

Officer Response to Issues identified in Fight for Middlewich Petition

Note: The issues listed in the second column have been extracted (in most cases) verbatim from the paper petition and/or the petition which ran on Change.org. Any variation in the wording is due to the amalgamation of the two statements.

The relevant Cheshire East Service Committee or external body has been identified in column four; where the description of an issue is non-specific, a 'best fit' approach has been applied.

	Issue	Relevant Service Committee/External body	Council Response
1	No Landfill	Environment and Communities Committee	<p>The Environmental Hub in Middlewich has enabled the end of the use of landfill within the Borough. All household waste collected at kerbside is now directed to a waste to energy plant outside the Borough as a more sustainable route for disposal than landfill.</p> <p>The ending of landfilling of kerbside collected waste has reduced the future need for landfill in the borough. The Council is not aware of any proposals for new landfill sites around Middlewich within the borough. If a landowner or developer wished to bring forward a proposal it would be subject to the planning process.</p> <p>The draft Minerals and Waste Plan (part of the Cheshire East Local Plan) is due to be published for consultation soon. The Plan explains that the management of waste hierarchy identified in national planning guidance gives the highest priority to reducing the amount of waste that is produced in the first place through prevention and minimisation. When waste is created, priority for its management is as follows: preparing it for re-use, then recycling (including composting), then recovery (including energy generation), and last of all disposal (for example to landfill). It does, however, recognise that the current Waste Needs Assessment findings mean that the Minerals and Waste Plan should seek to make provision for a landfill site within the borough unless appropriate additional capacity can be identified in nearby other areas outside of Cheshire East.</p>

	Issue	Relevant Service Committee/External body	Council Response
2	Retain our tip	Environment and Communities Committee	There are no proposals to close Middlewich household waste recycling centre.
3	No super tip on ANSA land	Environment and Communities Committee	There are no plans to replace Middlewich Household Waste Recycling Centre to land adjacent to the Environmental Hub site.
4	Swimming Pool built with Everybody Leisure Centre & better sports facilities	Environment and Communities Committee	<p>Middlewich is within the catchment area and 10 minutes' drive of Sandbach Leisure Centre and Winsford Lifestyle Centre, both of which provide swimming pools.</p> <p>The Cheshire East Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy sets out what indoor sports facilities, including swimming pools, will be required to meet future needs within the borough. The strategy advises that anticipated population growth will create demand for 0.5 lanes of a swimming pool which currently does not meet the criteria for a new swimming pool in Middlewich. A new pool would cost in the region of £5 million to £10 million.</p>
5	S106 monies correctly given to Middlewich for the new houses which have a Middlewich postcode	Environment and Communities Committee	<p>Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables a local planning authority to enter into a negotiated agreement or planning obligation to mitigate the impact of a specific development and make it acceptable in planning terms. The planning obligation might, for example, require the provision or contribution to a new or improved road, school, health facility, affordable housing, or local parks.</p> <p>For Middlewich wards, the Council is currently holding a total value of s106 contributions of £874,444. This figure is broken down against the broad categories that the money is required to be spent on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology £10,986 • Highways £397,418 • Greenspaces £466,039

			<p>Contributions are linked to specific projects in accordance with the legal agreement between the council and the developer following the granting of planning permission. The contributions cannot be used for purposes outside of the agreed purposes. Copies of relevant legal agreements setting out the purpose of the contribution can be provided on request.</p> <p>There are a number of steps to be followed before the projects can be implemented. These can include planning applications, project planning, and consultation with residents and town and parish councils.</p>
6	More infrastructure in line with growing population and business support,	<p>Dependent on what is meant by infrastructure, could fall -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside the Council's responsibilities • To Highways and Transport Committee • To Environment and Communities Committee • To Economy and Growth Committee 	<p>One of the most significant infrastructure projects within the borough is the Middlewich Eastern Bypass. The scheme is important for the delivery of local jobs on Mid Point 18 development site and will help relieve congestion in the town centre.</p> <p>The Council has led the development of the scheme and has forward funded all the design and development work for this much needed piece of infrastructure, including gaining planning permission.</p> <p>Work is now underway in acquiring all the land and rights to deliver the scheme and to prepare the Full Business Case for the delivery of the DfT grant.</p> <p>Developer contributions are sought by the Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and through legal agreements via Section 106 planning obligations.</p> <p>The Community Infrastructure Levy is a planning charge that local authorities can use to help fund the infrastructure needed to support the development of the borough. The definition of infrastructure allows a broad range of facilities to be funded such as play areas, open spaces, parks, and green spaces, cultural and sports facilities, as well as those relating to transport, health, and education.</p>

