CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL : ELECTORAL REVIEW

Submission to the Boundary Committee on Council Size.

1 Context

1.1 This submission sets out Cheshire East Council's proposals on Council size, which is the first issue to be addressed in the Boundary Committee's electoral review of the area. The proposal is for a Council of 82 elected Members in Cheshire East. This will ensure that all roles at political level can be carried out effectively, and will enable the authority to achieve its objective of being an excellent Council.

1.2 Cheshire East is a newly created Unitary Council, delivering or commissioning the full range of Local Authority services in its area. The Council has a population of 360,700 which means it is the third largest Unitary Local Authority in the North West and the twelfth largest Unitary Council in England. The Council covers an area of 116,638 hectares, and employs approximately 14,000 staff with a net budget of £235M.

1.3 The Council's economic output per head of population is above the national average. It has high performing schools with results again above the national average. It is also experiencing significant demographic change. It is projected that by 2026 there will be 5% fewer children than in 2006, and that those 85 years or over will double over the same 20 year period.

1.4 Cheshire East has a diverse rural/urban profile. Nearly 40% of the population live in areas which are classed as rural. Crewe and Macclesfield are the largest urban areas, but the other eight towns although obviously urban have outskirts which contain areas classified as more rural than urban. The area to the north-east of Macclesfield is classified as predominantly rural. A high proportion of the Cheshire East area is rural, including the areas south west of Crewe and Macclesfield. Knutsford is also surrounded by rural areas. The percentages of the population living in urban/rural areas in Cheshire East are:

Urban	18%
Predominantly Urban	14%
More Urban than Rural	29%
More Rural than Urban	23%
Predominantly rural	8%
Rural	8%

This profile places different demands on the Councillors, many of who cover a mix of rural and urban populations, particularly in how they relate affectively to local communities with different characteristics.

1.5 The Council has developed it's Vision, the various aspects of which may be summarised as 'Working Together to Improve Community Life'. It has also developed a set of core values and key behaviours to underpin the

Council's aim of 'having a positive impact on all sections of the communities that we serve'.

1.6 In order to deliver on these aims and Vision, the Council requires clear leadership and full engagement at the Political level. Critical to this will be the number of Councillors available to participate fully in all aspects of the life and work of the Council. This submission sets out proposals which argue for a Council of 82 Members, and the rationale and evidence leading to this conclusion.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The demands placed upon Members and the nature of their roles and responsibilities are significant. They cover engagement with local communities; representational with outside bodies and partner organisations; the corporate role within the Council itself; and political activity within their Party Groups.

2.2 Member engagement with local communities is a key priority for Cheshire East Council, and includes:

- Community leadership - having a presence in the community and representing the interests of the Ward, all sectors of the community and individuals.

- Communicating the Council's policies and services to the community and providing feedback to the Authority

- Carrying out specific Ward-based activities, for example as a Corporate Parent (attendance at award ceremonies for Looked-after children in the Ward; visits to children's homes if located in the Ward) and visits to care homes for Older People.

- Encouraging community interest and participation in the Council's decision making and scrutiny processes

- Participation in the Local Area Partnerships, Neighbourhood Working and the Community Strategy.

2.3 The representational role involves:

- Service on a range of national, regional and local outside bodies, including School Governing Bodies and attendance at Town and Parish Councils in the area.

- Working directly with partner organisations and other statutory bodies, including the Local Strategic Partnership to give political leadership where appropriate and the effective delivery of "joined up" services.

2.4 The corporate role is well established and covers:

- Participation in the full Council and Committee meetings, and overseeing Council performance

- Decision making through the Cabinet and Committees

- Undertaking quasi-judicial and regulatory roles such as licensing and planning

- Holding the Cabinet to account, advice on policy development and review of a range of outside bodies activities through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and "task and finish" enquiries.

- Responding to surges in workload as a result of new legislation.

- Identifying and addressing personal development needs to ensure all of these roles are discharged effectively.

2.5 The political role includes participation in the Party Group meetings and briefings, engagement in regional and national Party Political activities, and for some Members specific roles with the Group eg Group Secretary or Whip.

2.6 The 2008 National Census of Local Authority Councillors published in January 2009 by the Local Government Association and IDeA reveals that on average Councillors spend 22 hours per week on Council related business. In non-Metropolitan Unitary Councils this figure was higher at 26.2 hours. For those Members who hold senior positions such as Council and Group Leaders and Members of the Cabinet, the Census confirms that Council work is a full time occupation. Accordingly the number of Councillors has to be sufficient to allow Members capacity to discharge all of their roles effectively and to have the time to do so. This includes the capacity to engage fully with local communities, which is a key priority for Cheshire East Council.

2.7 Identifying the right Council size will impact directly on the number of people who are willing to come forward to stand for election as a Councillor. Member workloads should be at a reasonable level and should not deter candidates for election simply because the time required is too great, and incompatible with work or caring responsibilities. There must be sufficient capacity at member level to enable all of the Councillor roles to be performed effectively, without giving rise to unmanageable workloads for individual Members. Setting the Council size at the right figure should also encourage people from as many diverse backgrounds as possible to come forward, thereby maximising the level of cross-community representation on the Council.

3 **Political Management of the Council**

3.1 The Council has adopted "Executive arrangements" as required under the Local Government Act 2000. Accordingly, the full Council has agreed the overall policy and planning framework for the Authority and sets the annual

budget, leaving the bulk of the operational decision making to the Executive. The Council has also resolved to adopt the 'Strong Leader' model, whereby the Council Leader once appointed approves the Executive Portfolios, and selects the Members responsible for them. In Cheshire East, the Executive is called The Cabinet, and is of the maximum permitted number of ten Cabinet Members.

