

Cheshire East Council

Cheshire East plan 2024-25



Open

Fair

Green

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Foreword

In 2021 Cheshire East Council set out its vision for an **Open, Fairer and Greener Cheshire East** in the council's Corporate Plan 2021-25. The plan detailed priorities and activities to drive towards that vision.

At that time, we were emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the way we live our lives and people's expectations of local public services.

In the following years, a cost-of-living crisis has developed and councils across the country have been subject to escalating financial pressure, resulting from very high inflation and interest rates seen through 2023.

This updated plan reviews progress against the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-25 and updates on activities to deliver the plan in the context of the council's current financial position and the updated context in which it operates.

We can be proud of the progress we have made and our delivery against the priorities – this includes the council's move to an open committee system of decision-making, delivery of the Family Hubs, our work to support the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan resettlement schemes, the opening of Congleton Link Road, Poynton Relief Road and numerous active and sustainable travel routes, and the refurbishment of Congleton Leisure Centre.

However, our work towards our priorities has also been affected by a number of significant factors since we originally set out our plan.

This includes:

- Cancellation of HS2 Phase 2b
- National economy and impacts on the long-term financial viability of major regeneration and infrastructure projects
- Increasing costs, demand and complexity of need for our adult social care and children's services

We remain ambitious for the borough and for the council's role in delivering for people in Cheshire East. But we also must be realistic about what we are able to deliver in our work towards our vision.

The council's financial position has changed significantly since we set out the original plan. We are, at time of writing, forecasting a £100million shortfall in funding against forecast costs and demand. We must re-prioritise and redesign our services and support to ensure that we, working with partners and local communities, are providing the best value for Cheshire East residents. We have also applied and secured agreement in principle for Exceptional Financial Support from central government. A condition of this support is to submit a transformation plan to DLUHC.

We are undoubtedly embarking on a period of significant change for the organisation, to ensure financial sustainability and to protect essential services and support for local people. There are many opportunities ahead to use new technologies and to radically rethink what a council can do for the borough it serves, and how we can put people at the heart of our plans.

Cheshire East is a thriving borough with significant potential – people want to live, work, visit and invest here. They have high expectations in terms of quality of life and life opportunities. There are many strengths we can build upon - we have great employment and education, exciting and high value science and technology industries, an important agricultural economy, we are well positioned and well connected and there are great cultural, heritage and leisure facilities.

However, health inequalities across the borough are stark, with a 12-year gap in life expectancy between different areas. As a local council we have significant influence over the many economic and environmental factors that impact on people's physical and mental health. To promote fairness, we need to work across the whole organisation to tackle these wider determinants of health.

In May 2019 Cheshire East Council set out its vision to be a carbon neutral organisation by 2025, the most ambitious target in the country. It is a measure of the financial challenges facing the Council that it has been agreed to relax that target to 2027 – still one of the most ambitious targets in the country.

Councillor Sam Corcoran, Leader of the Council

Councillor Michael Gorman, Deputy Leader of the Council

Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive

Introduction - Welcome to Cheshire East

Cheshire East Council

The council is the third largest unitary authority in the Northwest and the seventeenth largest in the country. Cheshire East sits in the historical county of Cheshire (created in its current form by the local government reorganisations of 1974) alongside Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

The council is responsible for providing approximately 500 local public services across an area of over 1,100km² for more than 398,800 residents, across a mix of rural and urban environments.

In November 2020, the Council resolved to implement a committee system for decision making, with the new arrangements taking effect in May 2021, with seven service committees replacing the previous cabinet model.

Cheshire East Council, like councils across the country, has been experiencing unprecedented financial pressures. This results, in part, from increased demand and costs for special educational needs. The borough has seen significant growth in the number of pupils with additional needs and limited in-borough specialist provision for SEND, which have not been met by increased high-needs funding. This has led to a significant deficit.

There is also continued uncertainty following the government's announcement, in October 2023, of the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham.

This is in addition to the financial pressures being experienced by councils across the country – increased demand and complexity of need for adult social care and children's services, and high inflation and interest rates over the last year affecting service delivery and borrowing costs.

The council approved a budget for 2024/25 in February 2024. These plans include spending money from reserves to cover the impacts of additional financial pressures. However, this means that the council's general fund reserve is now insufficient to adequately protect the council against future risks.

Over the next four-years we are forecasting a funding gap of £100m.

In February 2024, the Secretary of State agreed, in principle, exceptional support in the form of a capitalisation direction. It provides the council with the facility to spread the cost of any additional emerging pressures, up to £17.6m, to future years, effectively providing an alternative to reserves should the need arise. This reduces (*but does not eliminate*) the risk of a Section114 (S114) notice.

Reducing these financial risks will enable investment in providing the required organisational capacity and resources in 2024/25 for a **council-wide transformational change programme** to create sustainability in the medium-term.

Securing financial stability and sustainability are key priorities for the council at this time. This updated plan reflects the re-prioritisation required in the context of this financial challenge.

Cheshire East the place and people

Cheshire East is a great place that is full of potential. We have strong employment opportunities, attractive places to live and high standards of education.

The area has excellent national and international communications by rail including the Crewe Junction and the West-Coast mainline, by road on the M6 and M56 and by air from Manchester Airport on its northern edge.

The borough is made up of a number of small to medium sized towns, the largest of which are Crewe and Macclesfield. There are twelve towns with populations over 10,000, along with a large rural hinterland.

Cheshire East is a thriving area with a strong emphasis on industry, commerce and agriculture and sits at the heart of a region that has one of the strongest science and technology clusters in the UK. Local businesses include global employers, delivering supply chain opportunities for the borough's high number of small to medium enterprises (SME's) and high-quality jobs for our residents.

The borough has a higher-than-average older population. The over 65 population projection is estimated to rise by approximately 20% from 2021 to 2030.

Despite a good overall quality of life, there are some areas where the experience is different. The **health inequalities** across the borough are stark.

Our residents have a longer life expectancy than the national average. However, life expectancy varies widely across the borough. For females there is a 14-year difference in life expectancy between the highest and lowest wards, for males the figure is slightly less at 11 years.

The index of multiple deprivation 2019 ranked Cheshire East 228th out of 317 local authority areas, making it overall one of the least deprived areas of England. However, there are local areas within the borough which rank among most deprived areas nationally - the majority of these areas are located in Crewe, with small pockets in Congleton and Macclesfield.

Employment rates and household income levels are higher than average. However, there is a considerable range of average household income levels at ward level, from £18,000 in Crewe St Barnabas to £56,000 in Prestbury.

