

Environment and Communities Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday, 27th November, 2024
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. Apologies for Absence

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. Declarations of Interest

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 12)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 September 2024.

For requests for further information

Contact: Josie Lloyd

Tel: 01270 686466

E-Mail: josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Council's Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, set out in the [Constitution](#), a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

Petitions - To receive any petitions which have met the criteria - [Petitions Scheme Criteria](#), and falls within the remit of the Committee. Petition organisers will be allowed up to three minutes to speak.

5. **Second Financial Review of 2024/25 (Environment and Communities Committee) (Pages 13 - 86)**

To receive a report on the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2024/25 based on income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of August 2024. It also identifies actions that are being taken to address adverse variances to urgently address financial sustainability.

6. **Medium Term Financial Strategy Update 2025/26 - 2028/29 (Environment & Communities Committee) (Pages 87 - 98)**

To receive a report outlining further development activity required before the final MTFS 2025-29 is presented for approval to the budget setting Council meeting in February 2025.

7. **Libraries Strategy - Implementation (Pages 99 - 252)**

To consider a report seeking approval to implement the final details of the Libraries Strategy.

8. **Waste Collection - residual waste (Pages 253 - 340)**

To consider a report seeking approval for the implementation of changes to residual waste collections, including feedback from a planned public consultation exercise.

9. **Work Programme (Pages 341 - 344)**

To consider the work programme and determine any required amendments.

Membership: Councillors L Braithwaite (Vice-Chair), J Bratherton, M Brooks, T Dean, A Farrall, S Gardiner, H Moss, D Jefferay, B Posnett, H Seddon, L Smetham, M Warren (Chair), H Whitaker

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee**
held on Thursday, 26th September, 2024 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor M Warren (Chair)
Councillor D Clark (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L Braithwaite, M Brooks, T Dean, A Farrall, H Moss, D Jefferay,
B Posnett, H Seddon, L Smetham, J Clowes and C O'Leary

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services
Steve Reading, Principal Accountant
Julie Gregory, Legal Team Manager
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Judy Snowball
Councillor Garnet Marshall
Councillor Ken Edwards
Councillor Mike Sewart

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gardiner and Cllr Whitaker.
Cllr Clowes and Cllr O'Leary attended as substitutes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr O'Leary declared in relation to item 6 – Household Waste Recycling
Centres Review Final Recommendations that he had a non-registerable
and non-pecuniary interest as the administrator of the Facebook group
'Save Bollington Recycling Centre'.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2024 be agreed as a
correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

The following members of the public attended the meeting to speak in relation to item 6 – Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) Review Final Recommendations:

Mr Trevor Priestman presented a petition to the committee relating to the potential closure of the HWRC sites in Poynton, Middlewich and Bollington. The petition had received over 7000 signatures. Mr Priestman felt that when the public consultation was announced, the decision to close the sites had already been made and that the impact on residents borough-wide was dismissed. As there was already an item on the agenda dealing with this subject matter, the committee agreed to note the petition.

Mr Brian Perkins asked a number of questions regarding the closure of the HWRCs;

- How could the Committee vote on only two preferred options when there was a high risk– Operationally Effective was amber and Acceptability was red?
- What and where in the report was the weighting and scoring criteria?
- Could all Committee members confirm they had scrutinised the proposal implementation plans and detailed costs?
- How was the success of the trial mobile HWRC being measured and by whom?
- Had the councillors seen any evidence of trial monitoring before today?
- What was the average cost in pounds per visitor and pounds per tonnage for each of the Mobile tip vs Macclesfield tip?
- What was the total cost of employing 'Waste Education Specialists' Recruitment, training, salaries etc?
- What evidence existed that residents would be receiving value for money for such resources?
- What and where were the plans and costs for site improvements that were to remain open?
- Have all Committee members seen those plans before today's meeting?

Mr Perkins requested confirmation or otherwise that Councillor J Snowball and Councillor K Edwards had submitted the questions asked by 'Bollington Save Our Tip Group' dated 14th July as they were requested to do. And if they did, could the Chair confirm answers to them and on what date.