3.2 The Council has appointed five Scrutiny Committees to enable the non Executive Members to hold the Cabinet to account, and to conduct external Overview and Scrutiny. The Council has also appointed a number of 'Regulatory Committees' to discharge specific non-Executive functions on its behalf eg Planning, Licensing, etc. These arrangements are set out in the attached structure diagram (Appendix A) and are described in more detail below.

4 The Cabinet

4.1 The Cabinet consists of ten including the Leader covering nine portfolio areas (the Leader has no specific portfolio but one of the portfolio holders is the Deputy Leader). The portfolios are:

- Adult Services
- Children and Family Services
- Health and Wellbeing
- Environmental Services
- Prosperity
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Resources
- Procurement, Assets and Shared Services
- Performance and Capacity

4.2 The Cabinet meets formally at least once per month, to deal collectively with the high level operational and more strategic business, including key decisions of the Authority. Additionally, the Cabinet has adopted a scheme of delegation to the individual Cabinet Members, so that they are able to take decisions as appropriate within their portfolio responsibility. All of these individual meetings are convened formally as public meetings, on a basic six times per year cycle, but more may be required in the light of experience. It is expected that meetings of the full Cabinet and individual portfolio holders will be attended by the relevant Scrutiny Members (primarily the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the related Scrutiny Committee), which will impact on the level of Scrutiny activity (see below).

4.3 The Cabinet also meets informally, both in private and with officers of the Council present (mainly the Cheshire East Corporate Management Team). The purpose of these meetings is to consider and review the Council's political priorities and strategy, and to enable the Cabinet to be briefed on forthcoming business. Experience from the Shadow period leads to the conclusion that at least 20 such meetings will be required each year.

4.4 Cabinet Members may be required to attend meetings of Scrutiny Committees (or Task and Finish Reviews) to account for their decisions. As part of the agreed working arrangements between the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet Members will generally be expected to attend ordinary meetings of the Scrutiny Committee which deals with their area of responsibility.

4.5 In order to create further capacity in the Cabinet, four Cabinet Support Members have been appointed. Their role is to provide additional capacity for the Cabinet, giving direct support to any of the portfolio holders. The Support Members will deputise for Cabinet Members at meetings; work closely with officers on policy development; engage with Overview and Scrutiny; and represent the Cabinet Member at a wide range of partnership and other discussions. Although they cannot take decisions on behalf of the Cabinet Members, their roles will be extensive and are regarded as full-time activity.

5 Council and Committees

5.1 The annual cycle of Committee meetings is based on the pattern of six full Council meetings per year. However, many of the Committees will meet much more frequently than this, for reasons which are described in more detail below.

Overview and Scrutiny

5.2 Overview and Scrutiny is based on a system of five standing Committees, but operates on a flexible basis. The role of the Committees includes not just 'holding the Cabinet to account' but also carrying out advisory work on policy development (the 'Overview' function). The Committees will contribute to the Council's local and partnership working by reflecting the aspirations and concerns of the public and ensuring these are raised appropriately as part of the Council's business. The Committees will take on new roles required by Government including Local Petitions and the Councillor Call for Action. The structure also recognises the significantly increased demands of External Scrutiny, not only of the NHS, but also scrutiny of Local Area Agreement partners, Local Strategic Partnerships and the Crime and Disorder Partnerships. This can potentially involve scrutiny of up to 18 partner organisations in Cheshire East as identified in the Government Guidance. Capacity is required with External Scrutiny to participate in joint Scrutiny arrangements with other Councils, (eg the Cheshire and Wirral Mental Health Partnership Trust Joint Committee) and with other Local Authorities to conduct scrutiny of Regional Health services.

5.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees (including the main areas of responsibility) are:

- Children and Families (Children and Families Portfolio Holder; the Children's Trust and the Local Children's Safeguarding Board)
- Environment and Prosperity (Environmental Services and Prosperity Portfolio Holders)

- Corporate Scrutiny (Performance and Capacity, Resources, and Procurement, Assets and Shared Services Portfolios; and leads on review of Organisational Performance)
- Sustainable Communities (Safer and Stronger Communities Portfolio; Crime and Disorder; Local Area Agreement, Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Partnerships)
- Health and Adult Social Care (Adult Services and Health and Wellbeing Portfolios; Scrutiny of the NHS and jointly commissioned services)

5.4 The Council also appoints six Members to the Joint Scrutiny Committee established with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, to review the provision of services by the Mental Health Partnership Trust across this whole area. The Joint Committee meets a minimum of three times per year.

5.5 Each of these Scrutiny Committees meets a minimum of six times a year (eleven in the case of Health and Adult Social Care). Additional meetings will be required, to deal with unplanned business such as the "call in" of particular Cabinet decisions, ad hoc requests by the Cabinet to undertake policy development work, and specific proposals identified by non Executive Members.

5.6 The Committees are developing their annual work programme, which allows for the appointment of smaller (six or seven Members) 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Reviews of specific topics, which are demanding of Members' time and commitment often to deliver reports within strict timescales. The Committees have reviewed unfinished "legacy" scrutiny business from the predecessor County and District Councils, and have identified a number of topics which require immediate attention, and are included in the annual Scrutiny Work Programme.

