

## **Economy & Growth Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Report Title:</b>	Mid-Year Performance Review 2022/23 – Growth and Enterprise
<b>Report of:</b>	Peter Skates Director of Growth & Enterprise
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	EG/11/22-23
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All Wards

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

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with a review of the performance of the Growth & Enterprise department for the first two quarters of 2022-23 .

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. This report gives an update on performance across Growth & Enterprise department for the year 2022- 2023 to date.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. That the Committee note the performance of the department;

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

- 4.1. The Economy & Growth Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Growth & Enterprise department.

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

- 5.1. Not applicable.

## 6. Background

- 6.1. The Cheshire East's vision to be open, fairer, and greener is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 , with three broad aims to be an open and enabling organisation; a council which empowers and cares about people, and a thriving and sustainable place. The Growth & Enterprise department contributes to a number of the priorities under the aim of a thriving and sustainable place:
- A great place for people to live, work and visit
  - Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
  - Thriving urban and Rural economies with opportunities for all
  - To be carbon neutral by 2025
- 6.2. Housing and Economic Development are vital elements of developing the 'sense of place'. The Growth & Enterprise Department seeks to enhance these elements but also promoting the contribution of our Countryside and Rural Communities Our cultural, rural and visitor economies support our environment, heritage, culture and visitor offer and supplement Cheshire East's character. All of our aims and objectives are advanced through working with local and national partners.
- 6.3. Our property portfolio and property disposal programme is managed to ensure best use and value of the Council's assets while contributing to the strategic aims of the Council, and the Corporate Plan.
- 6.4. The delivery of PLACE related projects and schemes are under significant challenge in the residual impact of the pandemic, but also the substantive impact of construction inflation, general inflation and interest rates. The Growth & Enterprise Department has been heavily involved in supporting our towns, and also going forward will be progressing Growth Strategies, Recovery Plans and Actions.

## 7. Housing

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
A great place for people to live, work and visit	Enable access to well designed, affordable and safe homes for all our residents  To reduce the number of long-term empty dwellings  To make best use of our surplus buildings and assets to support the borough and our partners
Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	Crime and anti-social activity and anti-social behaviour to be reduced

	Victims of crime and exploitation to be supported effectively by the council and partners through collaboration
Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	Thriving and active rural communities
To be carbon neutral by 2025	To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council

Key Performance Indicators	2021/22 Outturn	Mid-year (21/22)	Mid-year (22/23)	Target 2022/23
Home adaptations for older and/or disabled residents	362	199	207	500
Increase the supply of new affordable housing	640	306	274	355
Maintain the number of long-term empty homes in Cheshire East to less than 1%	0.95%	End of year target	End of year target	<1%
Increase number of preventative and relief actions taken in order to reduce levels of homelessness in Cheshire East	1117	480	680	1000
Households helped to achieve affordable warmth	691	288	289	500
Households are helped to improve their living conditions	386	145	187	200

- 7.1.** Housing staff have continued to work hard to provide effective, customer focused frontline services to ensure that our residents are prevented from becoming homeless or are relieved from homelessness. This has also included developing our services for rough sleepers and we have successfully secured further Rough Sleepers Initiative funding which has enabled us to secure 3 years funding to develop a multi-disciplinary team to support rough sleepers with complex needs.
- 7.2.** In June 2022, the Housing Options Team achieved Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which is a scheme open to Housing

Associations, Local Authority Housing Teams and Homelessness Providers across the UK to help improve their response to domestic abuse.

