular suppliers
Taxi Minibus	Not enough money in it. Takes too much out of the day.
Minibus Hire	Not our model, so don't really look. Where do you see the jobs that they are looking for?
Coach and minibus hire	Not interested "Just not the kind of thing we do".
Taxis	Not interested as too much paperwork and never open to get on the list
Taxis	Ties you up but for the right price, who knows? How do I find out what's available?
Taxis	Made enquiries a few years ago but thought it was quite a rigmarole to become approved. Too complex. However, given airport work is dried up they regret not having a chance of work and would welcome finding out how.

Appendix C Summary feedback -users/ parents/setting stakeholders

Stakeholder	Summary response
Head	Would like more input into solutions to reduce safeguarding risks e.g., when children shouldn't travel together
Head	Very limited use of PA's. School would always travel with staff to child ratio but sometimes 5 children might be alone with a driver which is risky for the driver
Head	Difficult to get hold of the transport ops office at times when problems most likely to occur e.g., 8am
Head	Some cars not suitable for the size and number of passengers
Head	Because assessment protocols have changed over years it causes lack of equity in those entitled and offered transport. Children are being rejected for needs which were previously met.
Head	Parents believe they are entitled to free transport if their SEN child travels further than their nearest mainstream school based on need. This is not the case if they are travelling less than statutory distance.
Head	Schools take on board most of the communications with parent's ref transport
Head	Drivers and PAs don't have to carry out safeguarding training. This would be ideal.
Social care	Social workers little fiscal awareness of travel decisions outside of what are statutory requirements
General	Parental expectation is high and reinforced by articulate and powerful parent groups and supported by member led appeals
General	CEC is often parental needs led, rather than the needs of the child
Parent	Hard to know who to contact as there are many departments involved. Hard to find someone to take accountability for a problem.
Parent	There is a lack of understanding of eligibility criteria across each team

Parent	Cash grants take a long time to pay and I have to chase each month and they are not automated and finding staff that understand them is not easy
Parent	I have never had an inflationary rise for my cash grant
Parent	Transport arrangements are never discussed in my child's annual plan review, it would be useful to consider this as it's an important part of my child's day and needs.
Parent	Poor communications on changes to transport arrangements. We feel anxious at the beginning of each term regarding which driver and PA will turn up. Changes happen without notice and without communication. "Meet and Greets" before day 1 do not happen, even a photo of the driver would help. We understand changes need to happen but they are managed poorly.
Parent	If my driver changes there is rarely any knowledge and understanding of my child's needs and we are forced to start again and the onus feels like it is on us.
Parent	We have little visibility of the complaint's procedure, is there one?
Parent	Contractors are subcontracting to others without our knowledge which has on occasions left me not knowing where my child was and who they were with
Parent	Some drivers do not speak English which is very distressing for our children
Parent	Cannot get hold of anyone at peak times when issues occur such as at 0730 in the morning
Parent	There does not appear to be any penalty for poor performing supply firms, we all know the ones to avoid but nothing ever happens to the ones that fall short of safety and performance. Some firms have a reputation for handing back their contracts and causing operational chaos.
Parent	We are very keen to explore travel training but this has never really taken off and there does not appear to be anyone who can talk to us about it
Parent	The approval process for transport was OK and happened smoothly

Appendix D Stakeholders engaged in the review

Area	Stakeholder Name	Position
School Transport and Admissions Team	Jo Bowkett	Manager, Admissions and School Transport
School Transport Team	Clair Kiffin	Manager, School Transport Operations Manager
School Transport Team	Helen Rawlinson	Transport Manager, School Transport Team
Transport (Place)	Richard Hibbert	Head of Strategic Transport and Parking
Transport (Place)	Trevor Robinson	Contracts & Performance Manager, Transport Contracts & Monitoring
Transport (Place)	Jenny Marston	Policy & Accessibility Manager
Corporate services	Helen Green	Group Finance Business Partner (TSS finance)
Corporate services	Steve Reading	Principal Accountant, Children and Families Services
Education Services	Jacky Forster	Director of Education and Skills
Children and Families	Gill Betton	Head of Service for Children's Development & Partnerships
Education Services	Sally Ashworth	Interim Head of Service: Pupil Participation and Support
SEND	Laura Rogerson	Head of Service for Inclusion
Children's social care	Kerry Birtles	Director children's social care
Children's social care	Louise Hurst	Head of Service, CIN/CP
Children's social care	Keith Martin	Service Manager – Children with Disabilities
Children's social care	Annemarie Parker	Head of Cared for children and care leavers
Licencing	Tracey Bettaney	Head of Regulatory Services
Licencing	Kim Evans	Licencing Manager
Providers (ANSA)	Sarah Tunstall	Fleet Manager
Head Teacher	Nevin Deakin	Marton & District Primary
Head Teacher (PRU)	Gemma Bailey	Oakfield Lodge School
Head Teacher (Special)	Lisa Hodgkinson	Springfield Special School
Head Teacher	Matthew Dean	Poynton High School
Post 16	Mark Jones	Cheshire College South and West, Post 16 rep
CEPCF	Kate Walters	Parent carer forum

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Efficiency	Rationale	Potential annual returns				Risk
		23/24	24/25	25/26	On-going	
1	Reprocurement of current supply contracts	148,000	590,000	590,000	590,000	Green
2	Re-route	204,000	814,000	814,000	814,000	Yellow
TOTAL		352,000	1,404,000	1,404,000	1,404,000	

Demand, income, alternative, cost	Rationale	Annual returns				Risk
		23/24	24/25	25/26	On-going	
3	Re-assessment	52,602	105,204	157,806	157,806	Yellow
4	Introduce travel training	50,000	130,000	210,000	210,000	Green
5	Promotion of PTB's	125,000	250,000	375,000	375,000	Green
6	Post 16/ spare seats/	35,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	Yellow
7	Extra staffing	-70,000	-70,000	-70,000	-70,000	Green
TOTAL		192,602	485,204	742,806	742,806	

TOTAL

544,602	1,889,204	2,146,806	2,146,806
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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Cheshire East Holiday and Activities Food Programme

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
31/010/2022	FINAL	Gill Betton	NA

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL –EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

Department	People		Lead officer responsible for assessment		Gill Betton, Head of Children’s Development and Partnerships	
Service	Children’s Development and Partnerships		Other members of team undertaking assessment		NA	
Date	31 October 2022		Version 1			
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Project	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New		New		Revision	
Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	<p>Children and Young People’s Travel Support Review The local authority is required by both the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make travel arrangements for certain eligible children to attend school. This includes the duty to promote sustainable modes of travel for children and young people of compulsory school age.</p> <p>In recent years there has been an increase in demand for school transport, in particular in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The costs of providing transport have also increased significantly due to a reduction in the supply of transport providers and an increase in their running costs. The council approved a one-year increased budget for 2022-23, whilst a full review was carried out.</p> <p>EDGE Public Solutions was appointed to carry out the independent review. The aims of the review were to explore the current arrangements and costs of school and other transport and to identify recommendations and a detailed action plan to reduce the budget pressures and improve the effectiveness and customer experience in relation to sustainable travel support for children and young people.</p>					

A copy of the final review report is attached at Appendix 1. This is due for consideration by the Children and Families Committee on 14 November 2022, with the following recommendations:

- a. Note and agree the report contents and the underlying principles and cultural change set out in the independent review of travel support for children and young people at Appendix 1.
- b. Endorse the proposal to procure specialist professional capacity, funded from the children and families transformation fund, to drive the initial transformation plans, achievable savings and establishment of the integrated travel support team.
- c. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children and Families, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, to make decisions in relation to:
 - i. The roll out of a three-year transformation and modernisation programme to deliver the recommendations in the report, including a new strategy and integrated travel team, supported by clear performance and budget management reporting and consultation, communication and engagement with stakeholders.
 - ii. Proposal to streamline and revise the school transport policy and process from application to delivery, including a new application, reassessment and appeals process and the immediate development of alternative travel solutions, such as personal budgets and independent travel training.
 - iii. Proposals to embark on a comprehensive exercise around the operational delivery and re-procurement of school transport to improve the effectiveness of routes, encourage and support new suppliers to Cheshire East, improve value-for-money and the experiences for families.
 - iv. Developing a business case for investment for small capital schemes to improve safe walking routes on potential high-volume routes, including the production of an agreed protocol and strategy for implementing safe walking routes and supporting the council's priority outcomes for active travel and decarbonisation.
- d. Agree to receive interim reports around specific actions that require committee approval, along with an initial update report within six months and annually thereafter.

<p>Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</p>	<p><u>Stakeholders</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire East children and young people in receipt of travel support, including those with SEND • Cheshire East parents/carers whose children are in receipt of travel support • Parents who purchase spare seats for their child/children on existing transport • Cheshire East primary schools • Cheshire East secondary • Cheshire East special schools • Cheshire East further education colleges • Cheshire East pupil referral units • Out of borough schools and settings that Cheshire East children travel to • Other settings that children currently receive travel support to travel to/from • Local bus operators • Local taxi operators • Neighbouring local authorities • Elected members • Corporate Leadership Team • Cheshire East School Transport Team • Cheshire East Strategic Parking and Transport Service, including active travel • Cheshire East Licencing Team • Cheshire East Highways Team • Children’s Social Care Teams • Cheshire East Education Teams • Cheshire East enabling services – Legal, Procurement, Finance, Communication, Audit, Risk Management, HR <p><u>Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A briefing was sent to all stakeholders in May 2022 setting out the reason for the review, the aims, timeline and how to get involved. • A steering group of key officers from the council and Parent Carer Forum was formed in May 2022 and meets monthly to help to shape the review.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The independent reviewer contacted a number of the above stakeholders to inform the review findings. • Corporate Leadership team have been updated through reports. • Elected members have received a number of papers including the budget position around school transport and received a paper in May 2022 outlining the scope and purpose of the review. • A comprehensive communication and engagement plan will ensure that key stakeholders are involved in the proposed change programme and kept informed as plans develop. 	
Consultation/ involvement carried out.	YES	NO
What consultation method(s) did you use?	The travel support steering group were consulted with from the outset. This included scoping out the initial review to the final review recommendations. Formal consultation is expected to take place in relation to specific changes proposed in the review recommendations.	

Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	<p>Whilst the implementation of the recommendations is likely to have some impact on all of the above stakeholders, the main impact will be on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire East children and young people who are not in receipt of travel support • Cheshire East parents/carers whose children are in receipt of travel support • Parents who purchase spare seats for their child/children on existing transport • Local bus operators • Local taxi operators • Cheshire East School Transport Team • Cheshire East Strategic Parking and Transport Service, including active travel <p>The recommendations will impact on these groups as there is expected to be changes in the way that eligibility for travel support is assessed, procured and delivered. The move to one integrated</p>
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team will affect existing staff working within the school transport teams in children and families and the place directorate.

Current data in relation to children and young people who access travel support is set out below:

Date	Children with SEND	Mainstream education children	Children supported by social care	Total
September 2022	1036	2652	24	3712

As of September 2022:

- 444 SEND children travel to out of borough settings
- 184 SEND children travel to post-16 settings.
- 390 mainstream children attend primary
- 229 mainstream children travel out of borough to settings.
- 88 mainstream children are receiving transport through hardship reasons.
- 46 mainstream children receive travel assistance due to eligibility of faith and hardship reasons.
- There were 141 contracts with personal assistants supporting children to travel to a school or setting.
- 162 are in sole occupancy travel arrangements; 9 mainstream and 153 SEND
- There were 48 children receiving travel support to faith schools; 1 SEND, 36 secondary and 11 primary children.

Travel support in Cheshire East is delivered through a network of transport contractors including bus and coach companies and private hire taxi companies. The council also has an agreement in place with the arms length company, Ansa. All contracts are expected to be delivered in line with requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Who is intended to benefit and how

Travel support enables eligible children to access appropriate education.

	<p>There are expected to be benefits for some children and young people with SEND and their families. The review recommends that the assessment process identifies those children who will be capable of responding to travel training, being able to walk, and those passengers where the parent is willing to consider being compensated for transporting their own child or making their own arrangements if it is deemed appropriate.</p> <p>The long-term transport process for mainstream school children is that they attain increasing level of travel independence as they develop and learn to either walk to school or catch public transport. For children with SEND this is not always possible. In many cases they receive door-to-door transport from the time they start school until the time they leave college such that they do not gain the necessary travel skills that other children do. However, whilst some children with SEND will never be able to travel independently, those that can, should be given the opportunity. The recommendation to fund independent travel training will produce better outcomes for children over the long term and will have benefits for their future mobility, social integration, and employability.</p> <p>Personal travel budgets or cash grants provide flexibility to parents to make their own arrangements.</p>
<p>Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?</p>	<p>Implementation of the recommendations will affect children and young people aged 0-25.</p> <p>Compared to the percentage of the population, there are a higher proportion of children and young people with SEND who access travel support. As of September 2022, approximately 28% of those accessing travel support had SEND. The numbers of SEND children who receive travel support has increased significantly over recent years and this increase is set to continue.</p> <p>Parents of post-16 SEND children who receive travel support and those who buy spare seats will be affected by the proposed increase in fares.</p>
<p>Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?</p>	<p>Yes, proposed changes to the school transport policy and assessment process will involve making decisions on individual circumstances.</p>

<p>Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)</p>	<p>The proposed changes will favour those children and young people who are eligible to travel support in line with statutory guidance. This is a relatively small group compared to the total population of children and young people in Cheshire East.</p> <p>Children with SEND could be more affected through proposed changes to the assessment process and review of contract arrangements. These children are often more affected by change than their mainstream counterparts, however, it is hoped that this will be a one-off change that will result in less changes on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>The proposed recommendations mean that those parents who contribute to travel support through post-16 transport and spare seats scheme will see an increase in the cost of their transport. Post-16 pupils will be signposted to the government's 16-19 bursary. This provides support to vulnerable groups and those that need financial help. For other children, whose families are in financial hardship, they have a right to free school transport if they get free school meals or you get the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, and if any of the following distance criteria apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are aged 8-11 and the nearest school is more than 2 miles away • they are aged 11-16, the nearest school is between 2 and 6 miles away, and there are fewer than three suitable nearer schools • they are aged 11-16 and the school is between 2 and 15 miles away and is the nearest school that meets your religious preferences
<p>Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?</p>	<p>The council works in line with the statutory guidance for school transport, which sets out which children and young people are eligible for travel support. This means that some children and young people, eg, those with SEND, are more likely to be affected by the proposed changes. We are working closely with the Parent Carer Forum to ensure that these proposed changes have positive benefits for these children.</p> <p>There are a number of children who currently receive free transport as their route to school is deemed as either hazardous (726 children) or not an available walking route (101 children).</p> <p>Hazardous routes are assessed taking into consideration a range of factors, including:</p>

- the age of the child;
- whether any potential risks might be mitigated if the child were accompanied by an adult
- the width of any roads travelled along and the existence of pavements;
- the volume and speed of traffic travelling along any roads;
- the existence or otherwise of street lighting; and
- the condition of the route at different times of the year, at the times of day that a child would be expected to travel to and from school.

Due to the above factors, a number of hazardous routes affect those living in rural areas. Children in these areas are also more likely to be eligible for travel support due to the distance they need to travel to their nearest school. The review recommends that the council conducts a programme of identification of small capital schemes to improve safe walking routes on potential high-volume routes. Also, that it agrees a protocol and strategy for implementing safe walking routes.

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

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

Stage 3 Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts		Level of Risk (High, Medium or Low)
Age	<p>Implementation of the recommendations will affect children and young people aged 0-25 and their families. There are a total of 3712 children aged 0-25 who currently receive travel support.</p> <p>Parents of post-16 SEND children who receive travel support and those who buy spare seats will be affected by the proposed increase in fares.</p>	High
Marriage and Civil Partnership	This information is not currently collected, but children and young people from all backgrounds receive travel support. It is not expected that the review recommendations will have a greater impact on children whose parents have a particular marital status.	Low
Religion	There are currently 48 children receiving travel support to faith schools; 1 SEND, 36 secondary and 11 primary children. These children are subject to the same eligibility criteria as all other children, although they generally travel further to attend these schools.	Medium
Disability	<p>Compared to the percentage of the population, there are a higher proportion of children and young people with SEND who access travel support. As at September 2022, 1036 children or 28% of those accessing travel support had SEND. The numbers of SEND children who receive travel support has increased significantly over recent years and this increase is set to continue.</p> <p>Parents of post-16 SEND children who receive travel support and those who buy spare seats will be affected by the proposed increase in fares.</p>	High
Pregnancy and Maternity	This information is not currently collected but travel support is inclusive to any young person who meets the eligibility criteria.	Low
Sex	It is not expected that the review recommendations will have a greater impact on children of a particular sex.	Low

Gender Reassignment	This information is not currently collected, but travel support is inclusive and open to all children and young people as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.	Low
Race	It is not expected that the review recommendations will have a greater impact on children of a particular race.	Low
Sexual Orientation	This information is not currently collected, but it is not expected that the review recommendations will have a greater impact on children of a particular sexual orientation.	Low

Stage 4 Mitigation

Protected characteristics	Mitigating action <i>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</i>	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
Age	<p>As part of the policy review, we will consult with relevant stakeholders to ensure that any appropriate mitigations can be put in place.</p> <p>The steering group will be reviewed to ensure it has the appropriate membership.</p> <p>Any proposed changes will be implemented in a sensitive and, if appropriate, phased to ensure</p>	The Children and Families Committee will approve the final policy	Head of service responsible for school transport	To be confirmed in the implementation plan

	that there is sufficient time to adapt to new arrangements.			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-
Religion	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-
Disability	<p>As part of the policy review, we will consult with relevant stakeholders to ensure that any appropriate mitigations can be put in place.</p> <p>The steering group will be reviewed to ensure it has the appropriate membership in relation to disability.</p> <p>Any proposed changes will be implemented in a sensitive and, if appropriate, phased to ensure that there is sufficient time to adapt to new arrangements.</p>	-	-	-
Pregnancy and Maternity	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-
Sex	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-
Gender Reassignment	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-

Race	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-
Sexual Orientation	The service will continue to be accessible and inclusive to all those with protected characteristics.	-	-	-

5. Review and Conclusion

The aims of the travel support review were to explore the current arrangements and costs of school and other transport and to identify recommendations and a detailed action plan to reduce the budget pressures and improve the effectiveness and customer experience in relation to sustainable travel support for children and young people. The review sets out the need to roll out a three-year transformation programme, proposing change in a number of areas of travel support under the following key areas:

- Organisation – resources, systems and performance
- Policy, assessment and shifting the travel offer
- Delivery

This EIA sets out the initial considerations of the travel support review broad recommendations. Subject to approval by the Children and Families Committee on 14 November 2022, detailed plans will be developed on the proposed changes. This is likely to result in individual EIAs on specific policy changes.

Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date

Procure additional specialist professional capacity to drive the initial transformation plans, achievable savings and establishment of the integrated travel support team.	Through the Children and Families Directorate Management Team (DMT)	Head of Service responsible for school transport	December 2022
Review the steering group terms of reference and membership and other governance arrangements in relation to the review to ensure stakeholder involvement	Reports to the Children and Families and Place DMTs	Head of Service responsible for school transport	December 2022
Develop and implement communication and engagement plan in relation to implementation of review recommendations	Reports to the Children and Families and Place DMTs	Head of Service responsible for school transport	November 2022
Increase engagement with local bus and taxi operators	Through management information to the Children and Families and Place DMTs	Head of Service for Strategic Parking and Transport Service	Asap
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions			
When will this assessment be reviewed?	This EIA will be reviewed in line with the implementation plan as more information becomes available in relation to specific areas of the recommendations.		

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	An update of this EIA or the completion of new EIAs are likely to be required as the policy and processes are changed.		
Lead officer sign off	Gill Betton	Date	31/10/22
Director sign off	Jacky Forster	Date	02/11/22

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

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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 November 2022
Report Title:	Household Support Fund 3 (HSF3) Grant Delivery
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/60/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report updates the children and families committee on the household support fund 3 (HSF3) grant awarded to Cheshire East and seeks agreement to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to incur expenditure in line with the HSF3 grant conditions

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Following an announcement from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) at the end of August 2022, the HSF3 grant was awarded in a letter from the DWP on the 30 September 2022, with the grant commencing on 01 October 2022.
- 2.2. In July 2022, and ahead of the grant allocation to Cheshire East, finance committee agreed an supplementary estimate of £2.3 million in budget for 2022/23 in relation to the extension of the household support fund- see [Outturn 2021-22 - app 2.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)
- 2.3. Cheshire East's confirmed allocation is £2,203,892.10. The funding is expected to be used to support households in Cheshire East with food, utilities, and other essentials from 01 October 2022 until the 31 March 2023.

- 2.4. Following a survey to existing parents who have benefited from the previous household support fund and taking wider thinking into consideration, it is proposed to remain with the current model to issue the HSF3 grant in three payments with one in November, another in December 2022 and the remaining issued in February 2023.
- 2.5. Children and families committee is asked to note Cheshire East's final grant allocation, endorse the plans for the HSF3 grant and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to incur expenditure in line with the HSF3 grant conditions

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The children and families committee is recommended to:
 - i. Note Cheshire East's final HSF3 grant allocation of £2,203,892.10.
 - ii. Endorse the proposed allocation of the grant, eligible cohorts and payment arrangements set out in this paper.
 - iii. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to incur expenditure in line with the HSF3 grant conditions.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. Whilst the finance committee agreed the supplementary estimated grant for the HSF3 grant, the final allocation and delegation to the Executive Director of Children's Services is required to spend the grant. This delegation enables the fund to be allocated effectively to those residents most in need in Cheshire East and gives opportunity for any minimal change in grant division which may arise due to possible cost changes in the current economic climate.
- 4.2. The proposal to move to remain providing three payments to those families most in need is based on feedback from families and also balancing the cost-of-living concerns to ensure that the vouchers reach those most in need at the most difficult months of the year.
- 4.3. The new HSF guidance includes a requirement for the enquiry form to be accessible. To date, Cheshire East has allocated the fund based on known cohorts and referrals from professionals. The introduction of the public facing enquiry form in Cheshire East will ensure that all families and adults in need have access to the fund. Increasingly, other local authorities have introduced this self-referral option for those who do not engage with other services to make it more accessible to them.
- 4.4. The HSF grant will contribute to the delivery of the outcomes in the corporate plan under the priority to be a council that empowers and cares about people. Both adults and children and young people who suffer the

greatest inequality in terms of lack of household income will directly benefit from this grant.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. There are a range of other options, including increasing or reducing the payments to families, changing the cohorts that are eligible for the fund and the routes by which they can access this. After looking at all of these options and in consultation with parents, and colleagues across the council and partner agencies, the current proposed delivery model provides the most benefits.

6. Background

- 6.1. Over the last two years, a number of temporary grants and funding initiatives were introduced in recognition of the hardship placed upon families and individuals. This included the 'COVID Winter Grant Scheme' (December 2020 – April 2021), the 'COVID Support Grant' (April 2021 – September 2021), the Household support Fund (October 2021 – April 2022), the Household support Fund 2 (April 2022 – October 2022). Committee approval was received in receipt of these grants in Finance Sub on the 06.07.22 : which recommended to Council approval of:
- (a) fully-funded supplementary revenue estimates over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 2, Table 1; and
 - (b) the virement of £2.3m in 2022/23 from the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Reserve to the General Reserve as detailed in Appendix 5, paragraph 4.
- 6.2. For families these grants were distributed via e-vouchers through early years settings, schools, colleges to families who were vulnerable to financial hardship due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 6.3. Over 10,000 children and families across Cheshire East were supported via these grants alongside over 8,000 adults and pensioners, with a total of over 150,000 vouchers provided. The council also ensured that families in need of replacement goods, such as fridges, cookers and washing machines, were helped, and benefited from a partnership involving schools, colleges, the NHS, council services and third sector organisations to identify families in need. A similar process was in place for adults who needed assistance.

Cheshire East's grant allocation

- 6.4. On 26 August 2022, the DWP announced that the HSF would be extended from 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. This was followed by a final DWP letter and guidance on 30 September 2022 setting out the grant conditions.

This is a new scheme, and the council cannot carry forward any underspends from previous DWP grants. Cheshire East's confirmed allocation is £2,203,892.10.

- 6.5. Whilst most elements of the HSF are in line with the previous grant, HSF3 does not ringfence any proportion of funding for any particular cohort of people. This means that there is no longer a requirement for at least 33.3% of the fund to be allocated to households with someone over state pension age and that a further 33% must be allocated to support households that included a person under the age of 19. However, as Cheshire East proposes to support the same cohorts as per the previous grant, the fund is likely to be split broadly in line with the previous grant.
- 6.6. The HSF3 includes a requirement for all local authorities to operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis i.e. residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is also an expectation to particularly consider those groups who may not have benefited from any of the recent cost of living support.
- 6.7. The aim of the HSF3 is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need. In Cheshire East we are proposing to use the £2.2m fund to support vulnerable households with food, utilities and other essentials between October 2022 and March 2023.
- 6.8. The HSF3 budget will allow for £80 worth of payments to be made to the families of our children and young people who are entitled to free school meals (FSM), early year pupil premium, 2 year old funder, care leavers, young carers and NEET, and 1 x £100 utilities payment to pensioners in receipt of council tax support. The budget will also facilitate an enquiry form with an inventory of food/utilities vouchers to capture those not included within the priority groups.
- 6.9. Alongside food/utilities vouchers, the budget also allows for individuals to access support for boilers payments, housing payments and other essentials.
- 6.10. Enquiry payments for food would continue to be available for £20 per child, £40 per single adult and £60 per couple for one week, and £100 per household for utilities. A further £20 will be available for wider essential payments per household.
- 6.11. Grant monies will also be provided to the community's department to provide meals for our vulnerable residents via the Warm plaCEs initiative. There is also the expectation this will support the programme to engage with individuals currently unknown to the programme, or who do not currently engage with referral agencies. Please note, any individual who

received bulk support can also access the enquiry form. Individuals requesting white goods will be referred to emergency assistance.

Grant cohorts

- 6.12. It is proposed that Cheshire East continues to support the same cohorts through the HSF3 grant as previously. The children's groups which are provided with priority bulk payments include those who are eligible for free school meals (FSM), those funded for two year old (2YO)/ early years pupil premium (EYPP), care leavers between 18 – 25, young people aged 16 – 18 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), young carers, children open to social care, children open to early help and prevention services and children who are known to domestic abuse services. These families will receive their vouchers via schools, colleges, early years settings and by a host of support services. Any vulnerable adults or families who do not receive support via these channels would be eligible for referral from recognised professionals or via the proposed public facing enquiry form.
- 6.13. Based on cohort numbers at the beginning of the HSF2 grant, Cheshire East had approximately 8,500 FSM young people in schools and colleges, with a further 2,000 in 2YO funder/EYPP, totalling 10,500 individuals. A further 750 individuals were supported across the remaining cohorts (please note, most of the high-risk individuals from these groups are included in the FSM, 2YO/EYPP lists).
- 6.14. The council is encouraged to work closely with local partners to identify a broad range of vulnerable households across their local area. We will target those from low-income households that cannot increase their income through work, such as pensioners, people with disabilities, unpaid carers, and parents of very young children in their area.
- 6.15. As with the previous HSF grant, support will be distributed in the form of e-vouchers, and payments made to utility providers, payments to white goods providers (known to emergency assistance), payments made to landlords, or in some exceptional cases payments will be made directly to individuals.
- 6.16. Cheshire East's scheme targets pensioners who are in receipt of council tax support to enable referrals from professionals for those most in need. Referrals are likely to come from colleagues in the benefits service, adult services, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Age UK, the Winter Wellbeing Group, housing associations, disability and carer support services and other recognised professionals working with vulnerable adults. This will include individuals at immediate risk of eviction or who are facing notable winter poverty with regards to food or utilities. A cross-service steering group, chaired by the Head of Prevention and Early Help, oversees eligibility and development of the HSF.

- 6.17. The HSF Fund sits within a wider context of poverty support being provided to individuals including, discretionary housing payments, homelessness prevention and support under the emergency assistance scheme.

Payments to families and adults

- 6.18. In reviewing the effectiveness of the previous grant, consideration has been given to the frequency of payments taking into consideration practice across other local authorities. Previously, the children's bulk payments have been aligned with holiday periods. During the timeline of the grant (October 2022 to March 2023), 3 school holiday periods will occur: October half term, Christmas and February half term.
- 6.19. To gain feedback from families about the grant, families were informed that the payment for October would be delayed enabling a survey to be held asked families to consider if they would like larger and less frequent payments. We had a total of 420 responses (approx. 5% of overall priority groups).
- 6.20. 44% of responses were in support of 1 payment of their entire allocation before the end of 2022. In second place, 3 payments between November and March, which totalled 37% of responses and 2 payments, one in 2022 and one before March 2023 came in third place with 19%.
- 6.21. Although the highest response rate was to move to one payment, we have taken all considerations in terms of the low percentage response rate of the survey from the overall priority groups, how the increase in the cost of living is putting additional pressure on families, and the risk that families will spend the whole money in one payment which may then result in them not having support throughout the following months. Therefore, subject to committee approval we are therefore purposing to remain with the current model to issue the HSF3 grant in three payments with one in November, another in December 2022 and the remaining issued in February 2023.
- 6.22. The survey also showed a 97.4% 5 star approval rating of the programme, with hundreds of supportive and constructive comments included in the wider comments section.

Referrals

- 6.23. Currently, all enquiries require a recognised practitioner/professional to complete the referral form to access the household support fund. We have used this method to reduce fraudulent claims, target those most in need whilst also allowing a significant degree of flexibility to capture the newly/unknown vulnerable during a period of increased financial instability.

The current enquiry form has worked successfully over the past 2 years, with a total of £292,460.00 provided to over 2,347 families/individuals over the past 6 months.

6.24. The HSF3 guidance includes a requirement for the enquiry form to be accessible. To address this, the proposal is to introduce a public facing enquiry form. The main benefit of this would be to ensure that those residents who are struggling and not currently engaged with services can get the help they need. We will encourage those who apply through this route to take up other offers of support and services.

6.25. **Implications**

6.26. **Legal**

6.26.1. Additional funding has been made available by the DWP to Local authorities and covers the period from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. Local authorities have full discretion on how the funding is to be used as long as it is in accordance with the guidance set out in the household support fund grant determination .

6.26.2. Local authorities are expected to administer the HSF and provide assistance to households most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. Despite the fact that this is an extension to the previous two household support fund schemes it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as is set out in the grant determination letter.

6.26.3. Underspends from previous schemes cannot be carried forward and funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 as they cannot be held over for future usage.

6.26.4. When administering the fund, authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:

- use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information;
- use the funding from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials;
- in exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
- this includes payments made, or committed to, by the authority or any person acting on behalf of the authority, from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

- work together with district councils and third parties, including where necessary and appropriate other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family support services, and may incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of the fund.
- 6.26.5. Local authorities must ensure that they have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework defining eligibility and how households access the fund. Local authorities are expected to review their existing approach including how they define eligibility.
- 6.26.6. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, local authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems. Authorities should ensure that they consider the needs of various households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.
- 6.26.7. Authorities should particularly consider how they can support those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living, including the:
- Energy bills support scheme and the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July;
 - Council tax rebate and the associated £144m discretionary fund;
 - Cost of living payments for those on means tested benefits;
 - £150 disability cost of living payment;
 - One-off £300 pensioner cost of living payment (through the winter fuel payment),
- 6.26.8. In addition:
- a) The authority is to ensure that the grant is primarily allocated to support with the costs of energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), food, water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the Scheme guidance;
 - b) in exceptional circumstances of genuine emergency, the authority may allocate grant funds to support with housing costs as set out in the Scheme guidance;
 - c) the authority is to use best endeavours to facilitate applications for assistance under the scheme from individuals who are eligible for assistance in their area.

- 6.1.1 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 set out below shall apply. The level of grant funding (£2,203,892.10) requires Council approval, or a decision under urgency powers on behalf of Council.

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

6.27. Finance

- 6.2.1 Expenditure on the Household Support Fund will be fully funded by a government grant of £2,203,892.10. The duration of the scheme is from 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 6.2.2 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 as a result of this expenditure. It is not yet known if any funding will be provided after 31 March 2023 to continue this scheme or something similar.
- 6.2.3 The council will be required to provide two management information (MI) returns outlining their grant spend and the volume of awards as follows:
- An interim MI return for the period 01 October 2022 to the 31 December 2022 will be due on the 25 January 2023
 - A final MI return for the period 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 will be due 28 April 2023.
- 6.2.4 Grant payments will be made in arrears on receipt of a fully completed and verified MI return.

- 6.2.5 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.

6.3 Policy

- 6.3.1 The HSF3 grant is part of the government's package of support, targeted at those vulnerable families and adults who are most in need, to help them to cope with the impact of rising prices.

6.4 Equality

- 6.4.1 In accordance with the public sector equality duty, DWP has had due regard for the potential equalities impacts of this grant.
- 6.4.2 An equality impact assessment has been completed to ensure that people are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly by this scheme. For example, that our processes are easy to access and to navigate.
- 6.4.3 We expect that the implementation of the grant will have a positive impact in relation to the protective characteristic of age, particularly for children and young people. It will also support the need to ensure that we have fairer and more resilient communities.

6.5 Human Resources

- 6.5.1 The current capacity in place to administer this grant will continue. Reasonable administration costs are funded as part of the grant and we will ensure that the full costs of any additional staffing are offset against the grant.

6.6 Risk Management

- 6.6.1 There are several risks associated with providing grants to a high number of individuals and families.
- 6.6.2 As with any welfare payment to vulnerable recipients there is a risk of fraud, as recipients might appear to be eligible when they are not. To help mitigate this risk, the local authority will work with other organisations, including early years, schools, and colleges to administer this scheme to help identify vulnerable families, households, and individuals.
- 6.6.3 As a significant amount of funding will be in form of e-vouchers, it is impossible to ensure that these are spent on essential household items, however, these are families in need and our experience over the past year is that the funding has been used on necessary expenditure.
- 6.6.4 The risks of moving away from holiday periods include that there will be an expectation in the community that the vouchers will be received for holiday

periods, which may cause some initial resistance, and increased queries. Families in need are also unlikely to reserve the funds for during the holiday period due to financial pressures.