5.7 The Council has allocated two places to the Opposition Groups as the Chair/Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committees. The coordination of the Overview and Scrutiny activity is achieved through a bi-monthly meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs (ten Members) which is convened and led by the Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. Although not part of the formal structures, this is a key aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny work, providing capacity to liaise effectively with the Cabinet, external organisations, to prioritise work, and monitor the delivery of the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme.

Planning Board and Committees

5.8 The Council has appointed a Strategic Planning Board to oversee and deal with Planning Strategy, Regional issues, major development applications and the consistent application of development control. It has also appointed a North and a South Planning Committee, both of which will deal with the detailed planning determinations work. Between them the three Committees will hold 51 meetings per year, plus an estimated 20-30 site visits. The meetings are likely to be lengthy due to the volume and complexity of the

business, and the existence of public speaking rights. Contentious planning applications can require extensive briefing and liaison with the community which is demanding for Members in their local representative role. The Members of these Committees will need to undergo formal training and develop a high level of expertise for the work. It is unlikely therefore that these Members will have readily available time to take up many places on other Committees.

Licensing Arrangements

5.9 The Council is required to appoint a Licensing Committee (15 Members) to fulfil its statutory obligations under the licensing legislation. It also has to appoint two Sub-Committees from the Membership of the full Committee. One is a Sub-Committee of three Members to deal with Liquor licensing and gambling applications. The second consists of five Members and deals with all other general licensing matters eg taxi drivers, street trading etc. It is expected that the Chairman or the Vice Chairman of the main Committee will also Chair the Sub-Committee meetings.

5.10 Based on the experience of the last year (2008-9) across the three current District Councils, it is estimated that 25 meetings per year of the Liquor/Gambling Sub-Committee will be needed, with 35 meetings of the General Sub-Committee. These meetings are effectively “hearings” where the Members are discharging “quasi-judicial” functions. Accordingly the level of training and expertise required will be high and, again, it is anticipated that these 15 Members will have little or no capacity to serve on other Committees.

Other Committees

5.11 The Council has appointed a number of other Committees to discharge functions on its behalf. They too will meet on the basic Council cycle of six meetings per year, except for the Staffing Committee and the Appeals Committee which are set to meet monthly. The Committees are:

- Governance and Constitution Committee
- Standards Committee (a statutory requirement including Independent Members and eight Members of the Council). The Standards Committee is required to form three Sub-Committees to deal with the initial assessment of any complaints raised against Members; review of decisions whether or not to investigate; and to conduct hearings. As a Unitary Council, the Standards Committee will also be responsible for dealing with any complaints made against Town and Parish Councillors in the whole area. There are currently 108 such bodies in the area, involving 953 Town and Parish Councillors, so the workload although unquantifiable in advance, could potentially be high.
- Public Rights of Way Committee (a Regulatory body).
- Lay Members Appointments Committee (to appoint Lay Members to Committees which determine School Admission and Exclusion Appeals).

- Staffing Committee (dealing with appointments, discipline and other staff related matters)
- Appeals Committee (dealing with Appeals from Members of the public eg for School Transport; under the Marriage Act; and Appeals under the Social Services legislation)

5.12 Given the 'specialist' nature of the work carried out by many of these Committees, the Councillors who sit on them will have undertaken intensive training. Indeed, this is a requirement, eg for Members dealing with applications to the Planning Board and Committees and to the Licensing Committee and Sub-Committees. Therefore the Members engaged in these Committees will tend to be 'experts' in their area, requiring a high degree of commitment both in attending meetings, maintaining skills, and awareness of local issues. Members on these Committees will spend a great deal of their time on these specialist areas, meaning that the remainder of the non-Executive Councillors will have to be sufficient to cover the other Committee business especially Scrutiny.

6 Places on Committees - Member Bodies - Overview

6.1 The formal political management structure of the Council with the places allocated to the party Groups is attached (Appendix B). There is a total of 185 places and therefore resulting Members roles available (171 as shown, plus the Standards Committee (8) and the Wirral Joint Scrutiny Committee (6). It is generally accepted that the Cabinet should be discounted from the number of Members available to take up the places (as they are full time posts and therefore Cabinet Members do not normally sit on Committees - indeed they are not allowed to sit on Scrutiny Committees). The Council would take the view that the Cabinet Support Members (4) would be similarly placed so 14 Members in total would not take up Committee seats.

6.2 As indicated above (paragraphs 5.8 and 5.10) it is not expected that Planning and in particular Licensing Committee Members would be able to do much if any additional Committee work. Accordingly the assumption is made that overall across both Committees a further 15 Members would not be available to take other Committee seats. In addition, the Mayor of the Council will have to fulfil a full programme of Civic events and engagements, so his or her ability to take up Committee roles is very limited, and the Mayor should also be excluded from the calculation. Taken with the Cabinet therefore, 30 Members should be excluded from carrying out roles across the Committees. Removing the Licensing and Planning places from the equation, the places to be filled are reduced to 170 (185-15).

6.3 The 2008 Census of Councillors provided data which indicates that across all Authorities, members hold on average 3.7 Committee or Sub-Committee places. The Cheshire East Structure discussed above deals only with Committee places, and an additional allowance needs to be made for Members work on Task Groups, Task and Finish Panels and Sub Committees. Accordingly it is proposed that the appropriate number of

committee places for Cheshire East Councillors should be between 3 and 4, in addition to their other extensive responsibilities as a Councillor.