- 7.3. We are continuing to experience issues with contractors and supply chains for materials, due to the challenging economic climate, which has impacted on our ability to undertake adaptation works as quickly as we would like. The team however undertook the required procurement to secure a new framework contractor and have worked to try and manage customer expectations
- 7.4. Improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing fuel poverty has continued to be a priority within the team and the Housing Standards Team successfully secured £4,853,676 of Government funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes. Having been successful in securing funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 for our housing partners, the Registered Housing Providers are building on that experience for a Wave 2 funding application, and we are using our experience of delivering the various Green Homes Grant and Home Upgrade Grant programmes in a bid to the Government for Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 funding.
- 7.5. Ensuring we continue to increase the number of affordable homes across the authority is a priority set out within both the Corporate Plan, Local Plan and Housing Strategy. Following the establishment of the Council’s Housing Development Framework, we are continuing to progress the mini competitions.
- 7.6. Providing a safe place to stay for the transient Gypsy and Traveller community and dealing effectively with unauthorised encampments, recognising the impact on our settled communities continues to be a priority, and having secured planning permission, we have now secured Homes England grant funding, which will contribute towards the development costs of the scheme. We are now in the process of tendering the works packages..
- 7.7. We are continuing to support the Government’s Refugee programmes and have a dedicated officer, whose role is to support and provide housing advice.

## 8. Estates

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
<p>A financially sustainable council which has increased levels of reserves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Facilities Management team implement a series of projects and measures to reduce the running cost of the CEC estate</li> <li>• The Property Services and Farms teams have a Disposal Programme that aims to deliver capital receipts for the Council.</li> <li>• The Property Services and Farms teams manage leases on behalf of the Council and has an annual income target that offsets some costs of the service.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Estates Service completes the implementation and development of its asset management system (Concerto) and corresponding service delivery process adjustments</li> <li>• The Estates Service successfully implements a new asset management plan</li> <li>• The Property Projects Team have successfully procured a new Construction Services Consultancy Framework to ensure professional and technical support is available to develop and deliver the programme of capital construction projects.</li> </ul>
To make best use of our surplus buildings and assets to support the borough and our partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the community asset transfer policy and provide a clear framework to support effective transfer and further explore 'shared' use with our partners of town centre assets</li> <li>• Deliver Disposal Programme, support other Council initiatives, for example Housing Development Framework.</li> </ul>
To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver actions in the Cheshire East Council Carbon Action Plan, including the adoption of the Low Carbon Build Standard.</li> <li>• Support where appropriate the Introduction of green vehicles across the fleet (including waste and highways)</li> <li>• Reduce use of Gas by decarbonising sources of heating for our buildings</li> <li>• Promote carbon neutrality and carbon zero development across Cheshire East, providing information, advice and guidance for householders and businesses to reduce their carbon use</li> </ul>

- 8.1.** Since the last update to Committee the UK's Economy has sought to recover from the pandemic and also deal with multiple national and international challenges. This has generated instability in the property and construction markets. These factors are outside the Council's control but their implications have the potential to impact the Council and its Estates activities. The main issues for the Council as a land owner are general inflation, continued fluctuations and uncertainty in energy costs and continued challenges in and around cost and supply of workforce and materials in the construction sector. The Estates service continues to monitor these issues very closely seeking to deliver a fiscally balanced end of year out turn.
- 8.2.** Following recovery from the pandemic the service has not been significantly engaged in Covid 19 issues, and it has progressed with returning to 'business as usual' activity, although currently there are a high volume activity within the service.
- 8.3.** The service continues to be heavily involved in the delivery of the Council's policy to deliver a carbon neutral Council by 2025. It has been successful in obtaining £6.7m of decarbonisation grants, which has delivered air source heat pumps, Photovoltaic Panels, LED lighting and insulation to a number of buildings, with many of the Council's estate having benefitted. The Council has also been active in tree planting and the service has assisted this by identifying and making land available for this activity. It has developed the

standard that will be required to be met when delivering construction projects in the future.

- 8.4.** The Estates Service has a Capital programme of construction projects valued at £102m underway on the Council's assets. In year £22m of projects have been completed and handed over to end users including nine school expansion projects and the refurbishment of Nantwich Leisure Centre. Ongoing work includes remediation, refurbishment, construction and regeneration projects.
- 8.5.** The Council has a Capital Receipts target (from the disposal of property) of £4m over 4 years set out in the MTFs and has achieved £1.3m in the last Financial Year. Good progress has also been made in the current year against this target. These are minimum targets and disposal is predicated on a best effort basis to maximise capital receipts in any one year. Although Cheshire East has a robust Capital Programme, given the economic headwind in the economy and in particular the Property and Construction sectors this is a prudent approach. The Council through its existing processes identifies surplus assets and in turn places these in the disposal programme.