			<p>Infrastructure priorities and decisions on CIL spending are made annually through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) process rather than a separate CIL governance process. The MTFS is a rolling four-year programme that identifies how the Council's budget will be spent to meet its corporate objectives. This includes the infrastructure projects that will be delivered through the capital programme.</p> <p>Cheshire East has been working up Town Centre Vitality Plans for the main service centres, including Middlewich.</p> <p>A briefing has been held for Ward Members to attend, whilst a follow up briefing for the Town Council is due to be completed. There will then be 6 weeks of public consultation before seeking an endorsement at a meeting of Economy & Growth Committee (likely January 23).</p>
7	Youth provisions for over 12s and financial support for under 12s	Children and Families Committee	<p>Across the borough, the Youth Support Service provides street-based youth work, one to one support for young people, and a dedicated project groups for young people with particular needs, e.g. special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).</p> <p>The council's Youth Support Service, in conjunction with local young people, the council's Communities Team, Middlewich Town Council, Cheshire East Social Action Partnership, Youth Fed, and local volunteers, have set up a new youth group for young people in Middlewich which started in June 2022. The group runs on a Wednesday evening, 6.00-8.00pm at the Victoria Hall, Civic Way, Middlewich CW10 9AT and is open to children and young people aged 12-16.</p> <p>£2,203,892 of household support fund is available in Cheshire East between April and October 2022-23 to support lower income households in the borough with food, utilities, housing costs and other essentials. Eligibility for the programme spans across a wide</p>

			<p>range of financially vulnerable groups, including those in receipt of income related free school meals, in receipt of early years pupil premium and two-year funding, care leavers, young carers or those known to domestic abuse services. Professionals are able to refer any individuals who they deem to be financially vulnerable for additional support. In 2022-23, the programme has supported over 15,000 individuals. Further information about the scheme can be found here.</p> <p>During 2022, government funding of £878,640 was used to establish holiday activity clubs for children and young people eligible for free school meals and wider targeted groups (including Afghan refugees and children and young people with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities). The fund provides enriching activities during the holiday periods, with the ambition of reducing holiday inequality and promote healthy lifestyles to our vulnerable young people. During the summer, the programme has capacity for over 2,500 young people. Further information can be found here.</p>
8	Improved quality of highways services	Highways and Transportation Committee	<p>Highway Maintenance activities in Cheshire East follows national industry best practice set out in the Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highways Infrastructure'.</p> <p>A network hierarchy prioritises areas of the network by importance for example, their expected use, resilience and economic and social factors including industry, schools, hospitals. This determines the inspection frequency. Defects identified through inspections or reported by the public are investigated to determine the risk they pose to the public and what remedial action is required and in what timescale.</p> <p>Where urgent repairs are needed to keep road or pavement users safe, we take action quickly. Where road users are not at risk, we add the work to our ongoing road maintenance and improvement programme where appropriate. The same approach is adopted</p>