It was agreed that a written response would be provided outside of the meeting.

Mr Jon Park asked members not to vote on the closure of the HMRCs today and instead give the related Town Councils time to come up with alternative proposals.

Mr Greg Lisle requested that the recommendations be amended so that Bollington Town Council could work with Cheshire East Council (CEC) to look at revised HWRC services. The request was made following statistics shared with the committee on the number of slots available, uptake on those slots, no shows, and the approximate cost per user on that particular day in respect of the mobile tip which visited once a month.

Mr Stuart Redgard spoke in support of the proposal. Mr Redgard stated that, although the closures were not what he would like to see, the Council was having to make difficult decisions and the closure of HWRCs was an example of those.

Councillor Robert Douglas shared his concerns on the details in the report, relating specifically to the costs of a new site at Congleton and provided a number of examples of other sites recently constructed. Although it was common for quotations to vary, Councillor Douglas suggested that additional quotations were obtained.

Councillor John Stewart asked why the formal response from Bollington Town Council to the HWRC consultation was not included in the consultation report. Councillor Stewart raised the following questions and requested that the Council consider other options, such as site sharing with Poynton and Bollington, community involvement, parish funding.

1. Was a safety risk assessment done by, or for, CEC to determine whether the decision to mothball and potentially now close three local 'Tip's,' to funnel significant additional traffic into an ailing Macclesfield 'Tip', was a safe decision?
2. Was any consideration made about the economic consequences for the residents of Cheshire East of this proposal to close Bollington Tip?
3. Was there any consideration of the environmental consequences?
4. Since the new contracts run from September 2025, what would happen when the existing contracts end in April 2025?
5. How was it that, in spite of Bollington Town Council's plea to consider alternative options to save the HWRC from closure, officers chose not to engage with the Town Council on these ideas for over 4 months since the final correspondence in May 2024.

Councillor Suzy Firkin stated that fly tipping had increased following the closure of the Congleton HWRC. Councillor Firkin questioned why mobile sites had been offered to Bollington, Middlewich, and Poynton but not to Congleton.

Councillor Laurence Clark questioned how costs were calculated and why there was such secrecy around the newly procured HWRC operating costs and why they could not be published.

5 FIRST FINANCIAL REVIEW 2024/25

The committee considered the report which provided the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2024/25 based on income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of July 2024. It also identified actions that were being taken to address adverse variances to urgently address financial sustainability.

Officers advised that two further recommendations were being put forward in addition to those published in the report which would read:

4. *Approve the award of a grant to Nether Alderley Parish Council in the sum of £164,540 in order to carry out agreed improvement works to Nether Alderley Parish Hall as a means to discharge an obligation under a s106 agreement between Cheshire East Council and Bruntwood Limited, dated June 2016, namely to provide funds to undertake refurbishment works to Nether Alderley Grade II listed Parish Hall and;*
5. *Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services to take all necessary steps to enter into a funding agreement with Nether Alderley Parish Council for the purposes of providing the grant and evidencing use of the monies, and in doing so evidencing of the discharge of the obligation under the s.106 agreement.*

Officers advised that the transferral of reserves to mitigate overspend would be addresses in the FR2 report, and that the council collected business rates under the Business Rate Retention Scheme, which only allowed local authorities to retain a portion of the monies, however there was an ongoing review into this process.

Officers undertook to provide a written response in respect to the following questions:

CCTV efficiencies

1. Members were advised previously that CCTV was a non-statutory service. Would the removal of the CCTV service be looked at and would it be included in future consultations for budgeting or cost savings?
2. Although the CCTV service generated around £220k income for the council, there were associated costs, of around £480k to the council. What was being done to address this gap?
3. Could officers confirm that the Council were given a Safer Cheshire Partnership grant from the police, and how much this was?

S106 Monies

Could officers confirm that the refurbishment of a parish hall was considered as an appropriate use of section 106 funding under current policy?