Key Performance indicator	2021/22 Out Turn	2022/23 Target	30 Nov 22 Out Turn
Capital Receipts (Disposals)	£1.3m	£1m	£273k*

\*Currently the Council has in progress a number of sales, but these are subject to purchaser completion and are anticipated in year. £273,500 represents completed sales to date.

The service also is active in different ways to dispose of assets. The Council has also adopted a Housing Delivery Framework, which disposes of assets for housing. The service has supported the development and implementation of this policy.

- 8.6.** In year, the Committee has considered and approved the Community Asset Transfer Framework and the service is currently implementing the use of this policy progressing live cases through the Framework.
- 8.7.** The Council manages a portfolio of land and property that it leases to third parties. There have been impacts arising from the pandemic and lockdowns with some tenants, but the Estates service has ensured, where possible, that issues are carefully managed, with appropriate advice and direction to support given. Anecdotally a consequence of the pandemic and subsequent cost inflation appears to have delayed (or accelerated) changes in certain categories of organisation.
- 8.8.** The service is successfully implementing a new property information system. Its commencement of implementation is a key achievement for the service in 2021 and 2022. The service has also enabled its contractor Equans to

access the system simplifying the handling of data and improve real time reporting. Further work is ongoing to develop the system to improve the way the service deals with enquiries and develop appropriate workflows to manage more effective management of cases.

- 8.9.** The service has also successfully completed the procurement of a new Construction Related Consultancy Services Framework, which, in line with Government construction best practice, enables the Council to efficiently access professional and technical support to continue with the development and delivery of its capital construction projects. The framework is also available for use to all of the Council's community related partners, including academy trusts and Town Councils.
- 8.10.** The service was, due to the pandemic, delayed in developing a Corporate Asset Management Plan, however a policy principles report has been considered by the Committee earlier in the year and following this a draft Corporate Asset Management Plan has been developed for consultation with members and is due to be presented to Committee. Further policy activity will follow on from the adoption of the plan, for the Committee to consider.
- 8.11.** The service continues to deliver statutory compliance which is a critical activity to the Council and underpins all its other activity. It continues to be key to engage a wide range of stakeholders and have the appropriate attention for example through the Corporate Health and Safety forum and relevant upward reporting. The Facilities Management Team ensure the Council meet its statutory requirements, not only within our buildings, both other assets that the Council has a responsibility for.
- 8.12.** Looking forward the most significant challenge faced by the service is the fiscal challenge of operating in an inflationary economy. This is outside the control of the service and will have a material impact on the way the service has to operate. This issue is closely monitored by the service.

## **9. Rural & Cultural Economy**

- 9.1.** The Rural and Cultural Economy Service seeks to grow the contribution of countryside, cultural and visitor economy assets or opportunities to the Cheshire East economy helping it to be a thriving and sustainable place. The Service recognises the importance of our environment, heritage, culture and visitor offer to the area's character, economy, quality of place and wellbeing.
- 9.2.** The Public Rights of Way (PROW) team has once again delivered a very high standard of service to the public despite the high demands and some capacity issues. The Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee has oversight of this statutory service.



Key Performance Indicators	2021/22 Outturn	Mid-year (21/22)	Mid-year (22/23)	Target 2022/23
Ease of use of Public Rights of Way network  (Reported with kind permission of volunteer user groups East Cheshire Ramblers and Peak and Northern Footpath Society)	94%	n/a	n/a	85%
Audience figures for Lyceum Theatre	39,881	0	41,962	85,000 now revised to 75,000.
Tatton Park visitor numbers	615,000	410,000	405,000	700,000
Tatton Park net budget	£633,371	£743,914	£903,781	£849,781
Value of the Visitor economy (annual retrospective STEAM measure)	2021 £735m	n/a	n/a	Annual figure due Sept 2023
% Carbon emissions being offset by the Council	32.9%	n/a	33.5%	40%