- 6.6.5 The risk of introducing a new public facing form include a possible increase in fraudulent claims. The proposal is to increase the administration and checks in relation to these claims to ensure there is no duplication etc. In terms of delivery, it is proposed that public enquiries would be eligible for 1 claim, with a second claim eligible via a referral agency. This is likely also to have the benefit of increasing engagement with support agencies.
- 6.6.6 Risks are routinely assessed and reported on at the household support fund steering group, and remedial action is taken, as required.

6.7 Rural Communities

- 6.7.1 Children and families in rural areas of the council will directly benefit from receipt of the new grant as we harness distribution methods through our network of community early years settings, schools, and colleges.

6.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1 Children and young people who suffer the greatest inequality in terms of lack of household income will directly benefit from this grant. Cared for children are one of our most vulnerable groups and will continue to benefit from the grant.

6.9 Public Health

- 6.9.1 Poverty poses a threat to the public health of our residents as they are less likely to be able to access the conditions that promote a healthy physical and mental lifestyle. An adequate income can help people to avoid stress and feel in control, to access experiences and material resources, to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours, and to feel supported by a financial safety net.

6.10 Climate Change

- 6.10.1 There are not expected to be any climate change implications from the Household Support Grant.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Doug Hubbert, Business Development Manager Douglas.hubbert@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 November 2022
Report Title:	Financial Review 2022/23
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)
Report Reference No:	CF/27/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	Not Applicable

1. Recommendations

That Children and Families Committee:

- 1.1. Notes the report of the Finance Sub-Committee ([Agenda for Finance Sub-Committee on Wednesday, 9th November, 2022, 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 the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.
 - 1.1.1.3. 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 Children and Families Committee, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2.**
- 1.2. Notes Appendix 2 and the following sections specific to this Committee:
 - Changes to Revenue budget 2022/23
 - Action Plan 2022/23
 - Corporate Grants Register
 - Debt Management
 - Capital Strategy

- Reserve Strategy

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 Financial Review 2022-23 which includes: Covering Report Annex 1: Appendix 2 Children and Families Committee.
Background Papers:	Medium-Term Financial Strategy First Financial Review, Item No.14



Working for a brighter future together

Finance Sub-Committee

Date of Meeting:	9 November 2022
Report Title:	Financial Review 2022/23
Report of:	Alex Thompson: Director of Finance and Customer Services
Report Reference No:	FSC/6/22- 23
Ward(s) Affected:	Not applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report provides members with an overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23 as reported to Corporate Policy Committee on 6 October 2022. This report gives all service committees an opportunity to consider the First Review forecasts and the associated Action Plans.
- 1.2.** Members are being asked to note the financial challenges being experienced by the Council and to recognise the importance of ongoing activity to minimise the impact on services. The report also requests approval for financial changes taking place during the year that require authorisation in-line with the Constitution.
- 1.3.** The report highlights the negative impact of increasing inflationary pressures on the Council's budget since it was set in February 2022. It also highlights ongoing costs of Covid-19 scarring, where expenditure is still increased due to the effects of the pandemic.
- 1.4.** Reporting the financial forecast outturn at this stage, and in this format, supports the Council's vision to be an open Council as set out in the Corporate Plan 2021 to 2025. In particular, the priorities for an open and enabling organisation, ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** The Council operates a financial cycle of planning, monitoring and reporting. This review is part of the monitoring cycle providing the forecast outturn position and any impacts 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.
- 2.2.** The Council set its 2022/23 annual budget in February 2022. The budget was balanced, as required, and included important planning assumptions about spending in the year. The budget is part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022 to 2026.
- 2.3.** The provisional financial outturn for 2021/22 was reported in July 2022 and highlighted good financial management in that year, with an overall revenue outturn favourable variance of £1.1m (0.4% of the net budget). The report also recognised emerging pressure within the final quarter of the year, particularly from rising inflation and complexity of demand for care. It was also acknowledged specific risks remained unmitigated in respect of the Council's Private Finance Initiative and High Needs within the Dedicated Schools Grant. The report also highlighted the end of Covid-19 grant funding. The ongoing assumption was that carried forward grant funding would have to be used to fund ongoing Covid-19 related pressure.
- 2.4.** In monitoring the 2022/23 financial year the national increase in inflation, from 0.4% in February 2021 to 10.1% in July 2022, is having a significant impact on the cost of Council services as well as on the cost of living for local residents. Inflation is affecting several critical areas:
- 2.4.1.** Service demand and contract inflation: Care needs are demand led, but care costs are rising due to increasing complexity of need as well as rising provider costs linked to staff shortages and utility and fuel prices. Fuel prices are also causing increases in transport and waste services.
- 2.4.2.** Pay inflation: Assumptions about achieving target inflation at a national level are not realistic in the short to medium term. This is creating cost of living increases that are subsequently leading to increasing wage demands. Pay negotiations for Council staff are impacted by this too, but are carried out at a national, not local, level. The main Trade Unions are balloting their members on the Employers' final pay offer of a flat figure increase which averages at 6%. The outcome of the pay negotiations are expected in early November.
- 2.4.3.** Covid-19 scarring: Although government funding for Covid-19 related costs has ended there remains an ongoing impact on care services and some services funded from fees and charges. Waste services are also experiencing ongoing tonnage increases from changed behaviour linked to the pandemic.

- 2.5. The findings of this financial review present a need to mitigate emerging financial pressures. The MTFS recognises that the Council has relatively low levels of reserves as funding is instead utilised to manage ongoing service demand. Mitigation can focus on several areas:
- 2.5.1. Appropriate use of balances: Carried forward Covid-19 funding, MTFS Reserve, General Reserves and specific service and company reserves levels are being reviewed and funding released to support essential services where practical. Flexible use of Capital receipts is also under review, which can allow eligible one-off revenue transformation expenditure by services to be funded from the proceeds of asset sales.
- 2.5.2. Efficiencies and Income generation: Services continue to review non-essential spending requirements to release efficiencies, delay spending or generate additional income from key stakeholders.
- 2.6. The financial pressure being experienced by Cheshire East Council is not unique. Local authorities, including Cheshire East Council, continue to liaise with government departments over the severity of so many emerging financial issues. The Council achieves this liaison either directly or through professional or political networks. The County Councils Network's most recent analysis of the costs of inflation warn that "any moves to cut their budgets next year would be 'worse than austerity' and result in 'devastating' reductions in local services – with local authorities offering just the bare minimum" ([CCN News 2022](#)).
- 2.7. The report sets out details of the latest Financial Review of the Council's forecast financial performance for 2022/23, including the forecast revenue position as reported to Corporate Policy Committee on 6 October 2022, and most recent updates to the Capital programme and grant funding received:

Annex 1: Financial Review 2022/23

- **Financial Stability:** Provides information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council. It demonstrates how spending in 2022/23 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.
- **Appendices:**
 - Appendix 1** Adults and Health Committee.
 - Appendix 2** Children and Families Committee.
 - Appendix 3** Corporate Policy Committee.
 - Appendix 4** Economy and Growth Committee.
 - Appendix 5** Environment and Communities Committee.
 - Appendix 6** Finance Sub-Committee.
 - Appendix 7** Highways and Transport Committee.
 - Appendix 8** Update to the Treasury Management Strategy.
 - Appendix 9** Update to the Investment Strategy.

3. Recommendations

Finance Sub-Committee is asked to:

- 3.1. Note the forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £11.6m against a revised budget of £328.4m (3.5%) as reported to Corporate Policy Committee on 6 October 2022.
- 3.2. Note the forecast Capital Spending of £179.6m against an approved MTFS budget £185.2m due to slippage carried forward from the previous year.
- 3.3. Endorse the approach of Senior Officers to mitigate the adverse forecasts through the activities outlined in each 'Action Plan' contained in Annex 1 (Appendices 1 to 7), which include:
 - Managed restriction of in-year spending, whilst retaining essential services, in consultation with the relevant Committee.
 - Reviewing the level of spending on key contracts and reviewing the need for contract renewals during 2022/23.
 - Pricing and grant reviews to ensure income is being fully recovered on related activity.
 - Enhanced vacancy forecasting and management.
 - Re-alignment of, and appropriate use of balances, such as earmarked reserves, General Reserves and capital receipts.
 - Review and reprofile the Capital Programme to prevent any impact of related inflation on the revenue budget.
- 3.4. Note the contents of Annex 1 and each of the appendices, and note that any financial mitigation decisions requiring member approval will be presented to the appropriate Committee.
- 3.5. Approve supplementary capital estimates up to and including £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 6, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 5.**
- 3.6. Set up a Task Group to review the financial assumptions that will underpin the preparation of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24-2026/27.
- 3.7. Note that Council will be asked to approve:
 - 3.7.1. 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 6, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 1.**
 - 3.7.2. Supplementary capital estimates over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in **Appendix 6, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 6.**

- 3.8.** Recommend to Service Committees to:
- 3.8.1. Note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
- 3.8.2. Note that officers will seek to improve the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.
- 3.8.3. 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 Children and Families Committee, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2.**

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The overall process for managing the Council's resources focuses on value for money, good governance and stewardship. The approach to these responsibilities is captured in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 4.2. The budget and policy framework sets out rules for managing the Council's financial affairs and contains the financial limits that apply in various parts of the Constitution. As part of sound financial management and to comply with the constitution any changes to the budgets agreed by Council in the MTFS require approval in-line with the financial limits within the Finance Procedure Rules.
- 4.3. This report provides strong links between the Council's statutory reporting requirements and the in-year monitoring processes for financial and non-financial management of resources.
- 4.4. In approving the Cheshire East Council Medium-Term Financial Strategy members of the Council had regard to the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves as reported by the s.151 Officer. The s.151 Officer's report highlighted the importance of each element of the MTFS and the requirement to achieve all the proposals within it. The recommendations of this report highlight the need for ongoing activity to manage the financial pressure being experienced by the Council.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. None. This report is important to ensure members of the Committee are sighted on the financial pressure the Council is facing and the activity to date to try and mitigate this issue. Activity is required to ensure the Council balances its expenditure and income without serious impact on essential Council services.

6. Background

- 6.1. 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 Local Authority in the Northwest of England, responsible for

approximately 500 services, supporting over 398,000 local people. Gross annual spending is over £700m, with a revised net revenue budget for 2022/23 of £328.4m.

- 6.2.** 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.
- 6.3.** The political structure of the Council is organised into six committees, with a single sub-committee, all with financial responsibilities acutely aligned to the management structure. Performance against the 2022/23 Budget within each Committee, and the sub-committee, is outlined in Table 1 below.
- 6.4.** **Table 1 – Revenue Outturn Forecast split by the Six Service Committees and the Finance Sub-Committee as reported to Corporate Policy Committee 6 October 2022**

2022/23	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET)		
	£m	£m	£m
Service Committee			
Adults and Health	120.9	132.6	11.7
Children and Families	74.5	78.0	3.5
Economy and Growth	23.6	23.8	0.2
Environment and Communities	44.3	46.2	1.9
Highways and Transport	13.8	14.3	0.5
Corporate Policy	39.8	40.6	0.8
Sub-Committee			
Finance Sub	(316.9)	(323.9)	(7.0)
TOTAL	-	11.6	11.6

- 6.5.** The Council set a balanced net revenue budget of £327.7m at its meeting in February 2022. Current forecasts against the revised budget of £328.4m, shows a potential net expenditure of £340.0m.
- 6.6.** This position reflects the increase in demand led pressures in social care in both the Children’s Services Directorate and Adults, Health and Integration Directorate. This mirrors national events and the County Council’s Network has recently reported that forecast increases in care costs could be more than double those reported as recently as 2021.
- 6.7.** There are further pressures due to increased costs relating to rising inflation and the current national pay offer. The Council, in-line with most public

sector organisations, relies on government inflation targets when calculating budgets, target inflation remains at 2% but actual inflation is currently exceeding 10%. Some predictions say it may reach 13% by the end of the year. The Council actually forecast local pay increases of 2.5% recognising potentially higher increases for local lower paid workers. However, current national pay negotiations could see wages rise in excess of 6% for some lower paid workers.

- 6.8.** General Reserve balances are risk assessed and it was highlighted in the MTFS that emerging risks such as inflation and particularly the DSG deficit, as having no alternative funding. To address the issue of emerging financial pressure Senior Officers at the Council have set up Action Plans, which will continue to be developed to identify activities required to bring spending back in line with the MTFS.
- 6.9.** The emerging Action Plans reflect the Committee Structure to allow member oversight of the activities being carried out to manage in-year spending. Any appropriate decisions required from members will be brought to the Committee's attention via the Action Plans, to ensure appropriate context is provided.
- 6.10.** There is a clear ambition for each Committee to achieve spending in-line with the approved MTFS. However, in some cases, given the seriousness of the financial pressure being put on the Council, Committee members should consider options to exceed financial performance targets to retain an overall balanced position.
- 6.11.** Whilst some inflation factors may be temporary, the Action Plans must also consider the medium-term resilience of mitigation activity. For example, the use of one-off balances, to mitigate in-year spend, may be effective in the short term, but would not be effective if spending is likely to recur in later years.
- 6.12.** The Government is currently set to announce its Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 and it may be helpful, in this very challenging environment, in providing some further information to assist local authorities in their business and financial planning
- 6.13.** As noted at recommendation 3.6 of this report, Finance Sub Committee are being asked to set up a task group to review the financial assumptions that will underpin the preparations of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27. This is vital to ensure that all current assumptions are reviewed and revised where necessary to reflect ongoing and emerging changes to the assumptions contained within the approved MTFS from February 2022.
- 6.14.** The intention is to report an updated Financial Review report to Corporate Policy Committee on 1 December 2022 which will be informed by the latest forecasts, and any information that may come from the Government's 17 November 2022 Autumn Statement.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** 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.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1.** The legal implications surrounding the process of setting the 2022 to 2026 Medium-Term Financial Strategy were dealt with in the reports relating to that process. The purpose of this paper is to provide a progress report for 2022/23.
- 8.1.2.** 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.
- 8.1.3.** Legal implications that arise when activities funded from the budgets that this report deals with are undertaken, but those implications will be dealt with in the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records that relate.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1.** The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and communities. Monitoring and managing performance help to ensure that resources are used effectively, and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.
- 8.2.2.** 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 is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves.
- 8.2.3.** The unplanned use of financial reserves 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.
- 8.2.4.** 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.

8.2.5. Forecasts contained within this review provide important information in the process of developing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Analysis of variances during the year will identify whether such performance is likely to continue, and this enables more robust estimates to be established.

8.3. Policy

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

8.3.2. The forecast outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2023 to 2027 Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1. 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.

8.5. Human Resources

8.5.1. 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.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1. 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.

8.6.2. 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 2021/22 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2022/23 financial scenario, budget and reserves strategy.

8.7. Rural Communities

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

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

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

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. 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.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. Climate change 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.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer) alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 685876
Appendices:	Annex 1 including: Section 1 provides information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council. Further details are contained in the appendices. Appendix 1 Adults and Health Committee. Appendix 2 Children and Families Committee. Appendix 3 Corporate Policy Committee. Appendix 4 Economy and Growth Committee. Appendix 5 Environment and Communities Committee. Appendix 6 Finance Sub-Committee. Appendix 7 Highways and Transport Committee. Appendix 8 Update to the Treasury Management Strategy. Appendix 9 Update to the Investment Strategy.
Background Papers:	The following are links to key background documents: Medium-Term Financial Strategy First Financial Review, Item No.14



Financial Review 2022/23

November 2022

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 398,000 local people with annual spending of over £470m.

Local government is going through a period of financial challenges, with a combination of the impact of increasing demand for services and rising costs due to inflation. 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 and the national cost of living increases. This demand is resulting in forecast outturn of £340.0m against a net revenue budget of £328.4m, with the most significant impact within the rising complexity of needs in Adult Social Care.

When the 2022/23 budget was set, in February 2022, 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. The forecasts at first review highlight pressures due to demand, inflation and pay negotiations. These will almost certainly affect the medium term finances of the Council. This situation must be addressed now and as part of the MTFS process for 2023 to 2027.

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 2022/23:

The **Financial Stability** section provides information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council. It demonstrates how spending in 2022/23 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** Adults and Health Committee.
- **Appendix 2** Children and Families Committee.
- **Appendix 3** Corporate Policy Committee.
- **Appendix 4** Economy and Growth Committee.
- **Appendix 5** Environment and Communities Committee.
- **Appendix 6** Finance Sub-Committee.
- **Appendix 7** Highways and Transport Committee.
- **Appendix 8** Update to the Treasury Management Strategy.
- **Appendix 9** Update to the Investment Strategy.