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Review the factors leading to a forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of:

Council: £26.5m against a revised budget of £387.6m (6.8%)
Environment and Communities: £0.6m against a revised budget of £48.4m (1.2%)

To scrutinise the contents of Annex 1, Section 2 relevant to services within the committee's remit, and review progress on the delivery of the MTFS approved budget policy change items, the RAG ratings and latest forecasts, and to understand the actions to be taken to address any adverse variances from the approved budget.

2. Consider the in-year forecast capital spending:

Council: £164.5m against an approved MTFS budget of £215.8m, due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years.
Environment and Communities: £19.5m against an approved MTFS budget of £19.0m;

3. Note the available reserves position as per Annex 1, Section 5;
4. Approve the award of a grant to Nether Alderley Parish Council in the sum of £164,540 in order to carry out agreed improvement works to Nether Alderley Parish Hall as a means to discharge an obligation under a s106 agreement between Cheshire East Council and Bruntwood Limited, dated June 2016, namely, to provide funds to undertake refurbishment works to Nether Alderley Grade II listed Parish Hall and;
5. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services to take all necessary steps to enter into a funding agreement with Nether Alderley Parish Council for the purposes of providing the grant and evidencing use of the monies, and in doing so evidencing of the discharge of the obligation under the s.106 agreement.

6 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the report which detailed the final proposals for future permanent Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) service provision following an update of previously collated review and feasibility study information, public consultation, and the commencement of a procurement for a new operating contract provider.

The Committee was being asked to agree levels of service for the contract period of 7 years (with optional up to 3-year extension period) due to commence provisionally in September 2025 to allow continuity of service provision and to achieve best value for the Council through this procurement.

Cllr K Edwards attended to speak as a visiting member and stated that Cheshire East was operating in a difficult scenario with intense pressures on the budget. HWRC's were a great use for waste repurposing and education. Closing 3 of 7 sites would leave a minimum provision across the borough and those in rural areas would face much longer journeys and additional pollution – none of which was mentioned in the report. Cllr Edwards asked for negotiations, to take place with Bollington Town Council who were open to ideas to find financial support to keep the site open and urged serious consideration for the recommendation to be deferred back to officers to negotiate with Bollington Town Council to ensure that one HWRC was left in the north of borough.

Cllr Sewart attended to speak as a visiting member and stated that there was a need for a site north east of the borough as the drive from Poynton to Macclesfield took 34 minutes, meaning that it would take Disley residents even longer and then there would be significant queues to get in to the Macclesfield site. Cllr Sewart said that the credibility of Cheshire East Council would be questioned, and that the decision to temporarily close the Poynton site was “double speak”. Cllr Sewart said that there would be extra costs to the council for additional material in bins and asked the committee to consider keeping, one or both, sites in the north open either fully or on a part time basis.

Cllr Marshall attended to speak as a visiting member and asked members to reject the plan to close HWRCs. Cllr Marshall said that Middlewich was a unique site as all waste comes to Middlewich to be processed as it was where the waste transfer site was located, and several residents would have to drive past this site to go to another HWRC. Cllr Marshall asked the committee to be mindful of the statistics in the report which in his view were not accurate.

Cllr Snowball attended to speak as a visiting member and stated that on 10 May 2024 Bollington Town Council received a notice to keep the HWRC open. The Town Council had already set the budget for the year, and had only 7 days for a response, however they responded and were

determined to do everything reasonable within their power to keep the site open. Cllr Snowball said that she understood that savings needed to be made, and the council must meet statutory obligations. Bollington Town Council were willing to negotiate with the CEC to keep the HWRC open and asked the committee for this opportunity.