Cheshire East is becoming a more diverse borough due to its connections to Manchester, Birmingham and London. It is also the home of choice for many immigrant communities; towns in Cheshire East are home to varied communities from Eastern Europe, East Timor, Syria, India, Bangladesh and the Caribbean to name but a few.

The Council recognises that promoting equality, diversity and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. We want Cheshire East to be an area of equal opportunity where everyone has a fair chance and people from all backgrounds take part in community life. Our aim therefore is to make equality, diversity and inclusion an integral part of the way the Council works by putting it at the centre of everything we do.

We have active and vibrant communities in the borough, a strong town and parish councils' network, pro-active town partnerships such as Congleton and Sandbach, neighbourhood action groups from Macclesfield to Crewe, a strong volunteer force.

Our place-based neighbourhood partnership and collaborative arrangements bring together a range of partners including the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, public sector, private sector and local residents. As a partnership they collaboratively create and tailor projects to suit the communities needs building on existing assets.

Cheshire East has been a key lead, as well as the accountable body, for the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). In partnership with the LEP, and its partner local authorities (Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council), the Council has worked proactively to optimise the benefits of sub regional working in a positive and collaborative way. The Council has also supported the creation of Business Improvement Districts in both Wilmslow and Crewe.

The council has a leading role in the Cheshire East Place health and care partnership, as part of Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System. Key areas of cross sector working include such things as the Integrated Care Partnership which will explore how commissioning activities can be developed, focusing on population health. The 8 Care Communities partnerships across health and social care understand local health inequalities and are identifying solutions to keep people fit and well.

Our ongoing partnership operations with Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service are making Cheshire East a safer borough.

Vision

An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East

Aims

Aim 1 - An open and enabling organisation

Aim 2 - A council which empowers and cares about people

Aim 3 - A thriving and sustainable place

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

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

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

Priorities

- P1.1) Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
- P1.2) Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
- P1.3) Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
- P1.4) Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- P1.5) Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
- P1.6) Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

- P2.1) Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- P2.2) Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- P2.3) Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- P2.4) Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- P2.5) Support all children to have the best start in life
- P2.6) Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs
- P2.7) Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- P2.8) Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

- P3.1) A great place for people to live, work and visit
- P3.2) Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- P3.3) Reduce impact on the environment
- P3.4) A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- P3.5) Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- P3.6) Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Delivering together for Cheshire East – an overview of key corporate plan achievements

Aim 1 - An open and enabling organisation

P1.1) Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making

Implementation of committee system – The Council now makes decisions through committees which have responsibilities for various Council functions. The committees and their responsibilities can be found in the Council’s Constitution (add link). Each committee is composed of elected Councillors with representation across all of the Council’s political groups, in line with legislation.

Committee and Council meetings are open to the public to attend and are audio-streamed via the Council’s website. Members of the public are entitled to speak at meetings. All reports to committees and Council are published at least five clear working days in advance of meetings and can be viewed on the Council website.

Collaboration with Town and Parish Councils – Town and Parish Council network established in 2022/23 – three expert network sessions delivered to date covering climate change, green spaces review and leisure services review. The councils are also engaged each year in the annual budget setting process. We have provided a monthly e-newsletter to Town and Parish Councils since October 2023.

Open data site – Insight Cheshire East – Data published on the site includes air quality data, procurement information including contracts register and expenditure exceeding £500. During 2023/24, Q3 there were 34,131 views on Insight Cheshire East, with an average of 375 per day.

Financial, performance and risk reports are provided every quarter to committees’ public meetings with six-monthly compliments and complaints reporting.

P1.2) Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation

Budget consultation – during the period of the Corporate Plan 2021-25 we have seen significantly increased public and stakeholder participation in annual budget setting process. In the most recent year, (budget

consultation for 2024/25) we saw 2,829 consultation engagements, including 1,351 survey completions.

Public consultation in development of key strategies, policy and service development through public consultation and engagement, including Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Parking review, Digital Inclusion Plan, Carbon Neutral Action Plan and more.

Customer experience strategy and customer charter - developed and implemented, including a better understanding of our performance against customer contact measures, a review of our special contact measures policy, an improved adult social care complaints policy and customer journey mapping, with an approach to understanding and improving the experience our customers have when they contact us and training for managers.

Direct engagement - The council has undertaken direct engagement exercises with residents, including establishing a people panel to generate ideas around how the council can support residents in the cost-of-living crisis. The council has also spoken with residents about their ideas for priorities for the council and borough.

Work to support Armed Forces and veterans - The council has been awarded the silver standard for the Ministry of Defence’s employer recognition scheme (Armed Forces Covenant), and it now working towards the gold award.

The Council supports the annual Crewe Armed Forces Day, supporting local veterans and serving members of the armed forces.

We have created a veterans’ staff network to identify and help veterans and serving families within the Council.

The Council’s Veterans Officer continues to work with groups such as the RBL to organise Armed forces events across the borough. This includes continued support of the 8 Veteran Breakfast clubs all throughout the borough.

P1.3) Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation

In 2023/24 the council addressed and in-year budget gap of £18.7m (at Q2). The council, like others, was subject to financial pressures including high levels of inflation and interest rates driving increased costs and increased demand for a number of services.

The council implemented in-year emergency measures, including recruitment and vacancy management, non-essential spend direction, review of contracts and fees and charges. The council reduced the in-year gap and used reserves to balance at year end.

The council has set a budget for 2024/25, however this is reliant on timely delivery of a number of challenging budget proposals, and organisational transformation and risk of s114 remains high. The council successfully applied to government for exceptional financial support and has secured agreement in principle to be able to capitalise revenue costs to the value of £17.6m if necessary to balance in-year.

The council has a good record of council tax collection with a rate maintained at around 99% over the last 5 years.

P1.4) Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough

The Council secures funding from a range of sources to support delivery of services and projects in Cheshire East. This includes Government funding for strategic infrastructure projects, Towns Fund, Future High Streets Fund, school building, green initiatives and others.

P1.5) Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered

We have worked to deliver our Workforce Strategy objectives, including a range of activity to support workforce wellbeing, introduced an employee deal, established programmes of staff development and training and supported recruitment in a very challenging market for many roles.

P1.6) Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

A Communications Strategy for Residents was approved in 2022/23, setting out aims and outlines priorities for communications activity that will support the delivery of the corporate plan. It also sets out the principles we will follow when communicating.

The council delivers a comprehensive programme of communications activity across a range of channels to keep residents informed about their council and council services and are aware of council decisions and how to influence them.