			<p>across the Borough irrespective of location. This ensures the best possible use of the available budgets.</p> <p>From the start of the 2022/23 financial year, the Council has committed to a £19m, 3-year capital investment programme in highway maintenance. This will help to deliver highway condition improvements for our residents and road users across the Borough.</p>
9	Public facilities	<p>Dependent on what is meant by public facilities, could fall -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside the Council's responsibilities (Middlewich Town Council) • Environment and Communities Committee 	<p>There are a range of public facilities available within Middlewich provided by Cheshire East Council and Middlewich Town Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middlewich library • Middlewich leisure centre • Salinae Day Centre for adults • Fountain Fields Park and Play Area • Victoria Hall • Public toilets
10	Quick response team to immediately deal with the residents' complaints and be accountable	Corporate Policy Committee	<p>The Council treats complaints seriously.</p> <p>Whilst each individual department within the Council will operate an informal complaints resolution process, Cheshire East Council operates a corporate complaints policy that will apply in all cases. There is a separate statutory means to complain for social care). It produces a "Let us Know" booklet detailing how to make a complaint about a service and this is available on the Council's website and advises how to complain, and references ways in which this can be done e.g. by phone, in writing/person or using the specific email address letusknow@cheshireeast.gov.uk.</p> <p>The current corporate complaints procedure is set out in the booklet and in summary is:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once received and electronically recorded, complaint will be acknowledged within three working days.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The complaint will receive a full response within ten working days. <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfaction with the response can be communicated back within 20 working days from the date of the response with a request that the complaint is taken to Stage 2. At Stage 2, a review of the complaint will be carried out by an officer who has not previously been involved in dealing with the complaint. <input type="checkbox"/> A Stage 2 complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days, and a full response within 20 working days. <input type="checkbox"/> If unhappy after Stage 2, complainant is advised of right to take complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman and their address and contact details are provided. <p><u>https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/customer-services/complaints_and_feedback/complaints_and_feedback.aspx</u></p> <p>The speed at which a complaint is resolved depends on the issue raised and its complexity. Any complaint can be referred to an external body whose role is to ensure there is no maladministration by the Council that has caused an injustice to the complainant. Unusual practice is for this to be after the council's procedure has been completed.</p>
11	Councils at local and borough level to be open and transparent with the residents	Corporate Policy Committee for Cheshire East Outside the Council's responsibilities (Town and Parish Councils)	<p>In terms of Cheshire East Council's responsibilities, one of our Corporate Plan priorities is to be Open.</p> <p>We are committed to open data and transparency. Open data means making the non-personal information which it holds, freely available to everyone in open, machine-readable formats that are easy to reuse.</p> <p>Unless there are legal reasons not to do so, decisions made by the Council are made in public.</p>

			<p>The Local Government Transparency Code requires local authorities in England to publish information related to the themes listed below [see link for full list]. Cheshire East is working to exceed these requirements. The information required by the code is on Insight Cheshire East.</p> <p>Open data and transparency (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p>
12	Two voted residents on the ANSA Board	The Council is empowered to appoint individuals as non-executive directors	ANSA is a company wholly owned by Cheshire East Council. The appointment of Directors is undertaken by the Council. The responsibility for making decisions as Shareholder or owner of the Council's wholly owned companies, including the appointment of directors, rests with the Finance Sub-Committee. The Council is in the process of reviewing the governance of the Council's wholly owned companies and a report was considered by the Finance Sub-Committee on 7 th September 2022.
13	ANSA abide by legal and regulatory requirements and publish findings for residents	ANSA	ANSA confirmed it operates under a waste permit for the Environmental Hub site regulated by the Environment Agency. ANSA seeks to keep residents informed through publishing updates and liaison group note via its website.
14	ANSA should not cause any health deficiencies in Middlewich residents	ANSA	ANSA confirmed that it is a responsible company regulated in its waste operations by the Environment Agency.
15	ANSA problems resolved (no expansion) and no further growth	ANSA / Cheshire East	ANSA and the Council work in partnership to deliver Environmental Services for Cheshire East residents through the Environmental Hub in Middlewich. The site is focused on Cheshire East residents and does not service other authorities. It has enabled the increase in recycling, the ending of landfilling of kerbside waste and provided a high-quality employment base for workers from Middlewich and the surrounding areas. There are no immediate plans to expand the site however we cannot discount the need to adapt facilities to future changes in legislation to meet the needs of Cheshire East residents.

16	Prompt response to the ownership of Middlewich Cemetery and the gates fixed by March 2022	Outside the Council's responsibilities (Middlewich Cemetery Management Board)	<p>The Council has checked its property ownership records and can confirm that the land in question is not in its land and property portfolio. The Council has also checked its maintenance records and can confirm that ANSA/Orbitas do not manage the asset.</p> <p>The Middlewich Cemetery Management Board are responsible for the operation of the cemetery and any query about its operation is best placed to be addressed to them.</p>
17	Current police structure kept in place one PC and two PCSO's	Outside the Council's responsibilities (please refer to Cheshire Constabulary)	