

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council**
held on Wednesday, 16th July, 2025 in the Council Chamber, SKA
Observatory, Jodrell Bank, Lower Withington, SK11 9FT

PRESENT

Councillor D Edwardes (Mayor/Chair)

Councillor J Snowball (Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Adams, L Anderson, R Bailey, M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, J Bratherton, M Brooks, D Brown, C Browne, L Buchanan, C Bulman, A Burton, R Chadwick, C Chapman, D Clark, J Clowes, A Coiley, N Cook, S Corcoran, L Crane, T Dean, B Drake, S Edgar, M Edwards, H Faddes, A Farrall, R Fletcher, A Gage, S Gardiner, M Goldsmith, M Gorman, K Hague, E Hall, A Harrison, G Hayes, A Heler, S Holland, M Houston, T Jackson, R Kain, A Kolker, N Mannion, G Marshall, A Moran, R Moreton, R Morris, H Moss, M Muldoon, C O'Leary, J Pearson, J Place, B Posnett, J Pratt, J Priest, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes, H Seddon, M Sewart, M Simon, L Smetham, G Smith, J Smith, J Smith, L Smith, R Vernon, L Wardlaw, M Warren, H Whitaker, F Wilson, J Wray and B Wye

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Bird, L Braithwaite, P Coan, K Edwards, E Gilman, D Jefferay, P Redstone and J Saunders.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 7 – Letter from Assurance Panel, in the interest of openness Cllr S Gardiner and Cllr N Mannion declared that they were a member of the Assurance Panel.

In relation to Item 14 Notices of Motion – Housing Targets, in the interest of openness Cllr S Gardiner declared that he was a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

In relation to Item 14 Notices of Motion- Housing Targets, in the interest of openness Cllr N Mannion declared that he was a retired member of the Chartered Institute of Housing.

In relation to Item 14 - Notices of Motion, Cllr A Kolker indicated that he wished to declare a personal pecuniary interest, but he felt unable to publicly state the reason for doing so. Officers advised that the matter could be discussed with the Council's Monitoring Officer, separately. Cllr Kolker stated that he would not take part in the consideration of the Notice of Motion.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Mayor Making and Annual Meeting held on 14 May 2025, and the Special Meeting of Council held on 14 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

24 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to the death in June of Councillor Chris Hilliard and stated that it had been a privilege to attend their funeral. The Mayor invited representatives from each political group to pay tribute and then asked those present to stand for a minute's quiet reflection.

25 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

The Mayor stated that he had decided that the public speakers wishing to speak in relation to the Notice of Motion on Housing Targets would be invited to speak when that item was considered.

Mr Robert Douglas expressed his concern about the loss of detailed Pay-by-Phone car park income data due to a system change and asked if procedures were now in place to ensure that data would not be lost whenever there was any updating or swapping of I.T. systems. Mr Douglas asked whether the impact on footfall in Congleton was due to the increase in car parking charges. He referred to the public consultation on extending car parking charges and stated the results of this had not been discussed at the committee and was enacted via delegated authority. He asked that this be not repeated.

In response Cllr Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that access to real time and historic data from Pay-by-Phone was lost when the Council changed supplier to Ring Go, following a competitive procurement process. The provisions for access to information at the end of this contract had been defined in contract documents, following advice from ICT officers.

The decision to introduce evening and Sunday charging was made in January 2024. The public consultation in August 2024 was therefore only to review operational matters, such as maximum times of stay at car parks. The consultation was not intended to be a review of the January decision. As these changes were operational matters, they would not be discussed by the Highways and Transport Committee, which focused on strategy.

Cllr Goldsmith stated that regarding the Town Centre footfall in Congleton, this was recorded by a company called Visitor Insights, which tracked the total number of connections to local mobile phone masts to track visitor numbers. Cllr Goldsmith undertook to forward the data for Congleton to Mr Douglas. Cllr Goldsmith reported that this data was obtained for all towns

in Cheshire East and encouraged other councillors to seek out the data because it was very informative.

Cllr Goldsmith reported that the data for Congleton showed that from July 2024 onwards there was a footfall increase every year vs the corresponding month in 2023. This increase ranged from 5% to 27%, the latter being over the key Christmas retail period. Therefore, there was no adverse effect on footfall. Additionally, the data showed that council car parks in Congleton were visited +2% between June 2024 and June 2025.