Aim 2 - An organisation which empowers and cares about people

P2.1) Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient

The Live Well for Longer Plan was previously approved by the Adults and Health Committee and has now been adopted by the Cheshire East Place Partnership for Health and Social Care as our Framework for co-production. The Live Well for Longer Plan is based on our TOGETHER in Cheshire East principles to ensure that we are able to develop our services together with local people.

Engagement with young people – We work with young people and their representatives through a number of groups, including ‘My Voice’, ‘Jigsaw’, Youth Council, and parent career forum in developing services – for example, Emotionally Healthy Children and Young People Service.

Gypsy and Traveller transit site - Work has started on the Gypsy and Traveller transit site, which will provide a safe place for the travelling community to stay whilst in the area, reducing the level of unauthorised encampments. To open 2024. Work is underway with local schools and GP surgeries to raise cultural awareness and a training programme is being developed for Adult Social Workers who work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, to improve knowledge, skills and responses to assessed need.

Social value - As a council, we want to make a positive impact on people and places in Cheshire East. We call this impact social value.

We look at social value across 3 themes:

- social - creating healthier, safer, and more resilient communities
- economic - promoting local skills and employment growth, supporting inclusive diverse and responsible businesses
- environmental - supporting environmental sustainability

ICB, Cheshire East place and care communities – Cheshire East Place partners have co-designed a draft ‘Blueprint for 2030’, setting out a vision for healthy households, healthy neighbourhoods and health and care services. This recognises the need to address the root causes of poor health and wellbeing.

Care Communities - Care Communities continue to work across community partnerships, identifying local priorities and delivering projects to address areas of need:

- 20 projects are supporting marginalised/hard to reach communities.
- 25 projects are addressing Health Inequalities.
- 21 projects are supporting isolated residents.
- Seven community organisations have increased the volunteer programmes.
- Seven projects are directly supporting our most vulnerable residents.
- Cheshire East has partnered with a range of churches, community centres and other settings to enable them to become Connected Communities Centres/Venues. These buildings host a range of activities and support services closer to where people live. There are 34 Connected Communities Centres and Venues across Cheshire East.

Homes for Ukraine and Afghan resettlement schemes –

- Continued integration & development support within the ARAP (Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy) scheme for Afghan families.
- 12 families resettled into Cheshire East.
- 282 Ukrainian guests with sponsors matched with 165 households (all in education, training or work.)

- A further 284 Ukrainian guests living independently in either social housing, or private rented sector accommodation.

“We saw the pictures on television and felt we had to do something to help. We made contact with Kate and her mum through video calls and began the process of DBS checks before meeting them at Liverpool Airport. They seemed so relieved to be here. They have been through such a traumatic time. They are a great asset to the family. My daughter Alice has a new friend and there is plenty of space in the house. They have their own bedroom and bathroom. We love having them here.” - Homes for Ukraine host, Clare.



P2.2) Reduce health inequalities across the borough

The council is a key partner in the Cheshire East Plan health and care partnership, working to deliver the Cheshire East Joint health and Wellbeing Strategy. Key priorities include:

- Smoking cessation
- Substance abuse
- Cardio-vascular health
- Fighting obesity

Five joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) reviews have been completed this year, through collaboration with partners on poverty, smoking, substance misuse, falls and Crewe

A refreshed 'Tartan Rug' has been published, demonstrating variation in health and wellbeing need across the Cheshire East area.

Lifestyle on prescription - resource has been launched and is now being shared and socialised with health and care professionals across Cheshire East. This includes promotion of the Green Spaces for Wellbeing initiative.

Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board has endorsed the Mental Health Partnership Board 5-year plan and the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Plan.

We have also worked closely with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to who provide the Cheshire East Living Well bus which provides immunisations, health checks and wider wellbeing guidance at the heart of communities.

P2.3) Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation

The council plays a key role in both Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership and Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board.

In 2022, partnership arrangements for protecting children at risk of exploitation were inspected. This inspection found both strengths and areas for improvement in partnership arrangements. Since then, we have strengthened our multi-agency arrangements for children at risk of exploitation and, due to improvements made, additional monitoring has been lifted.

The Council is a key partner in the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership. New responsibilities were set out in the [Domestic Abuse Act](#) which was signed into law in April 2021. We received funding from the government to support this new Act. This has been focused on helping victims and their children into safe accommodation using a [Whole Housing Approach](#), meaning that services are strengthened to spot the signs of abuse and support families earlier.

P2.4) Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care

"It was 27 years ago when our daughters were aged four and two that we applied and were approved as foster carers for children between the ages of 0-18.

"We have seen about ten young people through to independence and most of them we are still in regular contact with, alongside their partners. They are still very much a part of our family as our own daughters are.

"The best thing about fostering is seeing the children we've cared for grow up and start to get on with their lives, making plans, being successful in their relationships, learning to be great parents and more – and we get to celebrate it all with them!

"Fostering has enriched and enhanced our lives not just as a couple, but as a whole family. We really enjoy spending time with the young people we have cared for in the past and those who we continue to care for." - Kerry and Graham Christopher from Nantwich.



P2.5) Support all children to have the best start in life

Family hubs and digital family hub – We have now opened five Family Hubs and an online family hub resource. Family Hubs support children and young people from birth up until the age of 19 (or 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities), and their families.

Physical Family Hubs are now open in:

- Oakenclough Family Hub
- Oak Tree Family Hub
- Monks Coppenhall Family Hub
- Ash Grove Family Hub
- Congleton Family Hub

“We are absolutely delighted to have the SEND family hub at the heart of Crewe and in such close proximity to Springfield.

“The hub is going to offer much needed support for young people and families within the locality. It was a pleasure for the Springfield choir to spread their joy at the opening event.

“We are really looking forward to working together with the hub in the future.” - Lisa Hodgkison, executive headteacher at Springfield School



Free childcare provision - The number of children taking up the 3 and 4-year-old offer remains consistently high, ensuring where possible children are accessing support from an early age to achieve their full potential.

Crewe Youth Zone - Delivered by the charity OnSide in partnership with Cheshire East Council, this project will in activities and access support from skilled youth workers.

The Youth Zone is proposed for Oak Street, and it is expected that a decision on the planning application for the facility will be made soon.

An additional boxing and recreation facility for young people is proposed for Mirion Street, which is being delivered by Crewe Youth Club, South Cheshire Amateur Boxing Club and Cheshire East Council.

It is expected that a planning application for this facility will be submitted in spring.

P2.6) Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – The Council is continuing to work with Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on funding and transformation of services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We are taking a number of steps to address the forecast deficit and to ensure that children with SEND get the right support at the right time, in the right place. This includes development of a management plan to transform SEND services in the borough, applications to divert additional educational funding to high needs services and a capital bid to fund additional specialist SEND places in Cheshire East.