6.4 Using this as the standard, each Member sitting on 3 - 4 Committees indicates that around 50 Councillors would be required for this "formal Committee" activity (170 places). Adding back the 30 Members above suggests that a least 80 Councillors would be required, so a total Council size of 82 as proposed would be sustainable for Cheshire East.

6.5 Many Councils consider that generally each non-Executive Member should attend an average of around three formal Committee meetings per month and that this represents a manageable workload. The Cheshire East Calendar for 2009-10 (Appendix C attached) provides for a total of 130 (including Staffing) Committee meetings (plus six full Council meetings) in the year. Each of the 50 or so Members identified above taking 3 - 4 places results in an average attendance of approximately three meetings per month for each Member. This indication would also tend to confirm the proposal that a Council size around 82 is right.

7 Task Groups and Briefings

7.1 The Unitary Councillors are also required to participate in a wide range of informal, non decision making meetings. Some of these meetings will be 'ad hoc' but many of them will be organised on a more structured basis. Examples of this form of working are:

- Member Task Groups, which are set up to examine specific topics in detail and bring forward recommendations. These include Task Groups for Member Development; making Appointments to Outside Bodies; School Governor Appointments; Liaison with Manchester Airport; Partnerships Working Group; Local Development Framework; Children and Adult Services; Information Technology; and Leisure Services Review.

- Briefings for Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Committees and "mid-Point" Meetings for Scrutiny Committees, in advance of formal meetings. Briefings will be convened so that the Cabinet Member, or Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman, and the Opposition Group representatives on Committees may be briefed collectively by the Officers on the business for forthcoming Cabinet or Committee meetings. For Scrutiny Committees, a Mid-Point discussion takes place between the formal Committee meetings, so that the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Spokesmen on the Committee can review the forthcoming business, and check progress on Scrutiny work within their area of responsibility.

7.2 Following the Council calendar, in total approaching 100 such briefings could take place for Committees annually; and 30 Mid Point Meetings in the Scrutiny area. Capacity is therefore required for Members

taking formal posts or places in the structure to undertake this associated work.

7.3 At a less formal level, Cabinet Members, Chairmen (and less frequently) Opposition Members will meet with Directors and Heads of Service to be briefed on forthcoming business and officer proposals. This activity is more difficult to quantify, but represents a regular and ongoing commitment on the part of the leading Members.

7.4 All of this less formal Member-level activity plays a highly important role in the efficient running of the Council. It impacts on all of the office holders and the overall capacity of the Council at the political level.

8 Councillor Representation on Outside Organisations

8.1 The full Council and the Cabinet make appointments to a very wide range of outside organisations. The number of Cheshire East representatives required for any particular body will vary, from one Councillor up to four or five in some cases and even eight in the case of Cheshire Fire Authority. These organisations range from bodies of National and Regional significance (eg the Local Government Association (including appointments by the Association itself to it's own internal Member bodies), Regional Economic and Strategic Planning Bodies, Partnership Organisations; other public bodies such as the Police Authority; Housing Bodies (Registered Social Landlords); Museums and Charitable Trusts; Tourism Bodies and Educational Associations. The impact on Members' time of this representational work should not be underestimated. Members of the Police Authority can spend up to 1.5 days per week on Authority business. Similarly the Fire Authority (one day per week); National Parks Authority (one day); and Housing Trusts are similarly demanding of Members time and capacity.

8.2 The Cabinet has reserved to itself appointments to 43 Outside Organisations, involving a total of 86 places, all of which are taken up by the Controlling Group.

8.3 On behalf of the full Council, the Governance and Constitution Committee has made appointments to a further 80 such Organisations, requiring 122 places to be taken up by Unitary Councillors. In total therefore, 208 Member appointments have to be covered. It is estimated that ideally, individual Councillors should be asked to serve on an average of no more than three outside bodies in order to cope with the additional demands on their time. A Council of 82 would therefore be able to cover 224 Outside body appointments on a reasonable basis.

8.4 This work is still ongoing, and more appointments will need to be made. However, these are personal responsibilities requiring the regular attendance of the Councillors at additional meetings, and their full involvement in the business of the organisations concerned. In some cases, this can involve Trustee and/or Director Status which carries a further degree of personal accountability. It is critical that sufficient Members are available to

provide the capacity for the Council to participate effectively in the activities of these outside organisations, given the impact which they have on the Cheshire East community.

8.5 In addition, all Councillors are expected to take up appointments as Local Authority governors on School Governing Bodies. There are 152 schools in the Cheshire East area with a total of 366 Local Authority Governor places. Clearly not all of these appointments will be taken by elected Members, but each Councillor can take up places without limit on school governing bodies. As these bodies meet at least termly, and most will appoint Sub-Committees which meet more frequently, a Councillor serving on (say) two Governing bodies would need to make time for possibly 10-12 such meetings per year.

8.6 Although not strictly outside Organisations, there is a number of important Annual National Conferences covering particular professional activity (eg Children, Adults Services) and areas of common interest (Urban and Rural issues, the Environment etc) which Councillors need to attend. The attached list (Appendix D) shows the main "Standing" Annual conferences which require the attendance of between 1 - 4 Members on each occasion. In addition, "ad hoc" conferences arise periodically which also require attendance by the relevant Members. As these generally involve a degree of travel and overnight stays, they have a significant impact on Members' time commitments.