Cllr Goldsmith stated that In January 2024 the Highways and Transport Committee gave authorisation to officers to review and change parking charges depending on inflation and other relevant factors. This is to ensure any changes were conducted in a timely and efficient manner. He stated that no one liked price rises but inflation was a fact of life, and this had to be acknowledged and acted on accordingly. He, therefore, did not expect this procedure to change in future years, where car park tariffs would be reviewed by officers alongside other council fees and charges.

Ms Sue Helliwell asked if this Council could pass on her thanks to all involved in the Linley Road appeal in Alsager as the planning inspectorate had turned down the appeal on the grounds of Cheshire East Council Good Design Guide and stated that this proved beyond reasonable doubt that the design guide document was a fantastic document. Ms Helliwell thanked all involved in writing this document and Councillors for voting in support of it. She asked if the Protected Open Space land at Linley Road would be maintained by Cheshire East Council. She asked what was the latest information on the Cheshire East Local Plan and when residents would know what the call for sites would be, and what were the timings for the Local Plan go out to public consultation.

In response Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, thanked Ms Helliwell for recognising the hard work of the officers, and for her support of the Cheshire East Design Guide and stated that the Council had put great weight on ensuring that new developments were of a high design quality, adhered to strong environmental guidelines and had a focus on place making. It was encouraging that the Planning Inspector took account of these principles in rejecting the recent appeal.

Cllr Seddon stated that the Council would continue to maintain the Linley Road public open space in accordance with the current grounds maintenance policy and the designated classification of the area.

Cllr Seddon stated that the Council was progressing work on a new Local Plan under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, as outlined in the Local Development Scheme 2025-26 and whilst the Council awaited national regulations and policy guidance, expected later this year, was intensifying project planning and undertaking preparatory work, including an initial assessment of sites submitted through the 'Call for Sites' process from last year. These sites would be published in due course as part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which did not confer

any planning status but formed part of the evidence base. It was anticipated that the new regulations would introduce mandatory consultation events, and the Local Development Scheme would be updated accordingly. Residents would be kept informed as the process developed and consultation opportunities are confirmed.

Mr Stuart Redgard asked how the Council complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to planning applications. He stated that he had looked earnestly and could not find any evidence whatsoever that it did. He referred to a development in Wilmslow which had now been completed and stated that there was no access for people with disabilities on the public footpath through the site.

Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee undertook to provide a written response.

26 LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, in summary:

- 1 paid tribute to the late Cllr Chris Hilliard acknowledging their contributions to the work of the Council.
- 2 stated that this council meeting marked one year since he had been elected as Leader and acknowledged the challenges and tough decisions faced over the past year.
- 3 highlighted the Council's reliance on exceptional financial support to balance the 2025-26 budget and warned of a £51m funding gap to 2029
- 4 highlighted the Government's Fair Funding Review consultation and urged councillors to respond
- 5 confirmed that the Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Borough Council remained part of the devolution priority programme for a Mayoral Combined Authority and the Councils had requested that the Mayoral elections move from May 2026 to May 2027.
- 6 referred to the Government's decision to introduce legislation to mandate a leader and cabinet model for councils in England and that the Council would need to prepare for this change
- 7 highlighted the improvements in the Children and Families services following Ofsted monitoring.
- 8 acknowledged the work of councillors and officers in driving the transformation programme.

The Deputy Leader, in summary:

- 1 paid tribute to the late Cllr Chris Hilliard.
- 2 reported that the traCE system would be launched on Wednesday 23 July, which was a new, map-based online tool to report potholes, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and streetlighting and would replace the current Fix My Street platform.
- 3 reported that the Council had received long awaited approval and grant funding from the Government for the Middlewich Eastern Bypass.
- 4 referred to the ongoing regeneration work in Crewe.
- 5 announced the launch of four new community grants - Cost of Living Community Response Fund, Digital Communities Fund, Enabling Prosperity and Wellbeing in Cheshire East Fund and Healthy Neighbourhoods Fund
- 6 reported the launch of a new SEND strategy which had been developed by the Cheshire East 0–25 SEND Partnership.
- 7 reported that additional DfE funding had been secured for supported internships for young people with SEND.
- 8 highlighted that the AI transformation programme was underway which was expected to say £40m over three years. AI would be used in customer services, adult social care and children’s services.
- 9 reported the launch of the “We Still Need You” project for male veterans by Mentell, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.
- 10 highlighted that the Active Travel consultation was open until 31 August 2025.