Alex Thompson

Director of Finance and Customer Services
(Section 151 Officer)

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2022/23 Outturn Forecast - Financial Position

2022/23	Revised Budget
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET)
	£m
SERVICE DIRECTORATES	
Adult, Health and Integration	120.9
Children's Services	74.5
Place	81.7
Corporate Services	39.8
CENTRAL BUDGETS	
Capital Financing	18.9
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(2.7)
Corporate Contributions / Central Budgets	(4.7)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	328.4
Business Rates Retention Scheme	(49.1)
Specific Grants	(24.6)
Council Tax	(254.7)
Net Funding	(328.4)
NET (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	-

Financial Stability

Introduction

1. The Council has a 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 rapid inflation, the legacy impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and increasing cost of living pressure on households. These issues have the effect of increasing the demand for services and increasing costs of services.
2. Complexity and market sustainability in Adults' and Children's Social Care remains the most significant financial pressure for the Council in the medium term. Rising inflation in fuel, utilities and wage levels are affecting costs across all services.
3. **Table 1** provides a service summary of financial performance. The current forecast is that services will be £18.6m over budget in the current year. The Action Plans provide further details and changes to service net budgets since the Medium-Term Financial Strategy are analysed in the **Appendices 1-7**.
4. Further items impacting on the level of the Council's balances are detailed in **Table 2** below on Central Budgets and Funding.

Table 1 - Service Revenue Outturn Forecasts

2022/23	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	FOR INFO COVID Costs Included in Totals
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET)			
	£m	£m	£m	£m
SERVICE DIRECTORATES				
Adult Social Care - Operations	117.5	128.5	11.0	4.9
Commissioning	3.4	4.1	0.7	-
Public Health	-	-	-	-
Adult, Health and Integration	120.9	132.6	11.7	4.9
Directorate	1.0	0.9	(0.1)	-
Children's Social Care	46.6	48.5	1.9	0.1
Strong Start, Family Help and Integration	8.3	8.3	-	0.1
Education & 14-19 Skills	18.6	20.3	1.7	0.5
Children's Services	74.5	78.0	3.5	0.7
Directorate	0.8	0.7	(0.1)	-
Environment & Neighbourhood Services	44.3	46.2	1.9	2.3
Growth & Enterprise	22.8	23.1	0.3	0.1
Highways & Infrastructure	13.8	14.3	0.5	1.6
Place	81.7	84.3	2.6	4.0
Directorate	1.9	1.9	-	-
Finance & Customer Services	11.9	12.3	0.4	-
Governance & Compliance Services	11.7	11.2	(0.5)	-
Communications	0.7	0.7	-	-
HR	2.4	2.2	(0.2)	-
ICT	9.3	10.4	1.1	-
Policy & Change	1.9	1.9	-	-
Corporate Services	39.8	40.6	0.8	-
<i>For Info</i>				
TOTAL SERVICES NET EXPENDITURE	316.9	335.5	18.6	9.6

Table 2 – Central Budgets and Funding Outturn Forecasts

2022/23	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET)		
	£m	£m	£m
CENTRAL BUDGETS			
Capital Financing	18.9	18.9	-
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(2.7)	(8.7)	(6.0)
Corporate Contributions / Central Budgets	(4.7)	(5.7)	(1.0)
Central Budgets	11.5	4.5	(7.0)
Business Rates Retention Scheme	(49.1)	(49.1)	-
Specific Grants	(24.6)	(24.6)	-
Council Tax	(254.7)	(254.7)	-
Net Funding	(328.4)	(328.4)	-

Outturn Impact

- The financial impact of the outturn forecast could decrease balances by £11.6m. This is over 75% of the Council's General Reserves balance, so mitigating actions must be taken to reduce the pressure during the year. Any deficit at the end of the year will be drawn down from the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Earmarked Reserve in the first instance, but drawdowns from that reserve are already factored in to the MTFs to manage the effects of variations in spending and income in specific years.
- The Council will continue to manage and review the financial forecasts in response to emerging pressures and how this affects the Council's revenue budget.

Collecting Local Taxes for Local Expenditure

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

Council Tax

- Council tax is set locally and retained for spending locally. Council tax was set for 2022/23 at £1,626.24 for a Band D property. This is applied to the taxbase.
- 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 2022/23 was agreed at 156,607.48 which, when multiplied by the Band D charge, means that the expected income for the year is £254.7m.
- 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 3** shows these amounts separately, giving a total budgeted collectable amount of £313.8m.
- 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 amount billed will therefore exceed the budget.
- 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 £315.3m.

Table 3 – Cheshire East Council collects Council Tax on behalf of other precepting authorities

	£m
Cheshire East Council	254.7
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner	36.9
Cheshire Fire Authority	12.9
Town and Parish Councils	9.3
Total	313.8

13. **Table 4** shows collection rates within three years, and demonstrates that 99% collection is on target to be achieved within this period.

Table 4 – 99% of Council Tax is collected in three years

Financial Year	CEC Cumulative			
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	%	%	%	%
After 1 year	98.2	97.9	97.4	97.8
After 2 years	99.0	98.8	98.3	**
After 3 years	99.2	98.9	**	**

**data not yet available

14. The council tax in-year collection rate for the period up to the end of September 2022 is 56.1%. This is a small decrease of 0.2% on the previous year, possibly indicating current cost of living pressures. Additionally, significant numbers of council tax staff have been supporting the government's energy

rebate payments which has impacted resource normally involved in collection.

15. Council tax support payments were budgeted at £18.4m for 2022/23 and at the end of September the total council tax support awarded was £18.9m.
16. During 2021/22 there was a consultation and review of the Council Tax Support scheme resulting in some amendments being made. The revised scheme was confirmed by full Council in December 2021.
17. Council tax discounts awarded are £28.6m which are comparable to the same period in 2021/22. A small increase is attributable to work related to raising awareness of the discounts available to residents.
18. Council tax exemptions awarded is £7.2m which although broadly in line with previous years shows a slight increase due to reasons shown at 17.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)

19. 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.
20. The small business multiplier applied to businesses which qualify for the small business relief was set at 49.9p in 2022/23. The non-domestic multiplier was set at 51.2p in the pound for 2022/23.
21. **Table 5** 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.

22. The business rates in-year collection rate for the period up to the end of September 2022 is 58.6%. This is a significant increase on last year and begins to revert collection rates back to pre pandemic figures. A return to standard collection processes and government support through additional reliefs has assisted the recovery in collection.

Table 5 – Over 99% of Business Rates are collected within three years

Financial Year	CEC Cumulative			
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	%	%	%	%
After 1 year	98.5	98.2	92.4	95.6
After 2 years	99.4	98.4	97.4	**
After 3 years	99.4	99.2	**	**

**data not yet available

Appendices to the Financial Review 2022/23

November 2022

Appendix 2 : Children and Families Committee

Contents

Children and Families Committee Extracts

- 1. Changes to Revenue Budget 2022/23 since Medium Term Financial Strategy**
- 2. Action Plan 2022/23 as reported to Corporate Policy Committee 6 October 2022**
- 3. Corporate Grants Register**
 - Table 1: Children and Families Committee Grants**
 - Table 2: Recommend to Service Committee Supplementary Estimates to Approve**
 - Table 3: Delegated Decisions for Committee to Note**
- 4. Debt Management**
- 5. Capital Strategy**
- 6. Reserves Strategy**

Appendix 2

Children and Families Committee

1. Changes to Revenue Budget 2022/23 since Medium Term Financial Strategy

	MTFS Net Budget £000	Additional Grant Funding £000	Restructuring & Realignments £000	Revised Net Budget £000
Children and Families				
Directorate	899	-	107	1,006
Children's Social Care	46,464	187	-	46,651
Education & 14-19 Skills	18,197	311	24	18,532
Strong Start, Family Help and Integration (Previously Prevention & Early Help)	8,217	-	91	8,308
	73,777	498	222	74,497

2. Action Plan 2022/23 as reported to Corporate Policy Committee 6 Oct 2022

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
C&F Committee				Pay Inflation	1.548	3&4	Red (will not achieve)	Represents current estimate of the impact on Committee services in excess of the MTFS, from a nationally negotiated pay award.	1.368
				Use of EMRs		New		Additional use of earmarked reserves above MTFS level.	-0.208
				Transformation		New		Flexible use of Capital Receipts.	-1.000
Directorate	1.3	-0.3	1.0						
Strong Start, Family Help and Integration	14.7	-6.3	8.3	A redesign of Early Help Services into a Locality model	-0.424	48	Green (on track and should achieve)	A restructure is scheduled for March 2023. A significant amount of vacancies have been held in the service pending the restructure and they allow the saving to be delivered in 2022/23.	0.000
				Staff Travel and related savings	-0.062	29	Red (will not achieve)	At this stage the service is working to resume pre COVID-19 delivery levels and is not able to deliver savings from less travel or a reduced mileage rate. To be considered as part of wider recruitment and retention issue.	0.050
				Development and		50	Amber (not on track but	Under discussion to confirm any required changes.	0.000

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				Partnerships service			may still achieve)		
				Revenue costs for Crewe Youth Zone		43	Green (on track and should achieve)		0.000
				Restructure Early Help budget to fund Crewe Youth Zone (CYZ)		44	Green (on track and should achieve)	Ringfenced reserves from the Supporting Families Programme (SFP) will be used to fund the Crewe youth zone. This will enable shared outcomes from the SFP programme with the outcomes of the Crewe youth zone. This will prevent any need to restructure within the early help budget. Depends on progress of the CYZ.	0.000
				P&S use of Troubled families		New			-0.300
				Use of COMF grant		New		Activity within Strong Start that may be funded from the ringfenced Contain Outbreak Management Fund.	-0.013
				In Year pressures		New		Difference from policy proposals and team plan related to other ongoing mitigation proposals.	-0.080

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
Education and 14-19 Skills	61.3	-42.7	18.6	Establish a traded service for non-statutory elements of Attendance Service	-0.035	22	Green (on track and should achieve)	Income is being generated and using it to fund a single post - broadly net nil.	0.000
				Establish an Education Psychologist traded service to enable a proactive early support and intervention offer	-0.025	23	Green (on track and should achieve)	Income is being generated. Need to confirm position related to team capacity.	0.000
				Increase capacity to support Statutory SEND service	0.400	42	Amber (on track but may not achieve all)	Legal costs continue to highlight pressure in this area.	0.000
				Increase capacity to support Statutory Education Psychology Service	0.125	47	Amber (on track but may not achieve all)	Growth is not sufficient to match pressures in 2022/23, but procurement activity has to continue to meet demand. Expectation is that financial pressure could increase.	0.531

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				School Transport	1.200	62	Red (will not achieve)	MTFS identified there might be £1m further pressure to be funded from the MTFS reserve, which is being utilised. Independent review has completed (July 22) with recommendations for potential cost savings. These need to be considered and decisions reached to determine whether growth needs to be built in for future years. Expectation that the SEND growth is increasing each year so additional pressures likely. Need to establish what the transport review outcome will recommend.	1.537
				Staff Travel and related savings	-0.050	29	Red (will not achieve)	This is a challenge to deliver as the reduction in travel is too much and the mileage rate has not been changed. Low numbers of regular user allowances in this service.	0.098
				SEND Staffing – both core services and specialist teams supporting reduction in SEND needs assessments		New		To be established.	
				EP Staffing		New		To be established.	

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				School catering – implications on outcome of external catering review		New		To consider the recommendations of the APSE external review in terms of future delivery models and implications of budgets.	
				Skills agenda – shaping a strategic direction of support for young people		New		To consider the wider implications of how we support young people in terms of skills and preparation for employment.	
				Use of Public Health grant		New		Activity within Education and Skills that may be funded from the ringfenced Public Health Grant	-0.200
				Use of COMF grant		New		Activity within Education and Skills that may be funded from the ringfenced Contain Outbreak Management Fund	-0.110
				E&S Cell		New			-0.030
				In Year pressures		New		Covid expenditure - catering staff absence.	
Children's Social Care	48.2	-1.6	46.7	Children's Social Care Transformation and OFSTED Response	-1.500	2	Green (on track and should achieve)	In light of improvement work needed at pace it would be helpful to extend the timescale for this funding. Balance held in earmarked reserves.	0.000

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				Investment in Cared for Children and Care Leavers and other pressures	4.000	41	Amber (not on track but may still achieve)	This has been allocated to the placements budget pressure – with a full review of budgets pending. Regular review / deep dive into placements. Opportunities in the other budgets will be considered but they are under pressure.	2.310
				Safeguarding Children – legacy staffing pressure	0.390	45	Green (on track and should achieve)	This was growth that has corrected a legacy issue.	0.000
				Growth in Children & Families Commissioning Contracts	0.180	46	Green (on track and should achieve)	This was growth that has corrected a legacy issue. The budget has been significantly reduced in earlier years so options for further reductions are limited. Review budgets for 2023/24.	0.000
				Staff Travel and related savings	-0.261	29	Red (will not achieve)	This will be a pressure on the requirement to travel. Impact on workforce to be considered and how savings can be delivered. Review for MTFS 2023/24. Part of the essential user allowance item will be delivered but unlikely that less mileage / lower mileage rate will be achieved.	0.113

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				Growth in Children's social care – average 10% per annum growth in spend (on £20m placement budget) less already agreed.		New		Possible scope for this to reduce in line with ambition to refocus activity and realising savings here through roll out of residential children's homes project. But likely to be double spend during transition phase.	
				Continuation of Transformation funding considering July 2022 inspection and wider improvement work.		New		Transformation work ongoing to realise ambition to draw down demand and reduce high cost provision.	
				Removal of high needs DSG contribution to Direct payments and replace with base budget funding.		New			
				Growth in direct payments budget to reflect activity levels.		New			

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				Growth in the service to manage resettlement activity – children stay in the system and staff are needed.		New			
				Workforce		New		Revise vacancy forecasts to reflect recruitment difficulties. Slow down in year recruitment where feasible/safe. Use specific reserves for exit costs (per MTFS).	
				Further Mitigations		New		Forensic review of projected deficit budget lines to identify in-year mitigations. Acquire domestic property for Children’s Homes. Review all high cost-low outcome placements.	-0.475
				Use of COMF grant		New		Activity within Childrens Social Care that may be funded from the ringfenced Contain Outbreak Management Fund	-0.044
				Care and Early Intervention		New		Review all high cost-low outcome placements.	

Children and Families Committee	Exp £m	Inc £m	Net Revised Budget £m	MTFS Proposal	Value 2022/23 £m	MTFS Ref	RAG Rating	Comments	Variance from MTFS 2022/23 £m
				Other		New		Reduce opening hours or close for under-utilised facilities. Work across partnerships to identify any additional funding streams for use of facilities.	
Total	125.4	-50.9	74.5		5.486				3.547

3. Corporate Grants Register

Table 1 – Corporate Grants Register

Grants 2022/23	Revised Forecast FR1 2022/23 £000	Latest Forecast 2022/23 £000	Change from FR1 2022/23 £000	Treatment of Grant <i>Notes 2 - 5</i>
CHILDREN & FAMILIES				
Specific Use (Held within Services)¹	165,406	166,408	1,002	
General Purpose (Held Corporately)				
Staying Put Implementation Grant	130	130	0	
Extended Rights to Free Transport (Home to School Transport)	250	250	0	
Extended Personal Adviser Duty Implementation	57	57	0	
Extension of the role of Virtual School Heads	61	61	0	
TOTAL CHILDREN & FAMILIES	165,904	166,906	1,002	

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 increase in specific grants relates mainly to Asylum Seekers, Ukraine Resettlement Funding and the COVID-19 Recovery Premium grants reflecting the latest allocations. Other additional specific grants have been received and are detailed in **Table 2 and Table 3**.