8.7 It should also be noted that as Cheshire East covers a large geographical area, the demands on Members time for travel to headquarters buildings, outside bodies, partner organisations and other meetings even within the area are also significant. To illustrate the point, Macclesfield to Sandbach (15 miles) takes 45 minutes; Macclesfield to Crewe (22 miles) is a one hour journey; and some journeys from the edge of the Cheshire East area such as Poynton, Disley and Nantwich will take 15-30 minutes longer.

9 **Member Development and Training**

9.1 As outlined in the introduction to this submission, Cheshire East is a substantial and newly formed Unitary Council, delivering or commissioning the full range of Local Authority services across the community. The Councillors' main corporate role in this is predominantly to agree the Policy and Strategy framework, and ensure effective delivery. Sufficient Councillors must be available to engage effectively in this activity, not just at the higher strategic level, but also overseeing operational matters and understanding the complexities of the Services concerned.

9.2 The Member Development Programme is the vehicle for enabling Councillors to develop their knowledge and personal skills in order to carry out their varied roles and to contribute effectively in their particular areas of interest. The other pressures on Members time mean that the 'pool' of Councillors must be big enough for the required levels of collective knowledge and expertise at Political level to be achieved. Too few Members means that

there is not enough time for the Councillors to attend and learn from Member Development activity, which would diminish effective participation in the Council's business at the Member level.

9.3 The Council has appointed a Member Development Task Group to oversee the Member Development Programme. The Council has also decided to seek early accreditation under the North West Employers Organisation Member Development Charter. As part of this initiative, all shadow Councillors have been contacted individually to identify their personal development needs. It is intended that during 2009, 75% of Cheshire East Members will have been interviewed and committed to achieving their own Personal Development Plan. In addition, 14 half or full day Member Development Seminars have been arranged between April 2009 - February 2010. There will without doubt be many further external opportunities for Members to attend courses each year, including IDeA Leadership and Scrutiny Programmes. It is understood that Members will need to dedicate ongoing time for this important activity, estimated at two hours per week particularly in specialist areas.

10 **Local and Partnership Working**

10.1 Achieving effective local working and relationships with local communities is a key priority for the Council. It is intended that Members should be able to devote a significant amount of their time in their local roles, in order to deliver effective community leadership and make an impact. The level of engagement required with Town and Parish Councils and partner bodies is discussed below (Section 11). This part of the submission is more concerned with the Council's own arrangements for area and neighbourhood working, and the demands to be placed on Members. It is essential that sufficient Councillor capacity is available to carry out these roles.

10.2 The Council's approach to local working is at two levels - neighbourhoods and Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). There is already extensive neighbourhood activity across the Borough. These arrangements vary, depending on the local area's needs and how the community choose to organise themselves. They include Town and Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Management Areas, market town initiatives, and other community-led partnerships. The Council intends to build on these varying approaches to build the capacity of communities to lead partnerships, and link effectively into the Local Strategic Partnership framework. Elected Members will have a pivotal role in this, with Ward Councillors engaging effectively with these local initiatives, providing leadership and acting as an advocate for the area - particularly through the LAP. A number of pilots have been set up by the Council to help to develop this approach.

10.3 The Council has established seven LAPs focussed on the main towns in Cheshire East and their surrounding areas (Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Poynton and Wilmslow). The overall objective of the LAPs is to prepare an Annual Delivery Plan, which amalgamates Parish and

Neighbourhood Plans produced more locally, and articulates the local response to the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

10.4 To achieve this objective, the LAPs will build partnerships with a range of organisations, encourage Community Action meetings and secure community engagement in local issues and decision-making. They will provide opportunities for local empowerment; and they will have a role in service delivery eg locally based commissioning; "joined-up" public services in the area; developing area profiles; and in due course carrying out delegated responsibilities.

10.5 Each LAP will act as a "mini Local Strategic Partnership" and include representation from a range of public bodies, including Cheshire East Council, where in the order of 20% of the Councillors for the area will be involved directly as representatives - about 18 Members in total. There will also be a standing invitation to all Councillors in the LAP areas to attend and act as an advocate on specific issues. Some of the LAPs will be Chaired at least initially by a Unitary Councillor, thereby carrying further responsibilities. In addition, each LAP will be attended by a Cabinet Member to provide a link to the Council's Executive. The nature of the business will determine which Cabinet Member is best suited to attend. Accordingly, around 25 elected Councillors will be directly involved in this work, as well as the need for all Members of the Council to engage effectively with the neighbourhood activity. Beyond 7-8 meetings of each of the seven LAPs (over 50 meetings per year), it is difficult to quantify the number of meetings involved, but clearly there will be a substantial workload for members arising from this activity.

10.6 It is also worth noting that the LAP boundaries drawn around the seven towns generally follow the current Ward boundaries for the Council. Some initial work has been done on how many Cheshire East Councillors would be appropriate for each LAP area, and how the LAP areas might be used as the envelope within which new Wards can be designed. Whilst recognising that the statistical work leading to conclusions about Council size is not an exact science, it does demonstrate a need for in the order of 80-85 Members, and the preliminary assessment of the optimum number in respect of LAP boundaries again leads to a figure of 82.

11 **The Unitary Council**

11.1 The change from two-tier to a Unitary Council has implications for Members workloads as well as the capacity to acquire new knowledge and skills. The Unitary Council brings together the functions of Cheshire County and the three District Councils in the area. In the two-tier setting there were 27 County Councillors plus 164 District Councillors covering the area, a total of 191 Members. There is potential therefore for the inevitable reduction in the number of Members elected for the area to impact substantially on individual Member workloads. This is particularly so as much of the casework concerns very local issues and has in the past been dealt with mainly by District Councillors.