27 ASSURANCE PANEL PROGRESS UPDATE LETTER

Consideration was given to the update letter from the Chair of the Assurance Panel on the Council’s process since the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in March 2024 and establishment of the Panel in August 2024.

As part of the LGA’s Corporate Peer Challenge process, a one-day revisit had taken place in mid-February 2025, and the revisit report was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council note the progress letter from the Assurance Panel, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge revisit report, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

28 OFFICER DECISION RE FUNDING FOR PHASE 3 OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report on the circumstances around the publication of the Officer Decision Record following an officer decision in relation to funding in respect of the Transformation Programme and the requirement for Council to approve a virement of funds to cover the expenditure approved by Council in February 2025 as part of the MTFS.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1 note the contents of the report, and the opportunity provided by the use of the decision-referral process to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.
- 2 approve a virement of up to £3.5m from earmarked reserves; this potentially to include sums of over £1m but which will not exceed the total virement without a further decision by full Council.

29 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE: CONSTITUTION OFFICER SCHEMES OF DELEGATION

Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Corporate Policy Committee on 12 June 2025 in relation to the Officer Schemes of Delegation in the Constitution.

The revised and expanded officer Schemes of Delegation were aimed at improving clarity, consistency, and accountability in decision-making across the council departments.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1 approve and adopt the new officer Schemes of Delegation, as set out in Appendices A to G to the report, to be incorporated into the Constitution at Chapter 2 Part 5 to replace the existing schemes and the revocation of all former officer schemes of delegation, including local or service specific schemes.
- 2 delegate authority to the Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer to make any minor necessary amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

**30 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE: FINAL
OUTTURN 2024-25 - APPROVAL OF SUPPLEMENTARY REVENUE
ESTIMATES AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Finance Sub Committee held on 2 June 2025 in relation to the approval of supplementary revenue estimates and supplementary capital estimates.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1 approve the Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £1,000,000, as set out in Annex 1, Section 3, Table 1 to the report, as follows:

Children and Families – Core Schools Budget Grant	£2,502,000
Corporate Policy – Housing Benefit Subsidy	£2,231,000

- 2 approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates over £1,000,000 in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules, as set out in Annex 1, Section 4, Table5, as follows:

High Needs Capital Grant	£3,955,823
Local Transport Grant	£7,754,000
Warm Homes Local Grant	£7,792,725

**31 RECOMMENDATION FROM ADULTS AND HEALTH COMMITTEE:
CONNECT TO WORK FUNDING - APPROVAL OF SUPPLEMENTARY
REVENUE ESTIMATE**

Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Adults and Health Committee on 23 June 2025 in relation to the supplementary revenue estimate in relation to the Connect to Work delivery proposals.

RESOLVED:

That Council approve a Supplementary Revenue Estimate of the value of £2,090,769, as referenced in paragraph 35 of the report, over the 2025-2030 financial years.

**32 RECOMMENDATION FROM HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
COMMITTEE: BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - 2025/26
DELIVERY PROGRAMME - APPROVAL OF SUPPLEMENTARY
REVENUE AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Highways and Transport Committee on 19 June 2025 in relation to the supplementary revenue and capital estimates in respect of the Department of Transport Local Bus Grant award for 2025/26.

RESOLVED:

That Council approve the associated, fully funded Supplementary Revenue and Capital Estimates for the value of revenue funding of £2,879,963 and capital funding £2,122,646.

**33 RECOMMENDATION FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:
RECRUITMENT OF CO-OPTED INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Consideration was given to the recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee on 29 May 2025 in relation to extension of the co-opted independent member's term of office to October 2027 so that this would be co terminus with a second co-opted independent members term of office, which would end in October 2027.

RESOLVED:

That Council approve that Mr Ron Jones' term of office as co-opted independent member on the Audit and Governance Committee be extended to October 2027.