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

Table 2 – Recommend to Service Committee to Approve Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Use) over £500,000 up to £1m

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Asylum Seekers	535	Increase on MTFs 2022-26 estimate. This grant is from the Department for Education. 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. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and leaving care: funding instructions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Specific Purpose Allocations over £500,000		535	

Table 3 – Note Delegated Decision - Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Use) £500,000 or less

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families - Schools	Sixth Forms Grant (Specific Purpose)	3	Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Funding is based on Pupil Numbers which makes up the main funding profile, the MTFs estimate will have been based on pupils in 2021/22 being forecast for the remainder of financial year. This will now have been updated for 2022/23 pupil numbers. Sixth Form providers also receive a High Value Course Premium based on the number of pupils taking high value

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
			courses. 16 to 19 education: funding allocations - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Children and Families - Schools	COVID-19 Recovery Premium (Specific Purpose)	180	Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Education. Recovery premium received on behalf of schools and allocated out as per funding schedule (breakdown by school).
Children and Families - Schools	School Led Tutoring Grant (Specific Purpose)	154	Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Education. This grant will give schools and academy trusts the flexibility in determining how best to provide tutoring intervention to support catch-up for lost education due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Grant conditions .
Children and Families - Schools	Senior Mental Health Lead Training Grant (Specific Purpose)	1	<p>Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Education.</p> <p>The Department for Education (DfE) is offering a grant of £1,200 for eligible state-funded schools and colleges in England to train a senior mental health lead to develop and implement a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. This training is not compulsory, but it is part of the government's commitment to offer this training to all eligible schools and colleges by 2025.</p> <p>Eligible schools and colleges are now able to apply for a senior mental health lead training grant to commence training within the 2022 to 2023 financial year, up to 31st March 2023. Grants will be provided to cover (or contribute to) the cost of attending a quality assured course and may also be used to hire supply staff whilst leads are engaged in learning. Senior mental health lead training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families - Schools	<p>Newly Qualified Teachers - Education Recovery 5% Time off Timetable</p> <p>(Specific Purpose)</p>	16	<p>Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Education. Eligible schools will receive a one-off payment to support NQTs who completed induction between the summer of 2021 and spring 2022. This funding will be made available to cover the cost of providing these teachers an additional 5% off timetable for the 2021 to 2022 academic year so they have additional time to invest in their development.</p> <p>This time off timetable has been designed to be used flexibly so that as many new teachers as possible can benefit from this additional support.</p> <p>Funding has been calculated as equivalent to 5% off timetable every week for an NQT over the academic year 2021 to 2022 and equates to 44 hours.</p> <p>[Withdrawn] Additional funding for newly qualified teachers completing induction between summer 2021 and spring 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
Children and Families - Schools	<p>Apprentice Incentive Scheme</p> <p>(Specific Purpose)</p>	2	<p>This grant is from the Department for Education. Incentive payments available for hiring a new apprentice. Employers are able to use their levy funds to cover the cost of an apprentice's training and assessment. Payments passported to schools. Grant conditions.</p>
Children and Families - Schools	<p>Digital Education Platform</p> <p>(Specific Purpose)</p>	2	<p>This grant is from the Department for Education. When schools and colleges closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, teachers needed a way to continue teaching students at home. The solution was to provide digital education platforms. This is the name we give to a set of tools and technologies that together enable pupils to learn online in virtual classrooms. Digital education platforms are purpose-built for remote learning and they are so much more than just a school website. Funding is available for</p>

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
			schools to help them get set up on one of two platforms, either G Suite for Education (Google Classroom) or Office 365 Education (Microsoft Teams). Both are free to use. Payments passported to schools.
Children and Families - Schools	Mass Testing (Specific Purpose)	9	This grant is from the Department for Education. This is the final payment allocation Phase 8 & 9 for this funding. It provides funding to cover the initial roll-out of rapid mass testing. Payments passported to schools. Grant conditions .
Children and Families - Schools	Vaccination funding (Specific Purpose)	9	This grant is from the Department for Education. Healthy 12 to 15 year olds in England are now being offered two doses of the PfizerBioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, 12 weeks apart. These vaccinations are available through school immunisation services or by booking through the national booking service to attend a vaccination site outside of school hours. At this critical point in the vaccine programme, it is particularly important that schools and immunisation teams work closely together to maximise effectiveness of the vaccination programme. Funding is provided to schools with a one-off payment to support schools in hosting vaccinations and ensuring that the COVID-19 vaccine is accessible to pupils. Payments passported to schools. Grant conditions .
Children and Families	Tackling Troubled Families (Payments by Results) (Specific Purpose)	139	Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). 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,

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
			<p>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.</p>
Children and Families	<p>NHS Cheshire CCG Grant to fund CEIAS Services</p> <p>(Specific Purpose)</p>	26	<p>This grant is from the NHS Cheshire CCG Education.</p> <p>For children and young people aged 0 – 25 years with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their parent/carers who are normally resident in Cheshire East local authority. CEIAS works with families from the moment a concern is identified with a child’s education, or development, and continues to support whether statutory thresholds for an Education Health and Care plan are met or not up to and including Tribunal, complaints etc. The service also supports families whose children and young people are excluded from school, or at threat of exclusion.</p>
Children and Families	<p>Remand Grant</p> <p>(Specific Purpose)</p>	55	<p>Increase on MTFs 2022-26 estimate. This grant is from the Home Office. Funding allocation towards remands to youth secure accommodation of children and young people (under 18 years of age). This payment is in respect of children detained on remand in YOIs and the treatment of such children as “looked after”, and to meet the costs of escorting remanded children to and from youth detention accommodation. Such payments reflect a reasonable estimate of demand using the most recently available data and the YOI remand sector price.</p>

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families	Ukraine Resettlement Funding (Specific Purpose)	238	This grant is from the Education & Skills Funding Agency. Funding to provide education and childcare services for children who have entered England via the Homes for Ukraine scheme 2022 to 2023. Grant conditions .
Children and Families	Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme - British Nationals (Specific Purpose)	9	Increase on Financial Review 1 forecast. This grant is from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Funding is being provided as part of the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme which is intended to provide funding to local authorities in England to provide targeted support to BN(O) status holders who need additional English language support and destitution support for those whose circumstances change. Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) welcome programme – information for local authorities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Specific Purpose Allocations less than £500,000		843	

4. Debt Management

	Outstanding Debt £000	Over 6 months old £000
Children and Families Committee		
Children's Social Care (Incl. Directorate)	8	6
Education and 14-19 Skills	70	-
Prevention and Early Help	9	-
Schools	47	-

5. Capital Strategy

Children and Families CAPITAL

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23-2025/26													
Scheme Description	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Expenditure				Total Forecast Budget 2022/26	Forecast Funding					Total Funding
			Forecast Budget 2022/23	Forecast Budget 2023/24	Forecast Budget 2024/25	Forecast Budget 2025/26		Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Childrens Social Care													
Foster Carers Capacity Scheme	634	348	0	286	0	0	286					286	286
Crewe Youth Zone	4,800	342	650	2,450	1,358	0	4,458	2,258				2,200	4,458
Strong Start, Family Help & Integration													
Ash Grove Nursery Expansion	230	225	5	0	0	0	5	5					5
Beechwood Nursery Expansion	868	836	33	0	0	0	33			33			33
Early Years Sufficiency Capital Fund	1,036	913	0	123	0	0	123	123					123
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Adelaide Academy	784	34	50	700	0	0	750	580				170	750
Congleton Planning Area	5,034	44	300	4,690	0	0	4,990	2,593	2,397				4,990
Devolved Formula Capital	2,179	350	954	300	290	285	1,829	1,829					1,829
Future Years Basic Need Allocation	4,192	11	2,652	1,529	0	0	4,180	4,180					4,180
Holmes Chapel Planning Area	3,625	770	750	2,105	0	0	2,855	2,480	375				2,855
Macclesfield Planning Area - secondary	4,084	1,106	100	2,400	478	0	2,978	2,978					2,978
Malbank High School	1,922	1,856	66	0	0	0	66	66					66
Monks Coppenhall Sen Expansion	127	2	125	0	0	0	125	25				100	125
Nantwich Planning Area (Primary)	7,080	104	400	4,600	1,976	0	6,976	3,787	3,189				6,976
Nantwich Planning Area (Secondary)	700	0	200	500	0	0	700	700					700
Park Lane Expansion	4,400	4,226	174	0	0	0	174	174					174
Provision of Sufficient School Places - SEND	6,006	16	2,490	3,500	0	0	5,990	500				5,490	5,990
Puss Bank SEN Expansion	532	509	23	0	0	0	23					23	23
Sandbach High School - Basic Need	1,704	1,702	2	0	0	0	2	2					2
Sandbach Boys School - Basic Need	1,776	1,773	3	0	0	0	3	3					3
Sandbach Planning Area (secondary)	38	0	38	0	0	0	38	38					38
School Condition Grant	4,356	42	1,595	2,761	0	0	4,356	4,301		55			4,356
Sen/High Needs Grant Allocation	3,866	0	46	3,820	0	0	3,866	3,866					3,866
Sen Placement Expn - Phase 2	38	0	38	0	0	0	38					38	38

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23-2025/26

Scheme Description	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Expenditure				Total Forecast Budget 2022/26	Forecast Funding					Total Funding
			Forecast Budget 2022/23	Forecast Budget 2023/24	Forecast Budget 2024/25	Forecast Budget 2025/26		Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Shavington Planning Area (1)	3,125	70	400	2,655	0	0	3,055	3,055					3,055
Special Provision Grant Allocation	908	46	863	0	0	0	863	857		6			863
Springfield Satellite Site (Dean Row)	4,120	91	2,030	2,000	0	0	4,030	3,230				800	4,030
To Expand 'In Borough' Sen Placement Capacity - Springfield Special School	149	91	58	0	0	0	58					58	58
Little Angels Satellite Sites	1,100	1,074	26	0	0	0	26	26					26
Wilmslow Basic Need Scheme	13,944	1,658	4,000	5,000	3,286	0	12,286	9,551	2,687			48	12,286
Wilmslow Primary Planning Area	626	1	0	625	0	0	625	125	500				625
Total Committed Schemes	83,984	18,240	18,071	40,042	7,388	285	65,786	47,330	9,149	94	0	9,213	65,786
New Schemes													
Childrens Social Care													
Children's Home Sufficiency Scheme	2,100		1,000	1,100	0	0	2,100					2,100	2,100
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Congleton Planning Area (1)	2,200	0	0	1,100	1,100	0	2,200	900	1,300				2,200
Congleton Planning Area (2)	625	0	100	525	0	0	625	625					625
Congleton Planning Area (3)	7,500	0	0	500	800	6,200	7,500	4,300	3,200				7,500
Sandbach Planning Area	3,183	0	500	2,683	0	0	3,183	2,673	510				3,183
Handforth Planning Area	15,000	0	0	2,000	6,500	6,500	15,000	2,136	12,864				15,000
Haslington Planning Area (The Dingle PS Expansion)	1,385	0	100	900	385	0	1,385	1,385					1,385
Macclesfield Academy Resource Provision	100	0	100	0	0	0	100	100					100
Macclesfield Planning Area (1)	4,000	0	0	0	2,000	2,000	4,000		4,000				4,000
Macclesfield Planning Area (2)	4,000	0	100	3,400	500	0	4,000	4,000					4,000
Mobberley Primary School	900	0	50	850	0	0	900	600			300		900
Resource Provision - Wistaston PS	1,400	0	400	1,000	0	0	1,400	1,100				300	1,400
Shavington Planning Area (2)	8,000	0	200	800	4,000	3,000	8,000	5,640	2,360				8,000
Total New Schemes	50,393	0	2,550	14,858	15,285	17,700	50,393	23,459	24,234	0	300	2,400	50,393
Total Children and Families Schemes	134,377	18,240	20,621	54,900	22,673	17,985	116,179	70,789	33,383	94	300	11,613	116,179

6. Reserves Strategy

Children and Families Committee

Name of Reserve	Opening Balance 1st April 2022 £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves 2022/23 £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31st March 2023 £000	Notes
Directorate				
Childrens Directorate - Transformation Funding	1,079	(365)	714	Expectation of £200k for CSC Court and Care Planning Service Proposals plus £65k for CSC New Beginnings.
Childrens Directorate - C&F ED	422	(110)	312	Estimated spend of £30k transport review, £50k Chess review and £30k catering review.
Childrens Social Care				
Domestic Abuse Partnership	112	(76)	36	To sustain preventative services to vulnerable people as a result of partnership funding. This is the current budgeted position, however updates will be provided on future reviews. Service will need to consider in year deficit as this would not be sustainable in 2023/24 based on current assumptions.
Education and 14-19 Skills				
Skills and Lifelong Learning	30	(30)	0	To support adult learning, training and improving skills for the workplace. Need to
School Organisation & Capital Service	16	(16)	0	Springfield lease of £28.5k per annum will be a pressure in 2022/23.
SSIF Nexus Programme	9	(9)	0	Reserve will be used towards School Improvement to continue to support schools with high disadvantaged learners - agreed with CWAC.
Strong Start, Family Help and Integration				
Troubled Fams Initiative	2,215	364	2,579	Previously intended to be used towards Prevention restructure. Newly formed
Emotional Healthy Schools	71	(71)	0	Funding by partners to deliver service.
Public Sector Transformation – contribution to Early Youth Inclusion Fund	57	(57)	0	
Complex Dependencies	21	(21)	0	
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TOTAL	4,032	(391)	3,641	

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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 September 2022
Report Title:	Children and Families Q1 score card 2022/23
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/28/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Children and Families Committee with an overview of performance against the core indicator set within the 3 directorate areas of children's services. This report covers a range of the corporate objectives under the overarching corporate priority of a fair authority.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of quarter 1 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2022-23
- 2.2 The committee will note that the format has changed in line with their request which includes the latest comparator data where available.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is asked to:
- 3.1.1. note the performance of children's services for quarter 1.
- 3.1.2. provide scrutiny in relation to performance of children and families services.

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 1 of 2022-23 (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022).
- 6.2. The outcomes framework scorecard contains 51 indicators across the 3 directorate areas within children's services and provides a strategic overview of the core activity with the service areas that demonstrate how we support the children and young people in Cheshire East
- 6.3. The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

Social Care

- **1.13** – the % of repeat referrals has continued to reduce which offers an assurance that the support provided to families has resulted in lasting positive changes. The rate is also favourable when compared to statistical neighbours and the England position
- **1.14** – assessments completed within 45 days. This continues to be a focus for improvement as any delays can be an indicator of families not receiving timely intervention and support. Timeliness however needs to be balanced to ensure assessments receive sufficient management oversight and are of high quality.
- **1.23** – the % of Initial child protection conferences (ICPC's) being completed within 15 days of the S47 enquiry has improved. This is a positive indicator that timely intervention is taking place and multi-agency decision making is prompt for Children and Young people where there are significant risks. As an authority we now compare much more favourably with the England average and our statistical neighbours.
- **1.27** – the rate of children in care continues to be in line with the national average but higher than our statistical neighbours. As a corporate parent it is important that these young people are supported by us for the right length of time and in the best homes for them.
- **1.30** – where possible when Children and Young people are cared for, we endeavour to place them close to their existing network of family and friends to reduce disruption in their lives. Ongoing work around local sufficiency of placements and exploring family support

in the first instance means we have reduced the numbers of individuals we have to move further away. This is balanced though with the most appropriate place for the young person to be safe and meet their needs.

- **1.28** – whilst we continue to work closely with our colleagues in the NHS to ensure that dental treatment is available for all our cared for children, this remains an ongoing challenge both locally and nationally.
- **1.34** – the Q1 figure for our NEET care leavers reflects a snapshot at that point of time and does not directly compare with the outturn position which reflects the NEET situation of the relevant individual on or around the relevant birthdate within the reporting year. Currently we have an additional 4% of care leavers engaged in reengagement and positive activities with the aim of entering the education, employment and training (EET) market.

Education

- **2.1 – 2.13** – the routine inspection of schools by Ofsted only recommenced in September 2021 so whilst the figures reflect the latest position there will be a number of schools that haven't been inspected for a number of years. Quality of provision remains a key partnership approach with our maintained schools and academies. In quarter 1 there was 1 inspection report published for Cheshire East schools for Hurdsfield Primary that went from requires improvement to good
- **2.21** – rate of EHCP growth as a % of the 0-25 age group continues to increase and is higher than the national average. This places increased pressure to ensure a sufficiency of placements to support individuals to achieve their maximum potential.
- **2.22** – The % of pupils in CEC maintained/ State Funded schools with SEN support is lower than both the national and statistical neighbour average. It is important to ensure that inclusivity within mainstream schools is balanced with the advantages that specialist provision can offer individuals.
- **2.26** – timeliness of EHCP completion continues to be a challenge due to increased demand on services. Comparing this on a quarter on quarter basis it is important to acknowledge that school holidays can have an impact on timeliness when assessments need to include a range of in class observations.

Early Help and Prevention

- **3.1** – we are supporting increasing numbers of individuals at the early help level with Cheshire East prevention staff leading on 2 out of every 3 cases.
- **3.14 – 3.15** – we continue to have very high levels of eligible individuals accessing the 2,3- and 4-year-old offer ensuring that

children are accessing education and support at the earliest opportunity. Our performance substantially exceeds the national picture.

- **3.16** – Supporting Families was previously known as Troubled families/ Family Focus. The Q1 performance for the Supporting Families’ criteria suggests that we are on target to achieve positive outcomes for the number of families we have a target for.
- **3.17** – Compared to quarter 4 (1402) substantially more individuals are accessing the range of services and sessions provided by the youth support service.
- **3.19** – Cheshire East overall numbers and rates of yr. 12-13 young people NEET continues to be lower than the national picture evidencing that positive outcomes continue to be achieved for the vast majority of young people in the borough

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1. Not applicable.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

8.1.1. There are no direct legal implications.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. 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 budget pressures at a service level

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. There are no direct policy implications.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1. Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

8.5. Human Resources

8.5.1. There are no direct human resources implications.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1. There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. 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.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. This report does not impact on climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager Bev.Harding@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Children and Families Outcomes Framework Score Card March 2022
Background Papers:	None

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June 2022 - Children and Families Outcomes Framework Scorecard

Notes: The boxes that are grayed out are where national data is not applicable or data isn't available, for example the schools data is available termly which doesn't always coincide with quarterly reporting

Rates are calculated using the 2020 ONS mid year population estimate 0-17 of 78,068 (Office of National Statistics) and are calculated as a rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17. This enables the local authority to be compared on a like for like basis with different local authorities or groups of authorities.