In-borough SEND provision – schools – In February 2024, we formally opened the newly expanded Springfield School site in Wilmslow, creating up to 80 much-needed local school spaces for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Supported internship promotion – We have continued to promote supported internships for interns with a disability to businesses across the borough. Most recently, this has included a business engagement event to mark National Supported Internships Day in 2024.

“I enjoy the role as a job coach because it’s such a rewarding thing to see the progress of the intern from the start of the journey all the way to see their confidence grow in themselves.” - Emma Beckley, supported internships job coach.



P2.7) Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential

School places offered – The number of parents receiving first choice offers for school places remains high, with 93% (primary) and 94% (secondary) of parents receiving a first choice offer in 2024.

Good and outstanding schools – Standards of education in Cheshire East remain high, with 94% of primary schools and 91% primary schools judged as good or outstanding (2023/24 Q2).

NEETs – 1.7% of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Years 12+13), against a national benchmark of 2.8%.

P2.8) Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

Home First – helps people to be better supported in their own home and reducing hospital readmissions.

This initiative, which aligns with the NHS's long-term plan, aims to empower people to receive the right level of care and treatment for their health conditions within the comfort and familiarity of their own homes.

Shared lives initiative – In 2023 we launched a recruitment campaign to attract more Shared Lives carers.

Shared Lives is where carers share their home and family life with an adult who needs help or support to live well. The carer provides support and companionship to the individual, and they can also help with everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping.

Our **Extra Care strategy** was agreed at Adults and Health Committee in November 2023. We have seen a growth in domiciliary care capacity, in line with our strategy for people to receive care at home, with an 18% increase in the number of hours delivered by commissioned care providers

The Adults and Health committee endorsed the adoption of a new **Cheshire East Falls Prevention Strategy** for 2023-2026. The strategy has been co-produced by a multi-agency partnership steering group and refined via a formal consultation process that took place in quarter 4 of 2022/23.

Aim 3 - A thriving and sustainable place

P3.1) A great place for people to live, work and visit

Affordable housing - We continue to work in partnership with our Registered Housing Providers to increase the supply of affordable homes across Cheshire East. To date 451 new homes have been completed, which exceeds the affordable housing requirement of 355 per annum.

Congleton Leisure Centre – Re-opened following a major refurbishment in summer of 2023. Congleton Leisure Centre is the latest in the borough to undergo a large-scale refurbishment, which has completely transformed its exterior design and the interior activities space and facilities, taking the borough's leisure offer to a new level. Children from The Quinta Primary School were first to test the water in the new big pool at Congleton Leisure Centre, following a civic opening by the Mayor of Cheshire East, who was joined by Olympian Ann Brightwell MBE.

"It's been great for the school to become so closely involved with this project and I am sure many of them, and their families, will be taking advantage of the amazing facilities the centre has to offer." - Alison Cope, Head of PE, The Quinta School, Congleton



The Learn to Swim scheme has grown to 9,700 swimmers participating in weekly lessons and **leisure memberships** have exceeded 20,000 for the first time, with over 2.5 million individual visits to our leisure centre sites

Empty homes – We continue to work with owners of empty properties to try and bring properties back into use. The level of long-term empty homes continues to be maintained at below 1% (0.92%) of the total number of residential properties.

Planning modernisation programme - The modernisation plan has progressed on four main areas of focus. The new IT system has been delayed, but more recent positive engagement should see implementation in the summer; the staffing restructure is underway with a focus on retention and recruitment to fill vacancies; the backlog of applications has slowly reduced with focused effort on the oldest applications; and various customer improvements have been put in place including new validation checklists and information updates to the Council's website. Great progress had been made addressing the recommendations of the s106 audit, with updates to system and process and collaboration with other Services which will result in a much more effective and efficient service going forward. Many of the above changes coupled with progression of an updated pre-application process will see a significant service reset after the summer responding to Government planning reforms aligned with a more focused service improvement plan.

Planning - Significant strategic developments have received planning consent including further housing, employment and retail schemes at North Congleton, expansion and redevelopment of sites in Crewe for key existing employers, and further market and affordable housing schemes in Middlewich and Macclesfield. Proactive approaches have been incorporated to maximise design and environmental quality in place making, alongside a continued focus on biodiversity net gain. An increase in enforcement notices (50+ in 2023/24) also demonstrates the priority to also protect the natural and built environment.

An Issues Paper highlighting 10 key topic areas and a call for sites has been commenced to enable the process of the new Local Plan to begin early next year. A number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have been prepared and now adopted over the year providing detailed technical information and guidance to support Local Plan policies.

Sustainable Drainage (SUDS), Developer Contributions and Environmental Protection are now all in place.

Economic strengths - the economy in Cheshire East remains strong and resilient, bolstered by global employers in science and manufacturing and over 19,000 small to medium enterprises. Businesses continue to commit to investing in Cheshire East, with Bentley Motors recently announcing their commitment to deliver a fleet of luxury electric vehicles in Crewe. While Cheshire East's employment count has not fully recovered from the pandemic when comparing to competing regions it should be noted that Cheshire East still performs strongly in comparison to the Northwest. Manufacturing proves to be a strong point for Cheshire East as it accounts for 10.2% of all employment in the area which is significantly higher than the England average of 7.3%. Furthermore, the manufacturing industry in Cheshire East contributes a Gross Value Added of 31.7% to Cheshire East's GDP, which is 20% more than the UK average of 11.2% in 2021.

Visitor economy - The value of the Visitor Economy for Cheshire East has recovered well since the Covid pandemic decimated the sector in 2020. The most up to date STEAM tourism economic impact modelling data shows an increase of 60% on 2020 figures and over 44% on 2021 figures. This provided a total of £879m of value to the Cheshire East economy in 2022, with almost 13 million visitors enjoying Cheshire East last year.

P3.2) Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods

Safer Cheshire East Partnership Plan refreshed in 2022, focusing on:

- Violence against women and girls
- Exploitation of adults and children
- Cybercrime
- Serious and Organised Crime
- Domestic Abuse
- Knife Crime
- Road Safety

CCTV investment - The CCTV wireless project is progressing on a town-by-town basis across the Borough in conjunction with our contracted provider. The project, which is set to complete by the end of the calendar year, will improve performance and security and greater functionality capitalising on technological advances.