11.2 Clearly the replication of 191 Councillors is not the objective, and the Unitary Council will be a different type of local Authority, working in different ways and deriving capacity from high levels of joint and partnership working. However settling on the right number of Councillors will be fundamental to the success of the Council and achieving excellent performance.

11.3 As a significant element of Members' work arises from local activity, particularly engaging with electors including home visits and holding "surgeries" for electors to raise their issues, together with managing a Ward based caseload, the Councillor/Elector ratio will need to be at a level where individual Councillors are not accountable to too high a number of electors and therefore in danger of an unmanageable caseload arising from Ward business. This is particularly true in Wards with high indicators of social or community deprivation where the demands placed upon Councillors can be higher than elsewhere.

11.4 Given that there are 108 Town and Parish Councils in Cheshire East, involving 953 Town and Parish Councillors, the potential for the Council to work closely with these bodies is great. However, local Member capacity needs to be at a level to enable this to happen effectively. The Parishes are not spread evenly across the unitary area, in that currently there are ten unparished Wards, with seven more coinciding with the area of single Town Councils. The remaining ten Wards have 101 Parishes between them, on a range of 27 (Cholmondeley) and 19 (Bucklow) to 3 (Presbury/Tytherington) and 4 (Rope). This means that in the parished areas, the Unitary Councillors have much to do to maintain and develop good working relationships with the local Councils. Conversely, in the non-parished areas, the Councillors have to develop neighbourhood working through other networks such as community groups and community action meetings; and local associations. Both scenarios represent a heavy demand on Members time, and relate back to the urban/rural diversity which characterises the Cheshire East area. Unitary Councillors are expected to forge close links with local Councils, which includes attendance at their meetings and "area meetings" of Parish Councils collectively. The expectation is that Unitary Councillors will attend Parish Councils monthly so this is a significant commitment for them, particularly in the highly parished areas.

11.5 In addition to the Town and Parish Council meetings themselves, the Cheshire Association of Local Councils currently convenes three collective area meetings of Parish Councils in Cheshire East each of which occur quarterly. All of the Unitary Councillors for the areas concerned are asked to attend these quarterly meetings.

11.6 On top of this, Charter Trustees have been created for unparished areas of Macclesfield Town and Crewe Town. This involves 12 Unitary Councillors in Crewe and 15 in Macclesfield fulfilling the role of Charter Trustees, in particular electing one of their number as Mayor, and attending at least one and probably more meetings of the Charter Trustees each year. In due course the Charter Trustees will be replaced by new Town Councils for

both areas. This process involves extensive public consultation through a Community Governance Review, and is likely to take some time to achieve.

11.7 All of this Town and Parish Council-related activity is further evidence of the need to ensure that sufficient numbers of Councillors are available to be able to cope effectively with locally based demands made on them. Furthermore it is necessary to ensure that a sensible Councillor/elector ratio is achieved.

12 **Councillor Workloads**

12.1 As indicated in para 2.6 above, on average across all authorities councillors spend 22 hours per week on council business. This figure increases to 26.2 hours in non-Metropolitan Unitary Councils. (The return made by Cheshire county councillors for 2008 was somewhat higher at 28 hours). This time is broken down into attendance at council meetings, Committees etc ten hours; external meetings, seminars and training six hours; and local working (including dealing with electors) eight hours. These figures apply to the general work of councillors, rather than the more senior Members for whom the demands amount to full-time work.

12.2 The analysis above would indicate that on average Cheshire East Members will attend up to one formal Committee meeting per week, plus Task Groups, Panels and Briefings. As any meeting can involve attendance of up to two hours, plus preparation and travelling of a further two hours, it is not difficult to see that members can easily spend ten hours per week on such activities.

12.3 External activities include representation on Outside Bodies (three per member) and School Governing Bodies which including travel and preparation would amount to at least four hours per week. Personal development activities are estimated to require two hours each week.