34 NOTICES OF MOTION

The Mayor invited Mr Nick Cheetham and Ms Sarah Bradley to speak in relation to the Notice of Motion on Housing Targets.

Mr Cheetham spoke in support of the Notice of Motion on Housing Targets and stated that since December 2024 national housing targets had increased by 2.5 times at the same time the National Planning Framework being revised to increase the housing supply. He noted that the Council had a valid Local Plan and was working on a refresh, but the present Plan no longer met the five-year housing supply, and this was leading to speculative applications from developers often on unprotected or green belt land. He felt this was leading to developer-led rather than a plan-led process.

Ms Bradley referred to the significant number of new builds in Sandbach which had put a strain on local services and caused traffic congestion. She noted that no transport study had been undertaken since 2016. She stated that the current housing targets left the council vulnerable to speculative developments. It was not about stopping development but ensuring a fair distribution of new builds in appropriate places with supporting infrastructure. She urged Members to support the Notice of Motion to request the Government to lower the housing target and to allow time to develop neighbourhood and local plans.

Consideration was given to two Notice of Motion which had been submitted in accordance with the Council's Procedural Rules.

The Mayor stated that he had decided that both Notices of Motion would be dealt with at the meeting.

1 Housing Targets

Proposed by Councillor S Gardiner and Seconded by Councillor S Edgar

“This Council resolves to:

- 3.1 Ask the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to write jointly to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government to firstly seek a reduction in the Housing Target and also to request the creation of a reasonable period of grace within which any shortfall in the Council's land supply may be set aside allowing the full weight of existing Local or Neighbourhood Plans to be applied.”

During the debate two amendments were proposed and seconded and accepted by the proposer and seconder of the Notice of Motion

Amendment 1

Addition of:

- 3.2 Agree that the housing target shall take into account Cheshire East's current planning policies around environmental protection, biodiversity and sustainability, along with a requirement for an increased proportion of social housing, and a requirement that key infrastructure and services such as drainage, flood prevention, and sustainable transport along with provision of primary health care, school places and other key local services are delivered ahead of development.

Amendment 2

Addition of:

- 3.3 Ask that all Cheshire East Council Group Leaders commit to lobbying the LGA (through the respective LGA political group leaders) to take this matter on as an official campaign.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be approved as follows:

This Council

- 3.1 Asks the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to write jointly to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government to firstly seek a reduction in the Housing Target and also to request the creation of a reasonable period of grace within which any shortfall in the Council's land supply may be set aside

allowing the full weight of existing Local or Neighbourhood Plans to be applied.

- 3.2 Agrees that the housing target shall take into account Cheshire East's current planning policies around environmental protection, biodiversity and sustainability, along with a requirement for an increased proportion of social housing, and a requirement that key infrastructure and services such as drainage, flood prevention, and sustainable transport along with provision of primary health care, school places and other key local services are delivered ahead of development.
- 3.3 Asks that all Cheshire East Council Group Leaders commit to lobbying the LGA (through the respective LGA political group leaders) to take this matter on as an official campaign.

2 National Cadet Forces Day

Proposed by Cllr A Harrison and Seconded by Cllr N Cook

"That this Council supports the national campaign to introduce a national 'Cadet Forces Day' on the Tuesday of Armed Forces week and proposes that Cheshire East Councils Leader, Deputy Leader and Leader of the Conservative Group sign a joint letter of support for the campaign to the Armed Forces Minister, Luke Pollard MP."

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be approved.

35 QUESTIONS

Cllr C O'Leary referred to the new pedestrian crossing, installed nine months ago, on the 40mph section of London Road, Lyme Green and stated that the lights and crossing were still not operational and asked if a date could be given when the crossing would be operational.

In response Cllr M Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that the new traffic signals had been installed by the Developer and were ready to be switched on but there was currently a privately owned tree obscuring visibility to one of the signal heads which presented a safety issue. The Council had contacted the developer, who was leading on these discussions with the landowner, for a response. If a response were not forthcoming soon, the Council would utilise its own powers under the Highways Act to cut back the overhanging vegetation and claim the cost back from the landowner.

Cllr G Marshall referred to the Government announcement of support for the Middlewich Eastern Bypass and asked if reassurance could be given that there would be no last minute technical or financial issues which would get in the way of its completion and what was the Chair and the Highways and Transport Committee doing to ensure that any shortfalls could be mitigated.