Air Quality - Air Quality Annual Status Reports have been submitted to and approved by Defra each year. Projects within the Air Quality Action Plan are ongoing in conjunction with a range of internal and external partners and progress is reported to the Air Quality Steering Group on a quarterly basis. A new continuous monitor has been commissioned and we are now measuring concentrations of Particulate Matter as well as Nitrogen Dioxide.

Food Safety - The commercial services team outturn for 2023-2024 was an achievement of 96.5% of all programmed A-D related food hygiene inspections; this figure includes inspections that were overdue following the reduced inspection requirements mandated by the Food Standards Agency during the Covid-19 pandemic and to the end of March 2023. This means that we start 2024-2025 in an excellent position to meet the requirements of the annual programme for the year. Of those premises that did receive a direct inspection, 97.7% are awarded 3 or above in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme putting Cheshire East on a par with national standards.

Licensing - The Councils updated 'Taxi' Licensing Policy was approved in November 2022 leading to a significant change in processes and requirements for licence holders. One such change was the requirement for all drivers to undertake safeguarding training and with the support of colleagues in the Cheshire East Safeguarding Team and the benefit of external funding we delivered 23 free of charge training sessions to over 500 drivers. Additional support has been provided through two trade meetings with plans for further engagement sessions in 2024-2025 alongside our newly developed Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter aimed at addressing general enquiries, changes to legislation and good practice.

Trading Standards - Trading Standards continue to protect residents of the Borough from unscrupulous traders and scams. Between 2021-2024 the Banking Protocol supported by Trading Standards and the Police dealt with 160 referrals where staff in financial institutions flag instances where they believe a customer is being forced to hand over money in unusual circumstances. The average saving for each Cheshire East resident referral was £8200. In addition, the Older Persons Scams Awareness and Aftercare project, a partnership between Cheshire East Trading Standards and Age UK won the Chartered Trading Standards Institute Hero Award in 2023 and for two years running the Trading Standards Service won a national award in recognitions of its efforts to raise awareness of the dangers of using loan sharks.

Cleaner Crewe – Four years ago, many of the alleyways in Crewe were in a poor state of repair and the communities living in these areas were not able to enjoy the immediate locality of their homes.

Now, following on from the introduction of the Cleaner Crewe project, alleyways have gone from being filled with fly-tipped rubbish to being places residents can be proud of. The Council's support and direct involvement in the Cleaner Crewe Project completed on 31/03/2024. A detailed report was produced in relation to lessons learnt, how further support could be resourced in the future and also highlighted the continued success of the "Friends of Crewe South 1 Alleyways" committee. The Committee continues to meet on a regular basis and has actively sought various different grants and funding streams to continue to with engagement activities, clean ups events and sustainable activities and infrastructure to provide the best chance of those alleyways that have kept clean and well managed to stay that way, and also to engage future Alley Champions across the original "pilot area". Throughout April and May 2024 the residents, supported by local business, ward and town council members, other agencies and volunteers, have continued with clean up events, labelling of their plant pots and benches, and also some bank holiday street events.

The project itself was shortlisted in September 2022 for APSE 'Best Community & Neighbourhood Initiative' and also won first place in the LARAC Conference Celebration Awards in October 2022 for 'Best Partnership Award'.

As a result of the project, a clear model has been created as to what would be required should this be duplicated elsewhere in the borough and Crewe Town Council are currently reviewing what support they would also consider providing for the future in relation to similar issues and potential continued support of the original project area.

Pocket Parks – Four parks – McLaren Street, Derby Docks, School Crescent and Queen Street – will all see improvements that will allow these sites to be more accessible for residents and to create 'pocket parks'. McLaren Street 'pocket park' was the first of the parks to re-open in April 2024.

Green Spaces for Wellbeing - The innovative green spaces for wellbeing programme was launched in 2022.

"The alley regeneration project has been welcomed by Walthall Street and Westminster Street residents. Our alley was filthy and dangerous underfoot. We met our neighbours, they came out to chat and showed gratitude for the clean-up. Children were able to come out to play, this was lovely to see during the summer. Plants were added in containers, and residents looked after them. We saw a reduction in fly-tipping and dog fouling." - Denise Randle, a resident in Walthall Street, Crewe



Working in partnership, Cheshire East Council, the NHS, Ansa, Everybody Leisure and the voluntary sector, launched the 'Green Spaces for Wellbeing' programme to support people with long term health conditions and/or mental health needs to engage with nature-based activities.

Green flag awards - We have retained the prestigious National Green Flag Award for the quality, condition and overall cleanliness of its parks and open spaces in 11 of our towns, with three sites – Tatton Park, Congleton Park and Queens Park – also retaining their Green Heritage Site status.

P3.3) Reduce impact on the environment

Waste Strategy and recycling rates - Our municipal waste management strategy sets out how we intend to reduce, reuse, recycle, recover and

dispose of municipal waste between 2014 and 2030. Our strategy sets out key aims and objectives for the management of waste. The Strategy seeks to identify key drivers and ensure the aspirations of the Council are still relevant in the changing waste industry following government consultations covering the following:

- Waste and recycling: making recycling collections consistent in England. Simpler Recycling – Food waste collections.
- Packaging waste: changing the UK producer responsibility system for packaging waste
- Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers (bottles and cans)

The collection, treatment, and disposal of municipal waste in Cheshire East is underpinned by 18 high level strategic objectives that have been established by the Council. To read the whole strategy please go to : [Municipal Waste Management Strategy Review 2020 \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/municipal-waste-management-strategy-review-2020)

The latest official figures (2022 – 23) show that our recycling rate is 52%

Tree planting - 30ha of tree planting has taken place and a further 15ha is currently in progress giving a total of 45ha against the total of 120ha required by the Carbon Action Plan. Work is underway to plan a pipeline of sites to complete the planting required over the next two planting seasons.

P3.4) A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel

Poynton Relief Road - opened March 2023. The road relieves Poynton village of high volumes of traffic travelling between the Macclesfield and Poynton areas to Stockport, the airport, Manchester and the wider area.

Congleton Link Road opened April 2021, improving connectivity between Macclesfield, Congleton, the surrounding area and the M6. It has also reduced congestion and improved air quality in Congleton and released land creating the potential for jobs in the local economy.

The North West Crewe highways package that improves safe access to the hospital and enables economic growth remains on programme for completion in Spring 2024.

EV charging points - funding secured to meet the Council's aim to install 250 public EV points in the borough. This includes money from the Government's Residential On-street Charge Point scheme (ORCS) and the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme. A contract has been let to deliver c.15 sites through ORCS during 2024. Procurement of a charge point operator for LEVI delivery has begun.