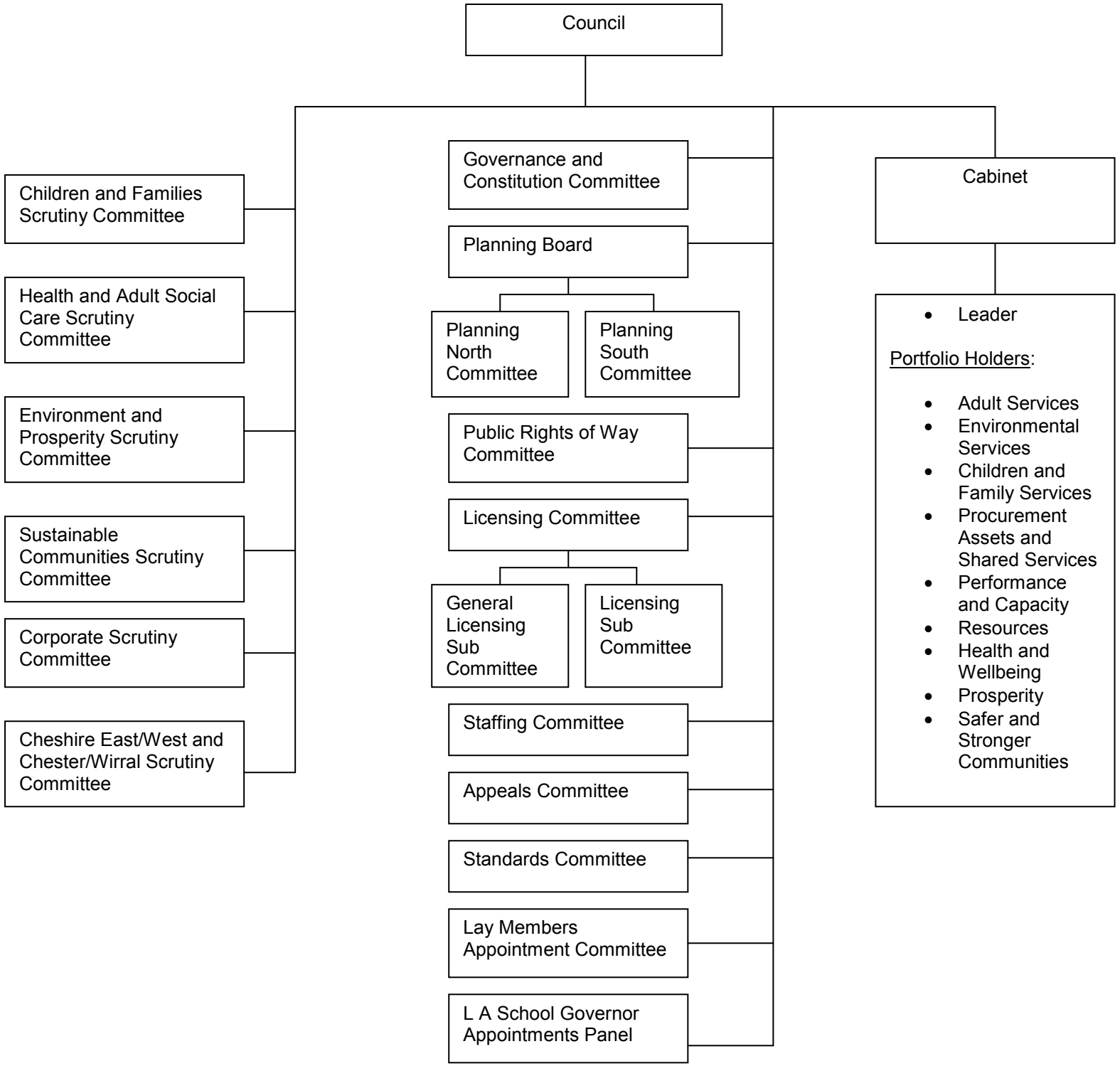
12.4 The whole area of local working is likely to be particularly demanding, in line with the Council's objective of engaging all Members fully in this work. Contact with even 5-10% of their electors will readily amount at the minimum to three hours per week. The average across the whole Council for attendance at LAP meetings and related business is calculated to be two hours. Attendance at Neighbourhood meetings (especially for those Members with Parish Councils in their Wards) and local networking is likely to require five hours per week.

12.5 Taking all of this activity together amounts to 26 hours on average per week for each Councillor, broadly in line with the national Census returns. These commitments further justify the proposal for a Council of 82 Members so that workload can be carried equitably across the Members as a whole and there is capacity to make the time commitments involved, and to operate effectively as elected Members.

13 **Conclusion**

13.1 82 Councillors for Cheshire East would give a ratio of 3497 electors per Councillor, which is not dissimilar from the ratio found in a number of other Unitary authorities of a comparable nature. It is proposed that this would be an appropriate ratio and the right number of Councillors for Cheshire East Council.

APPENDIX A


Council
Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Cheshire East/West and Chester/Wirral Scrutiny Committee
Governance and Constitution Committee
Planning Board
Planning North Committee
Planning South Committee
Public Rights of Way Committee
Licensing Committee
General Licensing Sub Committee
Licensing Sub Committee
Staffing Committee
Appeals Committee
Standards Committee
Lay Members Appointment Committee
L A School Governor Appointments Panel
Cabinet
Leader
Portfolio Holders:
Adult Services
Environmental Services
Children and Family Services
Procurement Assets and Shared Services
Performance and Capacity
Resources
Health and Wellbeing
Prosperity
Safer and Stronger Communities

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITIES

Committee	Con	Lib Dem	Lab	Ind	Total
Children and Families Scrutiny	10	2	1	1	
Health/Adult Social Care Scrutiny	10	2	1	1	
Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny	10	2	1	1	
Sustainable Communities Scrutiny	10	2	1	1	
Corporate Scrutiny	10	2	1	1	
Strategic Planning Board	10	2	1	1	
North Planning Committee	11	2	1	1	
South Planning Committee	11	2	1	1	
Licensing Committee	11	2	1	1	
Governance and Constitution	10	2	1	1	
Public Rights of Way	5	1	1	0	
Staffing	5	1	1	0	
Appeals	5	1	1	0	
Lay Members Appointments	5	1	1	0	
Total Places (Actual)	123	24	14	10	171

NB:
Cabinet and Standards Committee are outside the proportionality rules.