- 9.3.** In the first 2 quarters of 2022-23, the PROW team responded to more than 231 new issue reports about path furniture, signposting, surface and bridges, replacing and repairing where necessary and resolving over 180 issues through work allocated to contractors or completed by landowners. Whilst public expectations of the standard of the network appear to have increased, user group volunteer surveys (with thanks to the East Cheshire Ramblers and the Peak and Northern Footpath Society) have returned a result of 94% of the network being classed as good/acceptable. Other work includes path diversion cases, many of which proved to be complex in nature due to developments going through the planning system, claims for routes, and enquiries from landowners and users in order to protect and maintain the network for all.
- 9.4.** Capacity is stretched across the full work of the team, including on the legal orders work, where work progresses through waiting lists, dealing with new diversion application requests, temporary closure requests and 170 planning application consultations, in addition to other functions and enquiries. The waiting list of applications for 'claims' for paths has been proactively addressed this year following allocation of additional resource.



- 9.5.** The Countryside Ranger Service is responsible for Cheshire East Councils Country Parks, Nature Reserves and Linear Trails, which together attract over 1,000,000 visits each year.
- 9.6.** In 2022/23, the Ranger Service received Green Flag awards at Teggs Nose Country Park, Brereton Heath Local Nature Reserve and Riverside Park. This is a first time for Macclesfield Riverside Park local nature reserve in the Bollin Valley, where former farmland has been transformed into wildflower rich grassland. From spring through to autumn, the Bollin Valley's rare breed of Longhorn cattle graze here.
- 9.7.** The Countryside Ranger Service works closely with the PROW team to improve access to the wider countryside, and the teams are often work. The Service was supported by volunteers who help maintain the country parks and trails.
- 9.8.** The Visitor Economy team supports an important sector for Cheshire East that because of the pandemic fell in economic value from nearly £1bn in 2019 to £548m in 2020. The data is always retrospective and 2021 shows some recovery in the sector with it growing again to £735m. However, it should be noted that the cost of living is impacting across the country on both visitor numbers and visitor spend in 2022 and it is expected that progress will slow down.
- 9.9.** The Visitor Economy team has worked with Marketing Cheshire on promotional campaigns to position Cheshire as a Family Destination and is supporting a 'Destination Cheshire' network of non-Chester based tourism businesses and attractions. This ensures communication of best-practice, coordination of marketing activity, peer support and provides an ability to consult businesses directly on strategy going forward.
- 9.10.** Since the pandemic, hospitality businesses have had real issues around recruitment, to the point where this is hampering their ability to trade in a way that ensures their survival. The Visitor Economy team have been working in partnership with DWP & Springboard (National Hospitality Training Agency) to develop a bespoke approach to the significant issues of recruitment, retention, and skills since 2021 and this is starting to see results, giving some local people new career opportunities and helping local businesses access potential employees to cover their vacancies. The project is fully funded through a partnership with Job Centre Plus & Springboard.
- 9.11.** Consultation with businesses and local organisations on the priorities that need to be addressed in a new Visitor Economy Strategy. This strategy is due to come before Committee in January 2022.
- 9.12.** Plans for the History Centre in Crewe continue to progress as part of the larger Cheshire Archives project. Following a successful National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) mid-point review in December 2021, scheme development continued including building design to RIBA stage 3, activity