Parking review – a Borough-wide review of Council-operated car parks was completed on a town-by-town basis with the outcomes agreed at Highways Committee in January 2024. This review will rationalise parking charges and provisions to support town centres, encourage sustainable travel choices and improve the efficiency of the Council's car park estate. The new Multi Storey Car Park in Crewe town centre is being integrated into the town's parking offer, alongside a number of car park closures to enable regeneration sites at Oak Street, Lyceum Square and the Library/Archive Centre.

Walking and cycling routes:

- Manchester Road scheme between Handforth and Wilmslow has secured funding from Active Travel England to provide a safe Active Travel Corridor,
- Mill Street Corridor/Southern Gateway, in Crewe will link the town centre to the railway station, plans have been finalised and works to construct these facilities are being procured.
- Flag Lane Link: a highways and cycle scheme improving connectivity into the town centre from the west of Crewe. The main part of this scheme completed in summer 2023 and is now operational, including a new contraflow cycle lane giving priority access to cyclists and pedestrians.
- The final leg of Middlewood Way was opened with completion of the Black Lane Scheme in Macclesfield. The scheme received nearly £600k funding from Sustrans to create a safe link between Hurdsfield and the towns railway station.

Bus services - are benefitting from investment through the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding supported by the Council's own resources. In 2023/24 spending has focussed on Route 38 which links Crewe-Sandbach- Congleton and Macclesfield, where investment in bus stops/stations, passenger information and facilities is intended to complement the introduction of a new fleet of modern vehicles.

Flexilink and Go-Too have continued to provide demand-responsive transport services to residents. Flexilink operations have been extended to service Disley whilst Go-Too is our Rural Mobility Funded scheme serving areas to the south and west of Nantwich. The council is consulting on options to better integrate these 2 services and connect into the commercial bus network.

The national £2 bus fare cap covers almost all scheduled bus services in Cheshire East (exceptions being where the fare is less than £2 already). The fare cap has been important in getting more people to use buses following the pandemic, with most local service now seeing fare-paying passenger numbers at or above pre-pandemic levels. The fare cap will continue until (at least) December 2024.

P3.5) Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all

£100m regeneration programme for Crewe - focused on delivering around 20 projects, including those funded by the Government's £14.1m Future High Streets Fund and £22.9m Towns Fund, which include new/improved active travel routes and public spaces, youth and community facilities, commercial floorspace (see TADIC below) and support to reuse vacant properties.

Crewe bus station and multi-storey car park - at the heart of the town's regeneration plans, a new bus station opened in May 2024, featuring an enclosed passenger concourse, with WC amenities. Located in the same structure, a new 389 space MSCP, with 20+ EV charging points and solar PV, will provide new capacity and allow some other town centre car parks to be released to support wider regeneration plans.

Technology and Digital Innovation Campus (TADIC): plans have advanced for the creation of new co-working space at the former Municipal Building offices (NB not the historic civic amenities). Contractors have been appointed to undertake works commencing 2024 and completing early 2025, whilst marketing of the opportunity for a tenant/operator is underway. Separately, although no longer expected to be co-working space, plans to improve and safeguard Christ Church have been developed.

Sustainable Energy Network: Investment in energy improvements being implemented including to Lifestyle Centre, Lyceum Theatre and Delamere House to deliver carbon reduction and enable future heat network.

Cheshire Archives and History Centre - The shared service 'Archives - A Story Shared' programme, including the building of the new History Centre in Crewe, was successful in achieving a £4.4 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project is now at final building design stage with ongoing community engagement programmes. specifications being agreed for tendering.

Crewe Market Hall opened in May 2021 - it has become an anchor retail, leisure, and entertainment venue in the town.

The Ly² project at Lyceum Square launched in July 2023, providing a new public entertainment and performance space at the heart of Crewe town centre, adjacent to the Lyceum Theatre and Market Hall. The project includes stages, a giant video screen, new artwork, seating and planting areas to provide an attractive setting for visitors.

Macclesfield town centre, public realm and changing places – Building on the successful delivery of the Castle Street public realm improvement scheme and the Avanti funded Treacle TART (Treacle Town Art Trail) a copy work is now progressing on developing designs for further 'light touch' public realm improvements across Macclesfield's pedestrian core.

A Changing Places Grant and a significant financial contribution from Macclesfield Town Council were also utilised in 23/24 to upgrade toilets at Macclesfield Indoor Market, formerly only accessible to market traders, to be upgraded and enlarged to provide modern facilities suitable for public use, including accessible changing places toilet and baby changing facilities.

Work has also started on design work and costings for the refurbishment of Macclesfield Indoor Market, and it is hoped that these can be delivered in 2024/25, although the project is extremely challenging given central government restrictions on the funding.

Town centre vitality reports and Business Improvement Districts - Town Centre Vitality Reports were finalised in 2022 for the nine key service centres in Cheshire East. These plans identify key opportunities to support town centre vitality in these centres as and when funding can be secured whether by the Council, Town Councils or others wishing to support the vitality of our town centres. Since the approval of these plans, a number of Town Councils, with support from CEC, have taken steps to develop new town centre Business Improvement Districts to generate more funding and

capacity for town centre projects and stronger business networks. Following the establishment of the boroughs' first Business Improvement District in Wilmslow Town Centre in November 2022. 2023/24 has seen a successful ballot for a second BID covering central Crewe and its commencement on 1 April 2024.

Rural Action Plan - Rural England Prosperity grant funding to support Cheshire East based rural businesses has supported small scale investment in micro and small rural enterprises and the development and promotion of the rural visitor economy. A review of the various cross cutting elements of the Rural Action Plan 2022-2026 is taking place during 2024 to identify progress to date and future priorities.

Connecting Cheshire - the Connecting Partnership is continuing to manage a number of Digital Connectivity projects covering the wider Cheshire region with the aim to improve connection speeds for residents and businesses. The partnership also has recently launched the latest programme of Digital 'Masterclasses' for locally based SMEs that are designed to provide support and assistance in ensuring that their business can benefit from current digital productivity improvements.

P3.6) Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Solar farm, Leighton - Work is almost complete on the council's first solar farm. Once complete the 4.1MW farm will provide the majority of the electricity required by the council's compost plant at Leighton, Crewe with some residual electricity being sold to the grid.

Green vehicles in the council's fleet - EV charging units have been installed across the council estate and 16 vans are currently on order, once delivered these will bring our total EV fleet to 19 vehicles.

Solar Together promotion – Working with Cheshire West, and Warrington Borough Councils, the first Solar Together scheme in Cheshire and Warrington has seen more than 6,000 registrations from local residents keen to install solar photovoltaic (PV) systems in their homes and has won a Green Expo Award for Innovation in Energy.