Cllr M Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that the Council remained committed to completing the Middlewich Eastern Bypass, and envisaged work starting in Spring 2026. The Council was looking into options to bridge any funding gaps, and a report was being prepared and would go to Highways and Transport Committee in September 2025.

Cllr S Bennett-Wake asked for information on funding for the Families Hubs and how it would be spent.

Cllr L Crane, Chair of Children and Families Committee, that a meeting had been set up with officers and more information would be provided following that.

Cllr R Kain asked why the planning department were insisting that an additional feasibility study needed to be carried out on Linley Lane in Alsager regarding flooding under the railway bridge, when funding had already been allocated.

Cllr M Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr A Moran asked if the Council could increase the size of the grey recycling bin to encourage residents to recycle more and to increase the Council's recycling statistics.

Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of Environment and Communities Committee undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr H Whittaker asked if the Council could urgently review its communications strategy during multiagency responses to critical incidents, following recent event at Poynton Train Station.

In response Cllr Nick Mannion, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr S Gardiner referred to the high turnover of senior staff at the Council and asked what efforts were being taken to attract and retain the best people to the roles and if a cross-party Staffing Committee could be set up.

Cllr Nick Mannion, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr A Gage asked if the Council could explain why traders at Crewe Makers Market had been targeted regarding parking issues.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that the Council had a legal responsibility to ensure that roads were kept safe. The ticketed vehicles in questions were abandoned for around 10 minutes and the Council had a duty to ensure that the spaces are kept free and only used for dropping off equipment and moving on and parked appropriately elsewhere. This was part of the Enforcement Team's regular monitoring.

Cllr L Buchanan asked if the prioritisations scores for Crewe Road and Nantwich Road in Nantwich could be appraised with a view to reducing them from 40mph to 30mph and ensure that they were compliant with Active Travel Routes.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that the Council's 2022 Speed Management Strategy set out the Council's ambitions to promote safer road and compliance across the borough and that new reviews of roads of concern could be carried out.

Cllr N Cook asked if the green space maintenance of the Grange Way Estate, Elworth, could be reviewed in line with the Environment and Communities Committee decision in 2024.

Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr L Wardlaw asked if the Leader of the Council would agree that a staff survey should be carried out regarding staff culture.

Cllr Nick Mannion, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr M Brooks asked what steps were Cheshire East Council's Trading Standards taking to enforce the ban on disposable vapes.

In response Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, stated that the Council had a zero-tolerance approach to the supply of single-use vapes and were working with partners to carry out enforcement visits, and so far, had seized over 2000 noncompliant vapes.

Cllr H Moss asked if the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee could explain why not all 20mph School Safe Zones were indicated by flashing lights, and why didn't the primary school in Mobberley have these.

Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr J Place asked if the planning department could ensure that councillors understand what large scale developer's planning constraints were.

Cllr H Seddon, Vice Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Cllr T Dean asked what plans did the Council have to pay off over £100million DCG grant before the 1 April 2028 deadline.

Cllr Nick Mannion, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, responded that the Government had extended the repayment timeline by two years, and the Council was working to improve in-house provision, to reduce travel costs and work with the Government to ensure future policies work for residents.

Cllr C Browne asked when would the Council be installing Acoustic Cameras in Alderley Edge.

In response Cllr Michael Gorman, Chair of Economy and Growth, stated that the Council was still pursuing this, and meetings had been held with partners and that a report was currently being written which will go to the Economy and Growth Committee. He stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner would like to extend this scheme across other parts of the borough if this is successful. Cllr Gorman undertook to provide a written response with more details.

Cllr R Fletcher asked if the criteria used by Cheshire East Council for highways maintenance differentiated in any way between residential roads and roads and footways in the centres of towns? He stated that Lawton Road in the centre of Alsager must be one of the worst maintained roads and footways in England and asked if there was a flaw in the criteria that had made Alsager wait so long for improvements.

In response Cllr Mark Goldsmith, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, stated that all reviews into highways and footways improvements were done on an equitable basis with the worst and busiest roads getting the funding based on legal requirements and stated that there was a lack of funding from central government.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 4.28 pm

Councillor D Edwardes (Mayor/Chair)