planning, interpretation, business planning, consultation, and engagement. A stage 2 funding bid for the delivery phase was successfully submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- 9.13.** The Cultural Economy Team continue to support the Regeneration team on the art and cultural elements of the LY2 project and the 'heritage wall' as part of the bus station development.
- 9.14.** Work continued at pace on 'Powerhouse' in Crewe (a new commercial music venue and creative skills development hub) as part of the Towns Fund proposals. RIBA3 designs were completed, and a full business case submitted in June 2022.
- 9.15.** Following the successful commissioning of a mural of Ian Curtis in Macclesfield, the Cultural Economy Team were able to commission a further mural to adorn one of the lift shafts at Macclesfield station. Funded by Avanti, supported by Network Rail, commissioned and produced by CEC, the mural by Peachzz depicted Swifts by Charles Tunnicliffe, a reputed wildlife artist born in 1901 in Langley, Macclesfield. Both murals have been attracting a lot of attention for the town and generating a significant amount of positive social media for Macclesfield and Cheshire East.
- 9.16.** Tatton Park, which received 'Green flag' and 'Green Heritage site' awards once again, continues to be an important environmental and community resource as a driver of the local visitor economy. While visitor numbers to the park, garden and farm attractions recovered well following the removal of Government restrictions at the end of June 2021, like other attractions across the country the cost of living is impacting on both visitor numbers and visitor spend, with reductions of up to 20% not being uncommon.
- 9.17.** Measures have been taken to try and stimulate demand and the 3rd quarter trends show better weekend performance compared to mid-week. Catering and retail have similarly improved at weekends, while park entries are not too far off target.
- 9.18.** Events are an important area of activity to Tatton's finances, and despite the loss of a few events from the calendar due to pandemic impacts, Tatton was able to host much of its usual programme, including the RHS Flower show which welcomed nearly 64,000 visitors in July 2022.
- 9.19.** The service is also leading the Natural Capital workstream (including nature-based offsetting) as part of the Council's Carbon Action Plan. The programme, which includes tree planting and peatland restoration, has continued as part of its Carbon Action Plan commitments to help be carbon neutral by 2025. The programme has been developed in partnership with Mersey Forest and in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust. It has included new planting in parks and open spaces, in school grounds, at Tatton Park and in Countryside sites.

- 9.20.** Members of the team are also developing a catchment-wide approach to the Bollin Valley with a range of partners as well as developing proposals to improve the Crewe Valley Brook corridor and supporting the Local Nature Partnership.

## 10. Economic Development

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities			
Priority: Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Crewe</li> <li>• Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Macclesfield</li> <li>• Successful town centres in our other key towns</li> <li>• Maximise the commercial and regeneration opportunities associated with HS2 for the whole borough</li> <li>• Thriving and active rural communities</li> </ul>		
Priority: To be carbon neutral by 2025	To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council		
Key Performance Indicators	2020/21 Outturn	Year end (21/22)	Target 2021/22
Delivery of capital programmes and projects on time and to budget	New measure	100% • Crewe Market Hall • Castle St, Macclesfield	100%
Town Centre Footfall	Total footfall between August 2019 and July 2022 across all 11 service centres and towns combined has increased by 4% to 8.083m		10% increase on 20/21 figures
Deliver Business Growth Support	Distributing Additional Restrictions Grant	All funding in rounds 1 and 2 allocated and distributed in accordance to the Council's Policy	100% COMPLETED

- 10.1.** The Economic Development service has been delivering its priorities against the corporate and the strategic priorities set out in the strategic regeneration plans for Crewe and Macclesfield, and the Corporate Digital Strategy.

- 10.2.** At the November 2022 committee, members received an extensive report considered the progress that has been made in the regeneration of Crewe. This report provided an update on the £14.1m Future High Street Fund programme and the £23.1m Towns Fund Programme.
- 10.3.** The team responsible for delivering and overseeing the regeneration of Crewe town centre are continuing to progress all projects despite the significant and persistent cost inflation in the construction sector which represents a major risk to all capital projects.
- 10.4.** Ten projects under the Future High Street Fund have already been mobilised while the ten projects under the Towns Fund have addressed funding conditions to advance and in October were submitted to the next key government gateway. The development of detailed business cases using HM Treasury's five case business case model have been successfully completed and all were signed off by the Government in September 2022.
- 10.5.** Due to the cost inflation pressures the Town Board and this Committee made the difficult decision in November 2022, to withdraw the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the Towns Fund programme, and request that the Government reallocate the remaining unspent grant relating to this project be to other Towns Fund projects/activities that are experiencing cost pressures as a result of construction cost inflation. Officers have been in discussions with officials who have now shared the process and paperwork to move forward with this decision.
- 10.6.** In November, the Economic Development Team working in conjunction with the Culture Team, successfully submitted two planning applications associated with the new History centre. These are, the Dismantling of old library and development of a new court entrance, car park and enhanced public realm, and the Construction of History Centre. Both projects utilise a cocktail of funding including Towns Fund, Future High St Fund, National Heritage Lottery Fund and council funding.
- 10.7.** The Accelerated Towns Fund project utilizing £0.75m government grant has been used to develop designs and costings for Ly2 project and a planning permission has been granted and contracts were signed with the construction contractor in October 2022. Work is expected to start on the former carpark to develop an outdoor entertainment space, with stage, digital screen and new artworks in January 2023 to be completed during quarter 2 of 2023-24.
- 10.8.** Royal Arcade Phase 1: This is progressing to the timetable confirmed in spring 2022, with the interim bus station expected to be operational from January to December 2023, at which point the new permanent bus station will become operational. The new multi-storey car park is expected to be completed at the same time, and will free-up capacity at other town centre car parks, enabling other regeneration projects to proceed.
- 10.9.** The newly refurbished Market Hall successfully opened in May 2021 and the data shows that it is becoming an anchor retail, leisure, and entertainment venue in the town.