Decarbonising heat/energy for the council's buildings – 14 air source heat pumps have been installed on council's estate. Seventeen solar installations have been completed on council buildings, providing approximately 1GWh per year.

Aim 1 - An open and enabling organisation

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

Member Champion: TBC; **Officer Champion:** TBC

Priorities

- P1.1) Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
- P1.2) Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
- P1.3) Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
- P1.4) Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- P1.5) Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
- P1.6) Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

Where we are now

Over the last 12 months, the council has seen a significant escalation in financial pressures, including inflation and interest rates and increase in demand and complexity of need. It has applied to central government for Exceptional Financial Support and the DfE Safety Valve programme. The council has recently undertaken a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge which will result in a number of recommendations.

Opportunities and strengths

- Digital technologies and artificial intelligence
- A workforce and elected members with a will for transformation and improvement.

Challenges

The council's financial position and low levels of reserves means that it is at an increased risk of s114. The council also has limited capacity for the required change, improvement and transformation. Understanding about the council's priorities, services, decision-making and opportunities for residents to be involved can all be improved.

Drivers for change

The key drivers for change for this aim are:

- Financial sustainability
- Digital opportunities and artificial intelligence
- Refreshing the relationship with residents

What we will do - Priority actions for 2024/25			Lead Officer	Committee
P1.1	A1.1.1	Introduce a new decision-making framework to streamline the current arrangements and improve quality and clarity of reports.	Head of Democratic Services	CPC
	A1.1.2	Improve understanding of effective scrutiny in a committee system of decision-making	Head of Democratic Services	CPC
	A1.1.3	Member training to clarify roles and responsibilities for decision-making within the committee system	Head of Democratic Services	CPC
	A1.1.4	A clear and transparent budget setting process, where opportunities to inform and influence decision-making are clearly understood by stakeholders	Head of Finance	CPC
P1.2	A1.2.1	Review and embed consultation and engagement approach across the organisation to put resident and customer voice at the heart of evidence base for decisions, including establishing a 'people panel' to embed citizen voice into key decisions and policy development	Head of Communications	CPC
	A1.2.2	Review equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and EIAs to embed the voices of seldom-heard audiences and those with protected characteristics at the heart of decision-making and service redesign across the organisation.	Head of Business Change	CPC
	A1.2.3	Review and refresh the aims and priorities in the Customer Experience Strategy as part of a wider review of customer experience and resident engagement.	Head of Customer Services	CPC
	A1.2.4	Achieve the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award	Head of Communities and Integration	E+C
P1.3	A1.3.1	Embark on a whole organisation transformation and improvement programme – The primary aim in the short term must be to ensure that the Council is financially stable and delivering support to those who need it most.	Director of Transformation	CPC
	A1.3.2	Review commissioning approach across all directorates	Head of Integrated Commissioning	A+H/C+F
	A1.3.3	Deliver the savings set out in MTFS 2024-28 proposals within the agreed timescales to contribute to a balanced the budget and build sustainable reserves	Head of Finance	CPC
	A1.3.4	We will refresh the council's Digital Strategy and delivery programme. The Digital Strategy identifies forty-seven digital projects and emphasises a digital-by-design approach to offering services to customers.	Head of ICT	CPC
P1.4	A1.4.1	Comprehensive review of each existing ASDV including review of governance, management, business planning and performance management arrangements.	Director of Environment	FSC
P1.5	A1.5.1	Review Workforce Strategy and update for 2025 onwards.	Head of HR	CPC
	A1.5.2	Complete the office moves related WorkplaCE programme, making more efficient use of the council's office estate and technology to support modern ways of working	Executive Director – Place	CPC, E+G
	A1.5.3	Review and update the Brighter Future culture programme	Head of HR	CPC
	A1.5.4	Complete the DMA review of senior capacity and extend DMA across the organisation as part of service re-design	Head of HR	CPC
P1.6	A1.6.1	Review and refresh communications and engagement strategy and resourcing as part of a wider review of customer experience and resident engagement.	Head of Communications	CPC
	A1.6.2	Establish a range of subscriber e-newsletters and digital content to share key updates and council services, support and decisions with a range of stakeholders – to extend reach of messages	Head of Communications	CPC
	A1.6.3	Review and update the approach, across the organisation, to employee communications and workforce engagement	Head of Communications	CPC

Aim 2 - A council which empowers and cares about people

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

Member Champion: TBC; **Officer Champion:** TBC

Priorities

- P2.1) Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- P2.2) Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- P2.3) Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- P2.4) Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- P2.5) Support all children to have the best start in life
- P2.6) Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs
- P2.7) Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- P2.8) Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

Where we are now

Cheshire East is a prosperous place, but it has pockets of deprivation in income, health and life chances. Standards of education and achievement for our young people are generally high, but some children with additional needs may not achieve their potential. We have an older-than-average, aging population and adults accessing care services have increasingly complex needs.

Opportunities and strengths

- Expand the use of technology-enabled care.
- An extensive and active VCFSE sector
- High standards of education generally
- Fairer charging for services.
- New Leighton hospital campus

Challenges

- Greater than expected growth in both cost and demand pressures for care services.
- Health inequalities, including life expectancy.
- Dedicated Schools Grant, high needs funding, deficit.
- Social care and social worker recruitment
- Fragile care market
- Digital connectivity and exclusion

Drivers for change

- Demand and complexity of need exceeding available funding.
- Technology
- Health and care system integration