Directorate	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National	Benchmark Stat N'bour	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
Childrens Social Care	1.1	Number of referrals	1951	524							Fair	
	1.12	Rate of referrals (accumulative)	249.9	67.1					494	399	Fair	
	1.13	Percentage of repeat referrals	15%	11%					21%	20%	Fair	
	1.14	Percentage of assessments completed within 45 days	78%	70%					88%	91%	Fair	
	1.15	Number of children in need	1687	1677							Fair	
	1.16	Rate of children in need	216.1	214.8					321	271	Fair	
	1.17	Number of S47 enquiries (cumulative)	1123	284							Fair	
	1.18	Rate of Children subject to section 47 enquiries (cumulative)	143.8	36.4					164	130	Fair	
	1.19	Number of Children subject to an ICPC (cumulative)	330	83							Fair	ICPC - Initial Child Protection Conference
	1.2	Rate of Children subject to an ICPC (cumulative)	42.3	10.6					60	48	Fair	ICPC - Initial Child Protection Conference
	1.21	Number of children with a child protection plan	245	251							Fair	
	1.22	Rate of children with a child protection plan	31.4	32.1					41	31	Fair	
	1.23	% of ICPC within 15 days of S47 enquiry	78%	83%					83%	86%	Fair	ICPC - Initial Child Protection Conference
	1.24	Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection (CP) plan (rolling yr)	15%	16%					22%	23%	Fair	
	1.25	% of children on CP plans reviewed within timescales	88%	94%					93%		Fair	CP - Child Protection
	1.26	Number of cared for children	522	522							Fair	
	1.27	Rate of cared for children	66.9	66.9					67	60	Fair	
	1.28	Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	51%	37%					40%	43%	Fair	
	1.29	Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	80%	80%					91%	89%	Fair	
	1.30	% of cared for children placed out of borough and over 20 miles from home address	18%	17%					16%	19%	Fair	

Directorate	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National	Benchmark Stat N'bour	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym	
	1.31	% of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	24%	23%							Fair		
	1.32	% Children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted (YTD)	9%	11%					10%	12%	Fair	YTD - Year to Date	
	1.33	% Children who ceased to be looked after in the period due to a Special Guardianship Order (YTD)	11%	8%					14%	13%	Fair	YTD - Year to Date	
	1.34	% of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (aged 19-21) (NEET)	41%	46%					48%	47%	Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training	
	1.35	% of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation (aged 19-21)	99%	96%					88%	89%	Fair		
Education and 14-19 Skills	2.1	Percentage good or outstanding primary schools	89%	90%					92%	92%	Fair		
	2.12	Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools	80%	80%					83%	81%	Fair		
	2.13	Percentage good or outstanding special schools	75%	75%					94%	95%	Fair		
	2.14	Percentage attendance for primary pupils year to date		94%					96%	96%	Fair		
	2.15	Percentage attendance for secondary pupils year to date		90%					95%	95%	Fair		
	2.16	Percentage attendance for special school pupils year to date		89%					91%	92%	Fair		
	2.17	Number of permanent exclusions from Cheshire East Schools (latest term available)		11								Fair	
	2.18	Current Number of pupils educated at home	496	492								Fair	
	2.19	Current number of children missing from education.	64	39								Fair	
	2.2	Total number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)	3521	3698								Fair	EHCP - Education & Health Care Plan
	2.21	Rate of children with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) NB as rate of 0-25 yr old (105,819)	3.3%	3.5%								Fair	EHCP - Education & Health Care Plan
	2.22	Total % Pupils in CEC Maintained/State-funded with SEN Support. DfE / census measure from Jan census	9.4%	9.4%						12.6%	12.1%	Fair	SEN - Special Educational Needs DFE - Department for Education
	2.23	Number of children and young people with an EHCP open to social care (NB includes care leavers)		328								Fair	EHCP - Education & Health Care Plan
	2.24	Number of children with an EHCP with an EHA	277	288								Fair	EHA - Early Help Assessment
	2.25	% of requests for Educational Psychologists (EP) advice completed within 6 weeks	74%	52%								Fair	
2.26	Special Educational Needs – Education, Health and Care Plans completion within 20 weeks including exceptions (cummulative yr)	65.3%	42%						58%	66%	Fair		

Directorate	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National	Benchmark Stat N'bour	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym
	2.27	Average number of weeks for EHC Plans to be issued (snap shot at quarter end to which it relates)	20.7	24.3							Fair	EHCP - Education & Health Care Plan
Strong Start, Family Help and Integration	3.1	Current number of open Early Help Assessments/ plans (excluding short breaks)	1158	1190							Fair	
	3.12	% of all open Early Help Assessments led by Cheshire East Prevention service staff	66%	74%				66%			Fair	
	3.13	% 0-2 yrs engaged at children centres (most vulnerable i.e. CIN/CP/Cared for that have attended 3 or more times in the last 12 months)		27%							Fair	CIN - Child In Need, CP - Child Protection
	3.14	% eligible children taking up 2 year old offer (termly figure only)		77%					62%		Fair	
	3.15	% children taking up 3 and 4 year old offer (termly figure only)		96%					88%		Fair	
	3.16	Number of Families meeting the Supporting Families (previously family focus) criteria where outcomes have been successfully concluded (quarterly fig)	332	123							Fair	
	3.17	Number of young people accessing the youth support service		2419							Fair	
	3.18	Number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	149	194							Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
	3.19	% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) individuals [yr. 12-13]	1.99%	2.59%					2.80%		Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training

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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2022

Report Title: School Organisation: Academisation of Schools:
Forward Plan

Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of
Children's Services.

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the report

This report is presented to committee to allow committee members to be informed of planned schools across the borough who are seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust. The forward plan shows such schools and those that will require committee approval or will be progressed through delegated authority.

There is one change to this paper from the version which was considered at the September. committee meeting. Commencement of work to convert St Gregory's Catholic Primary School has been initiated but this will require detailed discussions with both the Diocese of Shrewsbury and Regional Directors office.

Note: The 'registration of interest' form for the local authority to initiate a multi-academy trust as per the paper presented at the July meeting has been submitted. An outcome as to whether we have been successful in this initial pilot phase is still not available – ongoing discussions with Regional Director office.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Children and Families Committee meeting on 12 July 2021 committee approved the delegation, with certain exemptions, for current and future conversions including academy leases and commercial transfer agreements jointly to the Executive Director of Children Services and the Executive Director of Place. Where exemptions apply delegation is not applicable and a full report would be presented to committee.
- 1.2 It was proposed that committee will receive a forward plan at each meeting highlighting conversions due to take place and confirmation of the conversions

that have taken place so that committee is fully informed and can note and scrutinise the academisation process. The forward plan has not been to the last two committees due to the size of the agenda and number of key decisions being taken at these meetings, however, this will be included on the forward plan for all meetings going forward.

- 1.3 A summary report (Appendix 1) provides an update for committee on those schools which have/are planning to convert to an academy so that committee members are kept informed. Note that in the vast majority of cases, schools converting to an academy will be required to join an existing multi-academy trust.

Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee receives and notes the summary table (Appendix 1) showing the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The committee has asked to receive a forward plan at each meeting highlighting conversions due to take place and confirmation of the conversions that have taken place.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The option to not inform committee of academy approvals is not considered appropriate as each academy conversion will have varying levels of risk and the inclusion of a forward plan of pending conversions allows committee members to be kept aware of future changes.
- 4.2 School governing boards apply to the secretary of state to progress with an academy order, the alternative is to remain a maintained school. There is no requirement for a school to convert to an academy unless directed to do so through an inadequate Ofsted inspection.
- 4.3 Failure to cooperate could result in the Secretary of State making transfer schemes which would be binding on the council.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 At the C&F committee meeting in July 2021, committee agreed the delegation for academy conversions as below:
 - a. The Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, has authority to take all steps necessary to agree and execute the commercial transfer agreement, novation of third-party contracts, shared use agreements/facilities access agreements, staffing and information transfer.

- b. The Executive Director of Place in consultation with Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary to agree and execute any transactions in relation to land, facilities or shared use agreements.
- c. No delegation may be exercised to execute any agreement as set out above where:
 - The school has a deficit of £100k or there is any significant impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - There are substantive third-party land interests.
 - i. Any public funds are to be reclaimed under section (land contributions)
 - ii. Any current or proposed legal claim has been identified where an indemnity is sought against Cheshire East Council on any matter.

5.2 This report presents the status of a range of recent and future conversions so that committee are kept aware of ongoing work in this area. However, it should be noted that proposed conversion dates can be delayed for a variety of reasons.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 Appropriate consultation and engagement takes place as part of the academy process with both staff and the local community.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1 Legal

7.1.1 All legal requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

7.2 Finance

7.2.1 All financial requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion

7.3 Policy

7.3.1 The implementation of academy conversion is undertaken in accordance with national legislation as per the various Education Acts

7.4 Equality

7.4.1 Not applicable for this report summary

7.5 Human Resources

7.5.1 All HR requirements (mainly relating to TUPE arrangements) are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

7.6 Risk Management

7.6.1 All associated risks are considered by legal, finance and HR as part of managing the academy conversion process.

7.6.2 The implications of the roll out of UNIT 4 /ERP administrative/transactional system have increased levels of risk due to the requirement to establish a new payroll process as part of the transition to academy status. This has generated some delays in conversion dates due to associated services having the capacity to build payroll structures ready for conversion.

7.7 Rural Communities

7.7.1 Not applicable for this report summary

7.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1 There is scrutiny of multi academy trusts by the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure they have capacity to adopt the school. Therefore, assuring that the school joins a strong trust that can ensure outcomes for children and young people continue to improve

7.9 Public Health

7.9.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10 Climate Change

7.10.1 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access & Authorisation of Information	
Contact Officer:	Mark Bayley Head of Service – Infrastructure and Outcomes mark.bayley@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Background Papers:	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/convert-to-an-academy-documents-for-schools Committee paper from 12 July 2021
	Academisation of Schools Report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

APPENDIX 1:

C&F Committee: School Academisation – Forward Plan

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2022

The following table will be updated ahead C&F Committee meetings as required to provide the latest position on current/forthcoming school academy conversions. Conversions included within the table are from the date of the commencement of the Council Committee system commenced in July 2021.

Green – completed. Amber – in progress Yellow – initial discussions taking place NOR : Numbers of Pupils on Roll (2021 census)

School	Phase	Status	Core School information	Proposed (P) & Actual (A) Conversion Dates	Commentary
Bosley CofE	Primary	Diocese of Chester:	NoR : 35 – Macc. rural school. Ofsted: 2016: Good	A: 1 st September 2021	Converted on time following approval at July C&F Committee.
Audlem St James'	Primary	Diocese of Chester:	NoR : 187 – rural school. Ofsted: 2018: Good	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1 st December 2021	Converted following approval at C&F Committee meeting in October
Middlewich High	Secondary	Community Maintained	NoR : 705 Ofsted: 2019: Good Leisure Centre on site.	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1st December 2021	Converted following approval at C&F Committee meeting in October
Christ the King	Primary	Joint Diocesan: Chester & Shrewsbury Diocese.	NoR : 87 Macclesfield Ofsted: 2018: Inadequate	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1 st April 2022	No requirement to be considered by Committee. Significant work required to agree suitable trust with both Diocesan.
Elworth Hall School	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 201 Sandbach Ofsted: 2022: Requires Improvement	A: 1 st April 2022	No requirement to be considered by Committee.
Oakfield Lodge	Secondary	Pupil Referral Unit (those at risk or have been permanently excluded)	NoR : 60 Crewe Ofsted: July 21: Requires Improvement	P: 1 st February 2022 A: 1 st September 2022	Expected conversion now planned for 1 September. Recs approved at Committee March 23 2022. School now converted.
Wilmslow Group of schools: <i>Proposing to all convert into a multi-academy trust at same time. schools outlined below:</i>	1x Secondary 4 x Primary			Date as yet to be confirmed	Ongoing discussions taking place with schools – will be brought to future Committee for consideration.
Wilmslow High School	Secondary	Community Maintained	NoR: 2130 Ofsted:2019: Good		

			Significant build programme currently in programme		
Styal	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 119 Ofsted: 2018: Good Land ownership: National Trust		
Alderley Edge	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 203 Ofsted: 2014: Outstanding		
Ashdene	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 419 Ofsted: 2019: Outstanding		
Lindow	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 210 Ofsted: 2018: Good		
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Diocesan of Shrewsbury	NoR : 71 Ofsted: Special measures	Date as yet to be confirmed	This will be a sponsored academy conversion due to an inadequate Ofsted inspection. Ongoing discussions with Diocese and Regional Director office.
Implications of recent White Paper: Trust expectations	All			N/A	Registration of interest submitted to Regional Director to establish a local authority multi academy trust – outcome expected in September 2022.



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 November 2022
Report Title:	Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Annual Report 2021-22
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/19/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. 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. This contributes to the strategic aims and objectives of the corporate plan to protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

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 and is planned for 2022/23 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 to by 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 Councils Corporate Plan aimed to protect and support our communities and safeguard children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. This includes protecting adults at risk and families from abuse and the 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.

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 legal guidance.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1. 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 legal guidance

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.9. Public Health

- 7.9.1. 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 legal guidance.

7.10. Climate Change

- 7.10.1.** 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 legal guidance.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alistair Jordan Alistair.jordan@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01606 288 517
Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A



Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report 2021-22

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Foreword from the Partnership Chair

This is the third annual report of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership, it covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. We want to first recognise that through this period COVID-19 continued to affect everyone in the Cheshire East community.

This report recognises the work of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership through this challenging year and that those challenges that remain that we will continue to address in 2022/23.

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.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has continued to lead the safeguarding work of the borough.

The focus of this report will be on the three Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities of

- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Contextual safeguarding
- ❖ Emotional Health and Wellbeing of our vulnerable children

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, 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 the Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

Independent Scrutiny

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

The partnership has commissioned 3 local safeguarding practice reviews led by independent chairs during 2021/22.

Ofsted conducted a Focused visit of Cheshire East Social Services on the 3 and 4 November 2021. The inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need or subject to a protection plan and found there had been an improvement in the overall quality of work with children who are in need of help or protection. Cheshire Youth Justice Service were inspected by the HM Inspectorate of Probation in July 2021. They received an overall rating of 'Good' following this joint inspection.

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.

Children and Young People in Cheshire East - Our Child Population

Whilst most children do particularly well in Cheshire East, the borough has 18 areas which are within the top 20% of the most deprived areas in England, affecting 33,350 people or 8.6% 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 78,200 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.

15.2% of primary pupils are entitled to free school meals (an indicator of deprivation) compared to 23.7% nationally. 15.1% of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals compared to 22.3% nationally.

The majority of pupils' ethnic backgrounds are reported to be White British (84.3% of primary pupils and 84.7% of secondary pupils), albeit the ratio has reduced slightly from last year. The biggest minority groups in Cheshire East schools are 'white other' (5%), Asian/ Asian British (2.9%), and mixed/ multiple ethnicities (4.1%).

There are just over 100 different first languages recorded for primary and secondary pupils, although only 8.4% of primary pupils and 6.4% of secondary pupils have a first language other than English, compared to national figures of 21.2% and 17.5%, respectively, unlike previously the increase from last year it is at a higher rate than the increase nationally.

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

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 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 and show how we take their views seriously.

The theme of 2021's November Children's Rights Month was how children's rights were affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key events in 2021 included:

- ❖ Taboo – Mental Health Conference
- ❖ Mental Health Awareness Training for professionals
- ❖ Inclusive sex education sessions for young people with Body Positive North West
- ❖ Children's Trust Board take over
- ❖ Young people presenting at Children and Families Committee
- ❖ Launch of the SHOUT Campaign at White Ribbon Day

On reviewing the Section 175 audit, it was extremely positive to read all the different ways in which schools capture the voice of the child in relation to safeguarding matters. The majority referenced using the 3 houses model as well as student surveys and assemblies.