- 10.10.** A consultation process for the nine Town Centre Vitality Plans covering Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow was successfully completed were completed in November 2022. Each Town Centre Vitality Plan sets out priorities for supporting the vitality and viability of specific town centres as and when funding opportunities arise. These plans are expected to be discussed by the Economy and Growth Committee at its January 2023 meeting.
- 10.11.** The Regeneration and Development team also focus on the maximising the vitality of our other nine towns (listed below), addressing another of the key priorities in the corporate plan. Unsurprisingly, Covid has impacted these centres as can be seen by the footfall data below April 2021 and August 2021:-

Table 1: Foot Fall data by towns August 2019 compared to July 2022

	Aug-19	Jul-22	% Change	Change
Alsager	308,768	392,446	27%	83,678
Congleton	857,664	817,060	-5%	-40,604
Crewe	1,136,167	1,264,693	11%	128,526
Handforth	288,912	385,228	33%	96,316
Knutsford	837,650	812,308	-3%	-253,42
Macclesfield	1,564,718	1,421,964	-9%	-142,754
Middlewich	227,975	345,379	51%	117,404
Nantwich	483,632	548,544	13%	64,912
Poynton	403,086	420,439	4%	17,353
Sandbach	582,484	681,279	17%	98,795
Wilmslow	1,074,848	994,355	-7%	-80,493
Total	7,765,904	8,083,695	4%	31,7791

- 10.12.** Footfall data once more shows that some of the small areas continue to attract local people. However, those larger areas such as Macclesfield and Congleton which have a larger pull factor are not performing as strongly as others when comparing pre-covid to post covid. The market hall effect is still positively impacting on footfall in Crewe, with increases of 11% compared to August 2019.
- 10.13.** The analysing of statistics can be subject to interpretation when trends are identified in a single table. Other monthly factors, such as weather, cost of living, changes towards hybrid working can also impact. The Council has published all the monthly detail for each town and this can be sourced via the following link

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major\\_regeneration\\_projects/town-centre-footfall.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major_regeneration_projects/town-centre-footfall.aspx)