Priority	What we will do - Priority actions for 2024/25		Lead Officer	Committee
P2.1	A2.1.1	Support VCFSE to build upon the People Helping People initiative and work collaboratively through 'Growing our communities'.	Head of Communities and Integration	A+H
	A2.1.2	Complete construction of the Traveller transit site	TBC	TBC
	A2.1.3	Support and contribute to the achievements of the borough's eight care communities and neighbourhood partnerships	Head of Communities and Integration	A+H
P2.2	A2.2.1	Focus delivery of targeted activity to reduce alcohol and substance misuse, smoking, domestic abuse and violence and increase healthy eating and physical exercise in areas that experience worse health outcomes.	Director of Public Health	A+H
	A2.2.2	Continue to deliver activity to deliver the Cheshire East Harm and Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2023-2025	Director of Public Health	A+H
	A2.2.3	Continue to deliver activity to deliver the Living Well in Crewe plan	Director of Public Health	A+H
	A2.2.4	Continue to deliver activity to deliver the Cheshire East Place Mental Health Plan 2024-2029	Director of Public Health	A+H
P2.3	A2.3.1	Continue to embed our Signs of Safety practice model	TBC	TBC
	A2.3.2	Update the Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan	Head of Adult Safeguarding	A+H
	A2.3.3	Update the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy	TBC	C+F
P2.4	A2.4.1	Attract more foster carers to support Cheshire East children through the Foster4 collaboration	Head of Provider Services	C+F
	A2.4.2	Prioritise care experienced adults as part of our recovery work to improve employment and training opportunities.	TBC	TBC
	A2.4.3	Deliver the priorities of the Cared for children and care leavers strategy 2022-26	Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers	C+F
P2.5	A2.5.1	Continue to develop services and support offered through Family Hub model and promote the Parenting Journey	Head of Early Years	C+F
	A2.5.2	Continue work to build Crewe Youth Zone	TBC	C+F
	A2.5.3	Continue to deliver the Emotionally Healthy Children and Young People programme	TBC	C+F
P2.6	A2.6.1	Establish and deliver against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan	Strategic lead for SEND and inclusion	C+F
	A2.6.2	Capital programme to increase in-borough provision	Head of Education	C+F
	A2.6.3	Grow organisational capacity to support transformation of SEND support (MTFS 24)	Strategic lead for SEND and inclusion	C+F
P2.7	A2.7.1	Deliver the Kingsbourne Academy primary school in Nantwich	Head of Education	C+F
	A2.7.2	Process primary and secondary applications efficiently, offering parental choice places for as many pupils as possible.	Head of Education	C+F
P2.8	A2.8.1	Investment in Adult Social Care (MTFS 8)	TBC	A+H

Priority	What we will do - Priority actions for 2024/25		Lead Officer	Committee
	A2.8.2	Continue to develop and promote the Shared Lives service	TBC	A+H
	A2.8.3	Use technology to digitally enable people to support themselves the Digital Inclusion Plan 2023 - 2026 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)	TBC	TBC
	A2.8.4	Deliver the objectives of the All Age Carers Strategy 2021-25	TBC	A+H

Aim 3 - A thriving and sustainable place

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

Member Champion: TBC; **Officer Champion:** TBC

Priorities

- P3.1) A great place for people to live, work and visit
- P3.2) Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- P3.3) Reduce impact on the environment
- P3.4) A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- P3.5) Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- P3.6) Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Where we are now

Cheshire East is a thriving area with a strong emphasis on industry, commerce and agriculture and sits at the heart of a region that has one of the strongest science and technology clusters in the UK. The strength of the science sector in Cheshire East is manifested through research and education facilities, such as Jodrell Bank Observatory and leading businesses such as AstraZeneca, Recipharm and the Waters Corporation. Cheshire East is the home to a number of major employers, including Bentley Motors, AO.com and Barclays.

The borough has built and natural heritage that is highly valued by residents, and, along with proximity Greater Manchester and Liverpool and 360° connectivity, makes it a place people want to live.

Economic ambition for the borough was in part built around HS2 Phase 2b and a hub station at Crewe, and the anticipated benefits to inward investment, employment and connectivity that would bring. We now need to refresh our economic and transport strategies in the light of this decision.

Opportunities and strengths

- Handforth Garden Village
- Sub-regional working
- Economic performance exceeds both the regional and national average
- Visitor economy
- Cheshire East boasts one of the strongest GVA's outside of the south east
- Large-scale global employers offering high quality jobs for residents
- The Council has substantial landholdings and property ownerships across the Borough which it can use to influence positive change.

Challenges

- HS2 Phase 2b cancelled
- Funding for highways maintenance
- Limited public transport options
- Demand for planning services

Drivers for change

- Climate change and threats to environment and biodiversity
- Health inequalities
- A growing and ageing population

Priority	What we will do - Priority actions for 2024/25		Lead Officer	Committee
P3.1	A3.1.1	Develop and begin consultation upon 'New style' Local Plan Strategy	Head of Planning	E+C
	A3.1.2	Deliver the Planning Service Improvement Plan	Head of Planning	E+C
	A3.1.3	Deliver cultural development activities, including continued activity towards the Cheshire Archives – a Story Shared project (MTFS 56)	Head of Rural and Cultural Economy	E+G
	A3.1.4	Update the Statement of Licensing Policy	Head of Regulatory Services	Council
P3.2	A3.2.1	Monitor the continued successful delivery of the Cleaner Crewe project.	Head of Neighbourhood Services	E+C
	A3.2.2	Update and deliver the Air Quality Strategy, following consultation.	Head of Regulatory Services	E+C
	A3.2.3	Update the Safer Cheshire East Partnership Plan	TBC	TBC
P3.3	A3.3.1	Continue implementation and monitoring of the Green Spaces Maintenance Policy	Head of Environmental Services	E+C
	A3.3.2	Update the Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Head of Planning	E+C
	A3.3.3	Finalise and implement the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document	Head of Planning	E+C
P3.4	A3.4.1	Complete Bus Service Review and refresh Bus Service Improvement Plan	Head of Strategic Transport and Parking	H+T
	A3.4.2	Deliver an integrated borough-wide demand-responsive transport service (Go-Too and Flexilink)	Head of Strategic Transport and Parking	H+T
	A3.4.3	Secure further funding for active travel routes	Head of Strategic Transport and Parking	H+T
	A3.4.4	Update business cases for Middlewich Eastern Bypass and A500 dualling	Head of Strategic Infrastructure	H+T
P3.5	A3.4.1	Deliver the Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022-26	Head of Rural and Cultural Economy	E+G
	A3.5.2	Continue to deliver Connected Cheshire digital infrastructure	Head of Economic Development	E+G
	A3.5.3	Continue to pursue a compensation package following scrapping of HS2 Phase 2	Programme Director HS2	E+G
	A3.5.4	Develop a clear Place Marketing Approach	Head of Economic Development	E+G
	A3.5.5	Enable the delivery of Handforth Garden Village	Head of Economic Development	E+G
P3.6	A3.6.1	Deliver actions to achieve the objectives of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan 2027 (updated timescale)	Head of Environmental Services	E+C
	A3.6.2	Update the borough-wide Carbon-Neutrality Action Plan 2045 following public consultation	Head of Environmental Services	E+C

How we will report progress

Corporate Policy Committee will receive reports for each Quarter following approval and adoption of the plan, providing updates on delivery of the priority actions detailed under each aim.

In addition, a summary will be provided for other activities that have been identified that contribute to the priorities, aims and vision to give a rounded view of delivery.

The committee will also receive updates on the development of a new strategic plan for the council and the borough for the period 2025-2029.