Improving engagement with frontline staff - e-bulletins

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has continued to publish its 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:

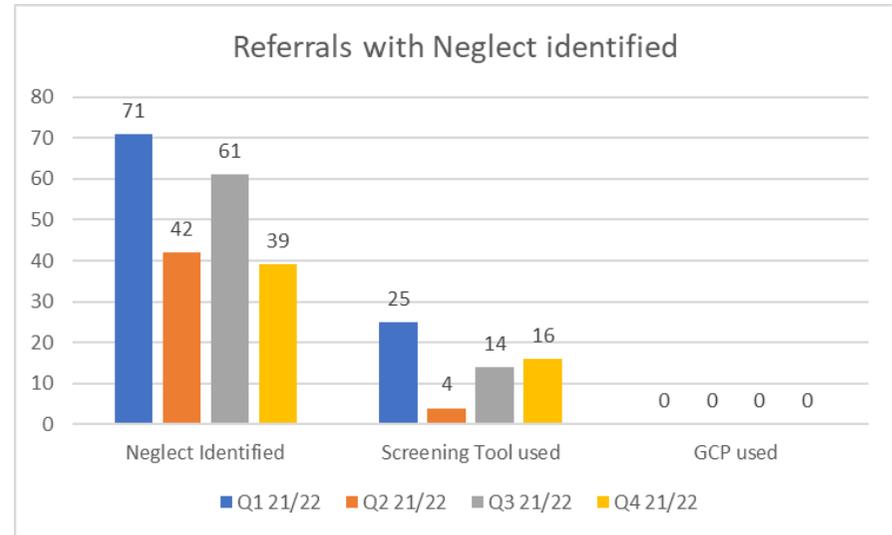
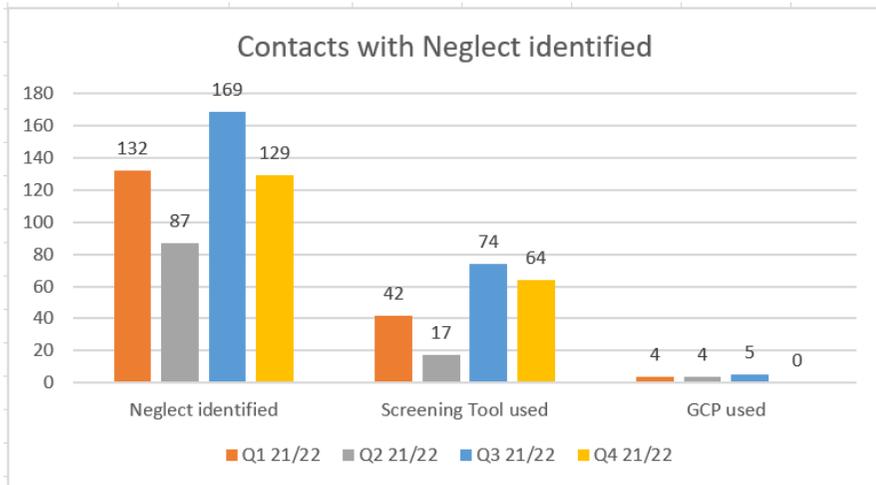
- | | |
|---|---|
| ❖ COVID Support grant | ❖ Cheshire East Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy |
| ❖ Adverse childhood experiences training | ❖ NHS guidance for parents on looking after children with Covid-19 |
| ❖ Psychological First Aid Training | ❖ Summer Activities programme |
| ❖ Safe Sleep Week | ❖ Hate crime 7-minute briefing |
| ❖ Pan Cheshire Missing from home and care newsletter | ❖ Early Help Scenario |
| ❖ Journey First Programme | ❖ Household Support Fund |
| ❖ The Childrens Society Working together toolkit | ❖ Out of school settings DofE briefing |
| ❖ Become a foster carer in Cheshire East link | ❖ Childrens Mental health Week |
| ❖ Recording children as 'not brought' not 'did not attend' for medical appointments | ❖ Opportunity with the Cheshire Youth Commission |
| ❖ Make your Mark and UK Youth Parliament Election | ❖ Coroners court support service |
| | ❖ ICON Translation |

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.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Priorities

Priority 1 - Neglect

The Neglect Strategic Board has met quarterly throughout the last year to measure the impact of the Strategy in responding to children and families experiencing Neglect. There is a scorecard developed to support the Partnership in understanding the activity across Cheshire East relating to neglect and to encourage a greater curiosity about what the data tells us about impact for children and quality of practice to identify neglect at the earliest opportunity.



The Neglect Strategy coupled with the Practice Guidance is explicit about the use of Screening Tools by the Partnership to support their identification of Neglect with children and families and to inform the need for further support and intervention. We have a high number of contacts received directly from family members who we would not expect to complete a Screening Tool and our Police colleagues are the highest professional referrer, who complete VPAs (Vulnerable Person Assessment) to support a Contact instead of a Neglect Screening Tool. We would expect a Screening Tool from all remaining professionals. We have seen an increase in the number completed by Education settings which is excellent. Graded Care Profiles (GCPs) are a far more in-depth assessment of Neglect and in the main are completed by Cheshire East Family Service or Children's Social Care. We have seen an increase in the number of GCPs being completed when children are subject to Child in Need which is positive, however we want to measure the success of neglect being identified and positive intervention prior to a family needing intervention

from Children's Social Care. We will want to see an increase of GCPs informing Early Help Plans over the coming 12 months. The Neglect Board seeks reassurance from individual agencies about how they are embedding the strategy into practice and how they know of the impact. We will refresh the measures of the strategy for 2022/2023 to focus curiosity in everyday practice and ownership across all levels of the partnership.

We have delivered:

- ❖ Practice Guidance for all practitioners working with children and families who experience neglect at all levels of need
- ❖ All agencies have promoted the Neglect Strategy within their organisation
- ❖ Developed a partnership data set for neglect to continuously tell us what our picture is in Cheshire East
- ❖ Held a Neglect Strategic Board to analyse the data in Cheshire East
- ❖ Reported outcomes from the Board to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Quality Assurance Sub-group.
- ❖ Delivered Training to the Partnership on Neglect and the use of GCP2

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
- ❖ Consultation with children and families regarding the impact of any level of intervention through feedback and participation
- ❖ Review survey with frontline practitioners to understand their confidence in practice and their view of their impact.

Priority 2 - Child Exploitation

In 2021-22 there were 326 contacts to the front door where child exploitation was a factor affecting either the individual or a family member. This related to 281 separate children. 138 of these (42%) were accompanied by a screening tool. 104 of the contacts resulted in a referral to social care.

- ❖ The Child Exploitation and Serious Organised Crime Strategic Group (CE/SOC) meet on a quarterly basis to review the impact of the strategy. Outcomes are reported from the group to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Quality Assurance Sub-group.
- ❖ In 2021/22 the Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group continued to meet 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 continues to be a key priority for action for the next year and we will:

- Develop and deliver a training offer for all partnership agencies regarding Contextual Safeguarding
- Refresh the Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime Strategy of 2019-2022
- Consult with children and families to inform the strategy
- Hold a further Serious Organised Crime Awareness Day with Safer Communities and Police colleagues, raising awareness across Cheshire East of CE and SOC

- Develop a scorecard to be scrutinised within the SOC/CE Strategic Group
- Undertake Multi-Agency Auditing into this cohort of children to measure impact
- Develop an offer of support to children and families across Early Help to identify and support diversion from Exploitation and Criminality at the earliest stage
- Enhance the focus of targeted disruption through Local Policing and Detached Youth Work within our communities
- Launch an All-Age Exploitation Strategy across PAN Cheshire

Priority 3 - Emotional health and wellbeing of our vulnerable children

We have delivered

- ❖ A joint service needs analysis has been completed in conjunction with Public Health. This is an in-depth piece of work which has taken place over the period of a couple of months. This will build on current mental health pathways to ensure a responsive and comprehensive offer or support is available for children.
- ❖ A mental health directory has been produced for professionals which details all mental health services across the continuum of need and provides details on referral mechanisms. This has been shared across the partnership
- ❖ Review of existing pathways and information sharing process has taken place. This will continue to be monitored and reported to the group.
- ❖ The self-harm pathway has been fully implemented and evaluated. This has been well received by multi-agency professionals in addition to children and families.

Continued development 2022/23

- ❖ Working with mental health commissioners within Cheshire East place building on the joint service needs analysis to ensure mental health services and pathways provide a responsive and comprehensive offer of support.
- ❖ Work with the multi-agency team to ensure that the family health hubs prioritise the needs of children with unmet emotional health and wellbeing needs
- ❖ Review of the self-harm information sharing pathway to ensure that families and young people are offered early help intervention at key touch points throughout the pathway including those children who are electively home educated.

Learning and Improvement

The Learning and Improvement Sub-group:

- ❖ received the Annual Training Report from the partnership's Training and Development Manager
- ❖ agreed an approach for continued delivery of safeguarding training
- ❖ agreed and approved the training charging policy in response to the COVID pandemic, removing any charge

Quality Assurance

A range of quality assurance activity supports performance monitoring which includes the 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 The Quality Assurance Subgroup has:

- ❖ undertaken audits on Sexual Abuse and Neglect which also fed into Local Safeguarding Practice Review outcomes.
- ❖ Recommendations from RR/LSPRs are translated into actions
- ❖ scrutinised and monitored the progress of agreed actions from audits and reflective reviews
- ❖ scrutinised S175 and S11 submissions

Section 175

The responses shared in this audit were extremely detailed and gave Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens Partnership a very clear outline of what schools have in place and what they are developing. It provided Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens Partnership with the reassurance they needed around safeguarding practice in those schools. In addition, the survey has also captured many of the ways in which schools have adapted and enhanced their safeguarding procedures during COVID.

Type of setting	% Completing S175 2020	% Completing S175 2021
Independent School	82%	87%
Primary School	93%	93%
Secondary School	80	95%
Special School	100%	85%
Colleges	67%	50%
Nursery	100%	n/a

In the majority of 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.

This means that schools are compliant with expectations. The Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) Team undertook

analysis of the submissions, and a report was scrutinised by the Quality Assurance Sub-group.

Rapid Reviews and Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The Rapid Review process reviewed six cases during 2021/22; three of these resulted in Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews being started during the year.

As a result of learning identified in a number of these reviews a Safe Sleep week was held in December 2021. This involved a social media campaign promoting safe sleep particularly when ‘out of routine’ for example staying with relatives or consuming alcohol over the festive period. A lunch and learn session held via Teams, hosted by the Designated Doctor for safeguarding children and child deaths in Cheshire East where ‘Out of Routine: A Review of sudden unexpected death in infancy in families where children are considered at risk of significant harm – report by Childrens Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. was shared and discussed with practitioners from across the partnership and was well attended.

COVID-19

The initial response of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens 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 child 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 evolved

- ❖ kept vulnerable children not in education on the agenda
- ❖ safe sleep campaign discussed, campaign ran with all Pan Cheshire areas
- ❖ gained assurance relating to impact of staffing levels for services delivering to Children and Young people
- ❖ Spiking discussed and advice shared across the partnership
- ❖ using the learning from first lockdown to inform joint working on further periods of restriction

This meeting continued to fortnightly then monthly through the remainder of 2021/22.

Training and Development

Training continued to be significantly impacted because of the ongoing global covid-19 pandemic. CЕСP took measures to ensure that safeguarding training could continue to be delivered to all partners across the children and family's workforce, a great deal of work was undertaken to redevelop all face-to-face courses to a virtual delivery model. All courses were successfully rewritten and have been delivered virtually.

The decision to continue to deliver training virtually was reviewed at 3 monthly intervals by the learning and improvement subgroup.

Summary of the training year

51 multi-agency courses were delivered between March 2021 and April 2022. 1053 participants attended training via the CЕСP training programme, this number represents an increase of almost 400 individuals.

Attendance was across all areas of the children's workforce, including police, health, education, social care, children and families and the voluntary sector.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens Partnership has delivered or coordinated the following learning and development processes alongside the existing training programme:

- ❖ GCP2 refresher training.
- ❖ Development and delivery of twilight sessions for ICON and GCP2
- ❖ Continued review of training materials to enhance virtual learning experience.
- ❖ Support to all training pool members to deliver courses confidently using virtual methods.

Key Priorities for 2022-23

Cheshire East Safeguarding Childrens 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

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.

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Work Programme – Children and Families Committee – 2022/23

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/35/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Children and Families Scorecard Q2	To consider key performance measures.	Executive Director Children's Services.	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/61/22-23	16 Jan 2023	High Needs Funding Post-Pilot Update	To provide an update on the results of the recently undertaken pilot in relation to a potential change in allocation model, and gain recommendations on next steps for this work.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	No		No
CF/63/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Joint Targeted Area Inspection - Update and Improvement Plan	To receive an update following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection and the improvement plan.	Executive Director Children's Services.				Open	
CF/33/22-23	16 Jan 2023	MTFS Budget Consultation	To respond to the budget consultation for Children and Families Services.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	N/A
CF/34/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Ofsted action plan and progress update	To receive an update on progress against the recommendations from the Ofsted ILACS inspections.	Director of Children's Social Care	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A

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/62/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Proposed Reduction in Resource Provision Places	Seeking approval to progress to Children and Families Committee for a final decision on the proposed reduction in Resource Provision at Middlewich Primary School and Lindow Community Primary School with effect from April 2023	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	No	Fair	
CF/59/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Recommendation for a sponsor to run primary school	The briefing report is to provide a recommendation for a sponsor to run the new primary school in Nantwich. The recommendation will also go to the DfE for approval.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	No				
CF/30/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Report on the Educational Psychology Service	To receive an update on the Educational Psychology Service.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	No		N/A
CF/36/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Supported Employment Strategy	To approve the Supported Employment Strategy.	Director of Commissioning	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/56/22-23	16 Jan 2023	The Dingle Primary School - Construction Contract	Authority is sought for the Executive Director of Children's Services to award a construction contract for the expansion of The Dingle Primary School.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	TBC	TBC	TBC	Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential	
CF/38/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Update on Academisation	To receive an update on the forward plan for academisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/29/22-23	16 Jan 2023	Update report on progress against the Mental Health Spotlight Review	To receive an update on progress against the Mental Health Spotlight Review.	Director of Early Help and Prevention	N/A	No	Yes		N/A
CF/24/22-23	13 Feb 2023	Children's Residential Provision	To ensure sufficient homes for cared for children and young people within Cheshire East.	Director of Children's Social Care	No	Yes	Yes		N/A

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/57/22-23	13 Feb 2023	Development of Family Hubs Update Report	To provide Children and Families Committee with an update on the development of family hubs in Cheshire East, review progress of the transformation so far, and next steps.	Director of Early Help and Prevention	No	No	Yes		No
CF/18/22-23	13 Feb 2023	Independent Care Review Outcomes	To update Committee on the outcome of the Independent Care Review and implications for services.	Director of Children's Social Care	N/A	No	Yes		N/A
CF/39/22-23	13 Feb 2023	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	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/40/22-23	13 Feb 2023	Update on Academisation	To receive an update on the forward plan for academisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/44/22-23	20 Mar 2023	12 Month Report on Councillor 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	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/45/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Progress on the All Age Carers Strategy	To receive an update on the progress against the All Age Carers Strategy.	Director of Commissioning	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/41/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Review of the learning disability and mental health strategy	To review the learning disability and mental health strategy.	Director of Commissioning	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/31/22-23	20 Mar 2023	School Catering Review Outcomes	To consider the recommended outcomes from the review of school catering.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills		Yes	Yes		N/A
CF/42/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Second financial review of 2022/23	To receive the third financial review for Children and Families and to note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	N/A	No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	N/A

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/43/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Self-evaluation of Children's Services	To receive the self-evaluation of services which shows the quality and impact of services.	Executive Director Children's Services.	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/46/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Update on Academisation	To receive an update on the forward plan for academisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/18/21-22	May 2023	Annual Progress Report on the SEND Strategy	To receive the annual progress report on the SEND Strategy.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	Yes		N/A

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**Minutes of a meeting of the Local Authority School Governor Nomination
Sub-Committee**

held on Wednesday, 8th June, 2022 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town
Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor S Carter (Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, D Edwardes, A Harewood and G Hayes

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Su Garbutt, Senior Governance Officer, School Governance and Liaison
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

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

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY NOMINATIONS TO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The committee received the report which detailed the current Local Authority Governor vacancies within Cheshire East maintained schools and academies, in the context of vacancies at a national level, and recommended individuals for nomination to identified posts.

The committee noted concerns from a recent Ofsted report for St Gregory's Primary School, which had been moved into special measures, particularly regarding the current governing board. The committee were advised that following the Ofsted Inspection, the school was awaiting conversion to academy status and that upon joining a MAT the Local Authority Governor position would be nullified. Due consideration was given and it was agreed, with regard to the benefit of continuity and an awareness of where improvement is required, that the nominated individual would be reappointed. It was also agreed that the School Governance Team would write to the Chair of Governors to express the committee's views regarding the reappointment.

It was requested that future reports include comparative data from other local authorities, particularly those neighbouring Cheshire East, on current vacant positions.

A further request was made for the application form to be amended to include a tick box to indicate approval from the headteacher of the school.

RESOLVED:

That, having regard to the statutory guidance in making nominations, the following be approved:

Nominations for Appointment:

WINCLE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
Paul Taylor

Nominations for Reappointment:

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Susan Davidson

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted to be 7 September 2022.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 and concluded at 10.10.

Councillor S Carter (Chair)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 6th September, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)

Councillors M Asquith, R Bailey, C Bulman, P Butterill, D Jefferay, M Benson
and S Edgar

ALSO PRESENT

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Laura Rogerson, Head of Service: Inclusion
Georgie Fletcher, Deputy Virtual School Headteacher
Laura McLoughlin, Social Worker
Steve Nevitt, Care Leavers Service Manager
Sue Pilkington, NHS Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children (joined
remotely via Microsoft Teams)
Karen Shuker, Democratic Services Officer

42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Buckley, Handley, Holland and
Saunders. Cllr Councillors Benson and Edgar attended as substitutes.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022 be agreed as a correct
record.

45 UPDATE FROM SHADOW COMMITTEE (VERBAL)

A verbal update was given on the recent A-Level and GCSE exam results for
cared for children and young people. It was noted that the data was still being
validated nationally and regionally so there was the potential for the figures to
change. The Virtual School Headteacher's annual report would be received at the
November Corporate Parenting Committee and this would contain more data and
analysis. The committee wanted to congratulate these young people on their
achievements and it was suggested that this could be done at a celebration event

which was being planned in November by the Shadow Corporate Parenting Committee.