- 10.14.** A significant work programme for the Council being taken forward by Economic Development Service between April 2022 and November 2023 has been the writing of bids and investment proposals in response to central government funding calls. This work has included:
- 10.15.** UK Shared Prosperity Fund: an allocation of £11.5 million core UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), £1.5 million for Multiply to support adult numeracy, and an anticipated additional £827,000 Rural Fund allocation for supporting rural businesses and rural community infrastructure. The UKSPF has three thematic areas: Communities and place, supporting local business and People and skills. The funding is for three years, year 1 is 2022-23 and ends 31 March 2025. The fund was launched by the government on 13 April 2022 and investment plans had to be submitted to the Government by 1 August 2022. The government signed off on Cheshire East's plan on the 6 December 2022.
- 10.16.** Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bids were submitted in July 2022 (outcome to be determined by Central Government):
- 10.16.1. The Macclesfield Regeneration team led on a bid to make significant improvements to public space in Macclesfield town centre, taking in Chestergate, Market Place, Exchange Street and Mill Street. The project – supported by MP David Rutley, Macclesfield Town Council, Grosvenor Centre owners Eskmuir and Make It Macclesfield – would transform the look of the area and focus on the pedestrian, rather than the vehicle. It would see pavements widened to create more scope for existing and new cafes, bars and restaurants to have al fresco seating areas, encourage more people to cycle into the town centre, and include adding more greenery and improving street furniture.
- 10.16.2. The Crewe regeneration team supported officers in the Highway and Transport teams to develop two bids relating to a pedestrian and cycle schemes around Crewe station.
- 10.17.** Great British Rail HQ at Crewe: The Business and Growth Team led on and developed the inward investment proposal for locating Great British Rail HQ in Crewe. GB Rail is the planned state-owned public body that will oversee rail transportation in Great Britain from 2024. Forty-two towns submitted expressions of interest and Crewe was shortlisted alongside five other railway towns and cities for the public vote and final ministerial selection. As part of this process the team also organised and hosted a ministerial visit from the Rail Minister. There were four key stages in the process:
- Stage 1 Deadline for expression of interests from potential bidders put in by March 16.



- Stage 2 Shortlists announced in May.
  - Stage 3 Following shortlisting, ministers will visit the shortlisted towns and a public vote will be held.
  - Stage 4 The location for the new HQ will be announced in the summer.
  - The final decision on the location of GB Rail has yet to be determined. The Transport Secretary announced on 19 October 2022 that the Transport Bill which would have set up GBR would not go ahead in the current parliamentary session.
- 10.18.** Investment Zone Bids, on the 9 October 2022, the ED service led on and submitted business cases for six investment zones in-line with the Government's growth priorities set out in the mini-budget dated 23 September 2022. The development of these proposals was an intensive two-week process to provide detailed economic analysis for each zone. All six were submitted by the 12 noon deadline on the 7 October 2022.
- 10.19.** Subsequently, in the Autumn Statement on the 17 November 2022 the Chancellor announced a change of approach and that expressions of interest would not now be taken forward. The government announced it will now use this investment zone programme to catalyse a limited number of the highest potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters, including through leveraging local research strengths.
- 10.20.** Officers are continuing to work with officials from the department and local stakeholders to promote the opportunities in Cheshire East .
- 10.21.** The Cheshire East Council's Connecting Cheshire initiative 'Digital Cheshire' has enabled an additional 3,000 full fibre connections across the Cheshire. The initiative - in partnership with broadband provider Airband – allows additional properties which were once deemed unviable, to connect to commercial providers and access ultrafast broadband speeds. Digital Cheshire is already seeing residents and businesses benefiting from the newly-installed ultrafast broadband across Cheshire, as broadband speeds and bandwidth demands continue to increase. Malpas, Hampton Heath, Wrenbury and Ridley are just some of the towns and villages to benefit from the full fibre technology.
- 10.22.** A further 42 premises have successfully made use of the Connecting Cheshire top-up voucher programme to enable connectivity with a non-contacted internet service provider.



## **11. Implications**

### **11.1. Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **11.2. Finance**

The financial implications of changes in performance requirements or responding to current performance levels will be included in the financial review report.

### **11.3. Policy**

The report sets out how the department is contributing to the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 in the first 6-9 months of the financial year..

### **11.4. Equality**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

### **11.5. Human Resources**

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

### **11.6. Risk Management**

The performance reporting process provides opportunities for the Council to identify and focus on areas for improvement to support achievement of its strategic ambitions. Timely performance reporting mitigates risk of the Council not achieving its outcomes by providing the opportunity to review outputs, identify trends and areas for improvement, and introduce corrective and/or preventative actions wherever necessary to address areas of poor - or under – performance.

### **11.7. Rural Communities**

There are no implications for rural communities arising from this performance report.

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

There are no implications for children and young people arising from this performance report.

### **11.9. Public Health**

There are no implications for public health arising from this performance report.

### **11.10. Climate Change**

The performance report highlights key initiatives and schemes which support and benefit the Councils aims and objectives to reduce impact on climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth & Enterprise peter.skates@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None