APPENDIX C

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Council (Thursday) * **	**1* 2**			**23**			**15****		**17**		**25**		**22**	
Cabinet (Tuesday) 2.00pm - venues to be confirmed	**21**	**19**	**16**	**14**	**11**	**8**	**6**	**3**	**1 22+**	**19**	**16**	**16**	**20#**	**18**
Governance and Constitution Committee (Thursday) 2.00 pm Westfields, Sandbach	**16**	**21**		**9**		**24**		**19**		**28**		**25**		
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny (Wednesday) 10.00 am Westfields, Sandbach	**29**	**20**	**24**	**29**		**16**	**21**	**18**	**16**	**13**	**10**	**10**	**14**	
CE/CWAC/Wirral Joint Scrutiny Committee Dates and venues tba		**7 (provisional)**												
Corporate Scrutiny (Monday) 10.30 am Westfields, Sandbach		**5 (Tu)**		**13**		**1 (Tu)**		**9**		**11**		**15**		
Children and Families Scrutiny (Monday) 10.30 am Westfields, Sandbach		**11**		**6**		**14**		**16**		**18**		**22**		
Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny (Weds) 10.30 am Westfields, Sandbach		**13**		**8**		**23**		**25**		**20**		**24**		
Sustainable Communities Scrutiny (Thursday) 10.30 am Westfields, Sandbach		**14**		**9**		**17**		**19**		**21**		**25**		

APPENDIX C

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Standards Committee (Monday) 10.30 am Westfields, Sandbach		**18**		**13**		**21**		**23**		**25**		**29**		
Staffing Committee 1.00 pm		**7**												
Appeals Committee (Thursday) 2.00 pm	**23**	**28**	**25**	**30**	**27**	**24**	**29**	**26**		**14**	**25**	**25**	**29**	
Public Rights of Way Committee (Monday) 2.00 pm			**1**			**7**			**7**			**1**		
Strategic Planning Board ## (Wednesday) 2.00pm Westfields, Sandbach	**15**	**6** **27**	**17**	**8** **29**	**19**	**9** **30**	**21**	**11**	**2** **23**	**20**	**10**	**3** **24**		
Northern Planning Committee ## (Wednesday) 2.00 pm Town Hall, Macclesfield	**8** **29**	**20**	**10**	**1** **22**	**12**	**2** **23**	**14**	**4** **25**	**16**	**13**	**3** **24**	**17**		
Southern Planning Committee ## (Wednesday) 2.00 pm Municipal Buildings, Crewe	**22**	**13**	**3** **24**	**15**	**5** **26**	**16**	**7** **28**	**18**	**9**	**6** **27**	**17**	**10** **31**		
Licensing (Monday) 2.00pm Westfields, Sandbach	**20**			**20**			**19**			**18**				
OUTSIDE BODIES/OTHER BODIES														
Police Authority (Tuesday)	**7**		**30**			**29**			**15**		**23**		**13**	
Manchester Airport Consultative Committee	**17**			**10**			**23**			**15**			**16**	

(Friday) – 10.00 am														
LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition			**30**	**1,2**										

NOTES

*** Mayor Making meeting – 11.15 am at Tatton Park, near Knutsford.**

+ 3 week gap between Cabinet meetings to accommodate Christmas break rather than having a meeting early in the New Year which will mean paperwork has to be distributed over Christmas.

 # 5 week gap to avoid clash with Police Authority Annual Meeting.

**** dependent on which body has authority to agree the Closure of Accounts – if this remains the responsibility of Council the Council date will need to move to September.**

***** Council meeting details as below:**

- **2 April, 23 July and 15 October 2009 and 22 April 2010 at 6.00 pm;**
- **17 December 2009, 25 February 2010 at 2.00 pm.**

No dates have been included for Individual Portfolio Holder meetings at this stage.

European Elections on 4 June.

Health Scrutiny meetings are on dates that are convenient for the Primary Care Trust which is represented at meetings and have a start time of 10.00 am which reflects the amount of business based on experience from the County Council committee.

Strategic Planning Board (SPB) and both Planning Committees are listed as starting at 2.00 pm which was the proposal from the Strategic Planning Board's first meeting held on 4 March. The SPB also agreed a programme of meetings up to December 2009, the Calendar above is based on those dates subject to the removal of the meeting listed for 30 December and extending the dates to March based on the pattern agreed at SPB on 4 March.

Appeals Committee to meet monthly based on advice of Governance Lead Officer and pattern of current County Council Appeals Committee meetings.

Other Committees/bodies

General Licensing Sub-Committee)
Licensing Sub-Committee) to meet as and when required
Standards Assessment Sub-Committee)
Standards Review Sub-Committee)
Standards Hearing Sub-Committee)
Lay Members Appointments Committee)
Independent Remuneration Panel)

BANK HOLIDAYS

2009
Good Friday 10 April
Easter Monday 13 April
Christmas Day Friday 25 December,
Boxing Day Monday 28 December

2010
Good Friday – 2 April
Easter Monday – 5 April

DJF/200309
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SCHEDULE OF APPROVED ANNUAL CONFERENCES

CONFERENCE
North of England Education Conference (January)
Delivering Sustainable Communities Conference (March)
Public Sector People Management Association (PPMA. formerly SOCPO) Annual Conference (April)
f40 Spring Conference (May)
CIPFA Conference (June)
Trading Standards Conference (June)
LGA Annual Conference (July)
4NW Annual Conference (July)
Public Sector People Management Association (PPMA. formerly SOCPO) Northern Regional Conference (September)
RiP/RiPfA Seminar (February)
LGA Annual Rural Conference (September)
Annual Libraries Conference (October)
DICIDA (Development Initiative for Chemical Dependent Areas) (October)
National Standards Board Conference (October)
National Conference for Children and Adult Services (October)
LGA Annual Local Government Finance Conference (December)
North West Employers Organisation Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Network
Network for Lead Members of Children's Services