46 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The committee received the report which detailed the progress and achievements over 2021-22 against the pledges the Council made to cared for children and care leavers in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

A query was raised regarding work that had been undertaken to improve dental care for cared for children and what impact this has had. The committee were advised that there had been an improvement but that it was not yet where the team wanted it to be. Data would be shared following the meeting to provide further detail.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parenting Committee endorse the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2021-22 as set out at Appendix 1.

47 CARE LEAVERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The committee received the Care Leavers Service Annual Report. A number of achievements were highlighted including the number of cared for young people in apprenticeships increasing and an increase in Staying Put arrangements.

Members raised queries in relation to the cost of living crisis and assurances were given that measures were in place to support care leavers financially and practically. This was in addition to the community resources available for the care leavers to connect with if they choose to.

The committee thanked the team for the positive report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 2.55 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 November 2022
Report Title:	Crewe Youth Zone Project Update
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock – Executive Director of Children’s Services
Report Reference No:	CF/20/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Crewe Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress for the development of the Crewe Youth Zone.
- 1.2 A Crewe Youth Zone contributes to the following strategic aims and objectives in the council’s Corporate Plan 2021-25:

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
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs.

A thriving and sustainable place:

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report follows on from previous Cabinet and Children and Families Committee reports, the approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provides a summary of the steps taken to date and future activity that will drive a project to deliver a Crewe Youth Zone that is effective in terms of cost, time and quality.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Committee should note this update.

4 Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 This an update report for information only.

5 Other Options Considered

- 5.1 This section is not applicable.

6 Background

- 6.1 Crewe Youth Zone reports have been presented to Cabinet on the 06 October 2020 and to Children and Families Committee on 08 November 2021. This report provides an update to Committee on progress over the last year and a summary of next steps.
- 6.2 One of the major milestones during 2022 was the submission of a Crewe Youth Zone full business case for Crewe Towns Fund, the successful independent appraisal by Ekosgen and subsequent approval by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Ekosgen have provided a summary of the full business case which is included in the confidential appendix to this report. The appendix contains information of a commercially sensitive nature relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and is exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. It should be noted that the summary includes reference to the Mirion Street project and elements of the project have moved on since the business cases was completed.
- 6.3 The Crewe Youth Zone on the Oak Street site comprises capital investment to deliver a 2,250 m² Youth Zone facility available for young people aged 8-19 and up to 25 for those with additional needs. This will be delivered by OnSide and will include a large-scale sports hall and multi-use 3G pitch, climbing wall, boxing and fitness suite, dance and music studios, art workshop, an enterprise and employability suite, training kitchen, group work and training rooms, a subsidised café and social areas.

The main aims of the project are to:

- Deliver a new Youth Zone in Crewe town centre providing a wide range of skills, leisure, sport, health and wellbeing support to young people.

- Secure the regeneration of a major strategic town centre gateway site.
- Re-purpose an existing car park leading to enhanced townscape that is more attractive to residents, businesses and visitors
- Support community health and wellbeing in Crewe.
- Contribute towards the diversification of the town centre and improve its vitality, sustainability and resilience.
- Support young people as Crewe embarks on its post COVID-19 recovery.
- Create new opportunities for volunteers.

6.4 In order to plot the journey to date and the future key milestones the chronology below is provided:

December 2020 – Crewe Youth Zone shortlisted for inclusion as a project for the Crewe Towns Fund bid.

July 2021 – Cheshire East Council awarded £22.9m through Crewe Towns Fund subject to full business case approvals (Cheshire East Council's submission included £2m for Crewe Youth Zone and £600,000 for a youth facility development at Mirion Street)

Autumn 2021 – internal council business case submitted as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (£2.2m capital and £400,000 revenue contribution for three years commencing 2025-26)

February 2022 – Crewe Youth Zone full business case for Crewe Towns Fund submitted as a Tranche 1 project for independent appraisal by Ekosgen

February 2022 - £340,000 of Crewe Towns Fund upfront development monies provided to OnSide to progress the project to RIBA Stage 3 and Planning

24 February 2022 Full Council approved the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (including £2.2m capital and £400,000 revenue contribution for three years commencing 2025-26)

29 April 2022 – Crewe Town Board approve tranche 1 business cases submitted to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

18 May 2022 – Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2 design report received for Crewe Youth Zone from Onside.

As a preview, this is what the scheme could look like: -



7 June 2022 – Crewe Youth Zone received approval from DLUHC. There were funding conditions applied by the Crewe Town Board and confirmed by DLUHC that are summarised below:

1. Milestones are agreed for the development of a detailed project programme and for confirming site-specific costs, to demonstrate that the scheme remains affordable within the available funding envelope.

Summary response: *A Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) plan of work will be followed that organises the process of briefing, designing, constructing and operating building projects. The current RIBA Stage 2 report for Crewe Youth Zone provided a cost plan that will be informed by (and revised following) completion of the Stage 3 design which will confirm site-specific costs. The programme for design and construction will also be updated once the balance of the capital funding requirement is secured.*

2. Milestones are agreed to confirm that match funding is in place ahead of releasing funding.

Summary response: *It has been agreed that the legal documentation will be structured to prevent further release of either the council's contribution or that of the Towns Fund until the match funding is in place, an affordable tender has been received and there is a start on site. The milestones for securing the match funding will be reviewed before 31 October 2022 in the context of a bid by OnSide for capital support from the recently opened Youth Investment Fund.*

3. The implications of cost inflation and cost overruns should be carefully monitored over the coming months, so that suitable mitigations can be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Summary response: *The RIBA Stage 2 cost plan contains a contingency for cost inflation (based on Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) data) plus other prudent risks of cost overrun. This will be revised following completion of the Stage 3 design and again at pre-tender. A monthly Project Board has been established which picks up the financial position of the project and any mitigation / escalation required. A monthly dashboard (including financial position / risk) is also presented to Crewe Town Fund Programme Board.*

4. A clear process should be agreed between Cheshire East Council (CEC) and the applicant for agreeing suitable mitigations, where they have the potential to impact on the scale or range of uses that can be delivered.

Summary response: *CEC and Onside have formed an effective Project Board and also meet outside of Board on a regular basis to review progress and any need for mitigations which have the potential to impact on the scale or range of uses would be identified and discussed immediately. Alternative mitigations would be explored as a priority.*

5. OnSide should provide clarity to CEC on the contracting entities at each stage of development and delivery post Board approval, roles and responsibilities of Onside and Crewe Youth Zone, and how the transition to Crewe Youth Zone will be managed.

Summary response: *CEC and Onside meet regularly to review progress and the respective parties' roles and responsibilities are highlighted at each stage of development. In August 2022 CEC nominated a senior officer to be one of the subscribers on the incorporation and charity registration of Crewe Youth Zone which will start the transition of responsibilities. An Operational Agreement will be put in place to formalise the ongoing management of the Youth Zone.*

6. CEC should be satisfied that short term contractual arrangements are clear.

Further evidence is provided in relation to the recruitment of a Board of Trustees for Crewe Youth Zone – including timescales demonstrating alignment with the overall programme, and process to ensure that a suitable breadth and depth of expertise is secured.

Summary response: *Short term contractual arrangements have been checked and agreed by CEC. Incorporation and registration of Crewe Youth Zone is to commence in early November 2022 at which point a programme for the recruitment and appointment of trustees will be produced. OnSide has a well-used and successful structure of portfolios*

for Youth Zone trustees and will recruit to those portfolios only at appropriate stages in the development of the project. This ensures that there is suitable local expertise available when needed but avoids trustees being in post before their expertise is required (risking loss of enthusiasm and commitment). OnSide has the resources to provide support across all portfolios until such time as the local resources are in place.

7. Further evidence is provided in relation to the recruitment of a Board of Trustees for Crewe Youth Zone – including timescales demonstrating alignment with the overall programme, and process to ensure that a suitable breadth and depth of expertise is secured.

Summary response: *See above plus Graham Ramsbottom, has recently agreed to be the private sector Trustee who will sit alongside Claire Williamson Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration and an OnSide representative, as the first three subscribers to the Board of Trustees for Crewe Youth Zone.*

Graham has most recently been the Chief Executive of the Wheatsheaf Group and was previously the Managing Director of the Grosvenor Estate. Educated at Harvard Business School following a number of years in the Royal Navy, Graham brings a wealth of expertise and connections across Cheshire to the Crewe Youth Zone Board.

June 2022 – OnSide formally start their capital and revenue fundraising

August 2022 – OnSide submit capital bid to Youth Investment Fund

October 2022 to December 2022 – incorporation of Crewe Youth Zone (at Companies House) and subsequent registration (with the Charity Commission) to establish an independent Crewe Youth Zone Charity to deliver and operate the Youth Zone (with CEC Senior Officer on board of trustees)

November 2022 – Planning application to be submitted for Crewe Youth Zone

November 2022 – Grant Funding Agreement, Operational Agreement and Agreement for Lease to be finalised.

June 2023 to September 2023 – Formal consultation and approval sought re the proposed variation to the car park order for Oak Street.

February 2023 to September 2023 – Tender preparation, issue, review and recommendation to gain approval to proceed to placing the building contract for Crewe Youth Zone (subject to all funding being secured).

November / December 2023 – site preparation and start on site (date of release of Oak Street car park interdependent on opening of new Royal Arcade multi-storey car park)

December 2024 – practical completion of the building

January - March 2025 - Fixtures, fittings and equipment fit-out; staff orientation and training; soft opening period.

April 2025 – Public opening

6.5 The efficient and effective delivery of a new Crewe Youth Zone requires appropriate governance and monitoring of risk. The following provides an outline of the avenues to secure effective governance:

Boards / Meetings:

- Crewe Town Board – Responsible for oversight of Crewe Towns Fund Programme
- Crewe Towns Fund Programme Board (CEC-led as Accountable Body for Towns Fund)
- Crewe Youth Zone Project Board

Tools / reports:

- Legal framework including Grant Funding Agreement, Lease, Operational Agreement, Network Agreement, Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage reports
- Monthly dashboard incorporating progress, escalation requirements and risks
- Financial dashboard – reported to S151 Officer
- Monitoring and evaluation reports to DLUHC
- Risk registers

7 Consultation and Engagement

7.1 The views of children and young people have been captured and built into the business case and early visits to see an operational Youth Zone have taken place. Prior to the submission of a full Planning application, face to face and virtual public consultation will be undertaken during late October 2022.

7.2 A comprehensive consultation and engagement plan will be drafted late 2022 / early 2023 when the project is at the appropriate stage of delivery. A bespoke community engagement approach will be based on the following principles:

- Working closely with the council, schools and any key figures in the business and voluntary communities to identify key community stakeholders.
- Seeking to understand the wider needs of the local community, obviously including young people, and the existing local provision.
- Being good listeners; being ready to hear the views in the community.
- Developing consultation evidence about the views of young people to support the Youth Zone and wider youth provision (including young people visits to Youth Zones).

- Having an eye out for opportunities for delivery and grow partnerships.
- Bringing together a Young People's Development Group; a group that is as representative as possible of the young people of the Borough (this generally starts about 18 - 20 months prior to opening).

7.3 It is important that access to youth support, whether through the council or other organisations / partners, is effective, targeted and supports the best outcomes for children and young people. The following bullet points provide the landscape that will influence access to the right offer, at the right time in the right location:

- The Council's current MTFS has the planned Cheshire East Council revenue commitments in respect of the Youth Zone identified and funded for the appropriate time period. The allocation of the overall resources for youth services will be planned with the knowledge of the additional significant resource being applied through the Youth Zone (estimated £1.3m revenue cost of operating a Youth Zone to be funded 100% through external fundraising, membership / sales revenues and external grant funding). When the new Crewe Youth Zone is up and running the existing youth service resources will be applied effectively across the remaining areas of the borough to deliver a good universal / targeted offer for all Cheshire East young people.
- Access and transport will be a key topic for the Youth Development Group to investigate (the Youth Development Group is 25-50 young people from across the borough who work intensively during the build period to shape the offer working with OnSide teams). The ability for parents to drop off and access to public transport will be considered and where possible supported by developing other options i.e. current Youth Zones across the country have mini bus pick up points in strategic locations and work closely with local bus operators to maximise support with access and transport.
- Some of the existing Youth Zones are working with their local Council's to develop 'Strategic Youth Partnerships' – a collective of organisations, into which all providers (public, charity and voluntary sector) are welcomed. Together, they are bidding for significant funding streams to share between them. They are avoiding duplication and plugging gaps through collaborative programme scheduling, larger organisations are actually now sharing staff to support smaller organisations in hard to reach areas, they are providing training and best practice sharing, co-referring and generally raising the bar even further for young people. Youth Zones are becoming a hub or a catalyst to galvanise and champion the whole youth sector within a locality – and a game changer to the system.
- Research and intelligence from existing Youth Zones shows distances travelled by Youth Zone members (one North West Youth Zone for

example - 14% of young people travelled between 5 and 8 km and an additional 15 % travelled over 8km) and shows that Youth Zones reach the right communities, even when big distances are involved.

- Seeing the overall local Youth Offer as a toolbox or jigsaw is really helpful. Not all young people want the same offer. We need to be providing young people with choice and options. A partnership approach to add value to the whole youth sector will be embedded early.
- It is vital that the investment into a Crewe Youth Zone has a positive impact for children and young people, their families and communities. Building on the impact described in the November 2021 Children and Families Committee report, the “Proven Impact” summary provides clear evidence of excellent impact of Youth Zones to date. A sample of the impact achieved is detailed below:
 - 77% of members are more self-confident
 - 82% of frequent attenders have more friends
 - 70% of members believe that they are healthier
 - 75% feel better in themselves
 - 73% of members feel less isolated
 - 79% of frequent attenders feel they are better prepared for the future
 - 83% have found work or gone into education or training as a result of our get a job course
 - 66% of members agree that they are more likely to stay out of trouble
 - 97% of stakeholders thought that their area was better since their Youth Zone opened
 - 94% of stakeholders said that it raised pride in the local area
- When the Crewe Youth Zone is operational regular local reports will be available that cover the impact that Cheshire East Council wishes to see from a Crewe Youth Zone.
- Within Cheshire East we have been ambitious to set our Corporate Plan and our 7 priority areas within our Children and Young People’s Plan. Work with the Crewe Youth Zone will ensure we link our agreed priorities from both plans with a clear outcome framework to evidence the impact of the work and in partnership with the Crewe Youth Zone to ensure we are achieving positive impact for our children and young people.
- The restructure of the Early Help and Prevention service is underway and it is proposed that a new outdoor education and engagement service will see youth workers target provision to re-engage children

back into education through various programmes. Strong partnerships will be further built on with our schools to engage young people into youth work provision. In areas where there is disruption, our targeted youth work team via detached work will engage young people into various targeted activities. Work with the police, health and partners to support our young people at risk of exploitation and serious crime will be an integral part of the work of the team to ensure our young people are safe from exploitation. Alongside this the Community Youth Lead will work within the localities to build community interest to develop community led youth work provision to engage a universal offer of youth provision. As the Crewe Youth Zone is developed resources within the youth support team will become dedicated to the remaining areas across Cheshire East.

8 Implications

8.2 Legal

8.2.1 The legal team (together with external lawyers) have been providing advice on the project, funding arrangements and subsidy control matters arising. The legal team will continue to provide advice on the grant funding agreement and be engaged in the creation and completion of all necessary legal agreements.

8.3 Finance

8.3.1 The next significant financial milestone in terms of the funding of the project will be the result of the Youth Investment Fund bid which was expected by the end of this calendar year. However, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have recently requested that the Crewe Youth Zone project be fast tracked for a decision by the end of October 2022 which is a positive sign. Once the funding decision is received this will enable the financial planning for the project to move forward, including critical cash flow planning given the sources of funding being applied overall.

8.3.2 The Council will be providing £1.2m of revenue funding made up of £0.4m for three years from 2025. This will enable the council to deliver targeted and universal preventative youth services to young people in Crewe and beyond dependant on need. The Grant Funding Agreement and Operational Agreement will put the necessary legal structure around the council funding to be applied to the project.

8.4 Policy

8.4.1 There are no policy implications as this is an update report.

8.5 Equality

8.5.1 Access to youth services for children and young people across the borough is important. As the Crewe Youth Zone is developed resources within the

council youth support team will become dedicated to the remaining areas across Cheshire East.

8.6 Human Resources

8.6.1 There are no human resources implications as this is an update report.

8.7 Risk Management

8.7.1 Risk management is a key feature throughout the business case and RIBA stages to project completion. A comprehensive risk register is maintained and project governance has a clear focus on identifying, mitigating and managing risk.

8.8 Rural Communities

8.8.1 The delivery of youth services (incorporating the new Crewe Youth Zone) across the borough will take account of the Cheshire East Council Rural Action Plan 2022 – 2026.

8.9 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.9.1 There are significant benefits of developing a Youth Zone for young people in terms of aspirational things to do, support to mental health and wellbeing, routes to employment and training, community cohesion and changing mindset around school attendance.

8.10 Public Health

8.10.1 Developing a Youth Zone will encourage improved physical activity and mental health and wellbeing thereby improving key public health outcomes.

8.11 Climate Change

8.11.1 There are no human resources implications as this is an update report.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1: Crewe Youth Zone Business Case (Part 2 – Confidential)
Background Papers:	None

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