Cllr Adams provided a statement which was read out by Cllr Clowes which stated that she had received many complaints about the closure of Poynton HWRC from Disley residents, which related to the closure itself, the quality of the consultation and the lack of meaningful engagement on the proposed closure. Cllr Adams said that Disley residents would face a 28-mile round trip, outside the WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) recommendation of 20 minutes to the nearest site and that the many extra miles that would be driven was not 'green' and did not support the Council's net zero aspirations. Cllr Adams stated that proposed mobile facilities did not meet the demand from residents and she had received complaints about being unable to book a slot during the trial which marginalised the digitally excluded. Cllr Adams said that Disley Parish Council had suggested that Cheshire East talks to Stockport MBC to agree use of the Marple HWRC which was 4 miles from Disley and had made this suggestion to Cheshire East, and it had been dismissed. Cllr Adams requested that a written response be provided to confirm the dates and details of any discussions with Stockport MBC on this matter be provided. If the proposed closures were agreed it would result in a considerable increase in fly tipping, which would lead to substantial extra costs for Cheshire East Council.

Cllr Moreton provided a statement which was read out by Cllr Jefferay which stated that he understood the Councils' financial situation but he, alongside other Congleton Councillors, had been fighting for a new recycling centre since the Congleton site was closed down. Cllr Moreton said that he would carry on this fight for the residents of Congleton as they are one of the biggest towns in the Borough and asked why Congleton was being overlooked as a site for the mobile HWRC service.

During consideration of the item, the committee resolved to move into part 2 to consider the confidential report and appendix. The committee moved back into part 1 for questions and debate.

In response to Members questions, Members were advised that if the decision was deferred, it could cause financial issues to the current procurement timeline, and that the emergency closures currently in place would produce a one off additional pro-rata saving until August 2025, which would be considered as part of the update to the MTFS. Members were advised that the new contract procurement includes the provision of ANPR, and there was a substantial "reuse" element in the specification. Members were advised that the ANSA site at Middlewich had not been designed as a household waste recycling centre, was an operational facility with a large number of HGV movements and was not suitable for the public to access. Rural areas were defined as those outside of a 20-

minute drive of a HWRC, and that the mobile service would set to address areas which were outside of this boundary, along with areas which data has evidenced an elevated fly tipping incident rate. Officers advised that the council has statutory fly tipping obligations and must report in a standard way to central government and fly tipping on council-maintained land where the council has the obligation to clear land. It does not report or clean up fly tipping on private land.

In the debate the following points were raised:

- It was acknowledged that the Council was in a difficult financial situation.
- Nobody wanted to make cuts, but they needed to be made and, if this was not agreed, other services would have to be reduced further
- The consultation evidenced that most residents did not use HWRCs on a frequent basis.
- It was highlighted that there could be significant technical and local issues if Town and Parish Councils were to run the sites independently.
- It was felt that the stated drive times were not accurate so needed to be looked at when looking at mobile recycling centres, nor were the environmental issues related to additional travel time taken into account.
- It was stated that the data collection relating to out of borough use of Cheshire East's HWRCs was only taken on a single day.
- Similar decisions were being made across the country.
- Some members felt that the savings from this proposal were insignificant in the context of the Council's financial position, however other members felt that any saving made would contribute to reducing the risk of a S114 notice having to be issued.
- It was felt that there were issues with the mobile service, booking system and queueing but this could be reviewed and refined
- There were opportunities for monetising cross border tonnage coming into the borough via ANPR, although that had not been appraised in an appropriate way. Officers clarified however that we cannot charge the public for use of HWRC services, as private residents.

Some members felt that they could not support the recommendations; others felt that, while they would not wish to make this decision, they could understand the need and that difficult decisions would have to be made.

It was noted that paragraph 64 of the report outlined that in order to achieve the deadlines set out in the procurement timeline (which is a live process) such that the contract can be awarded, and business disruption avoided, it was appropriate that the decision be made urgently, and referral waived.

It was proposed and seconded a recorded vote was carried out in respect to this item, with the following results:

FOR

Councillors L Braithwaite, M Brooks, D Clark, A Farrell, D Jefferay, H Moss, H Seddon and M Warren.

AGAINST

Councillors J Clowes, T Dean, C O' Leary, B Posnett and L Smetham.

The motion was declared carried with 8 votes for and 5 against.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Communities Committee

1. Note the outputs of the updated independent review of current site provision and the outcomes of the recent public consultation.

2. Approve:

- a. The permanent household waste recycling centre service provision for the borough, namely four sites located at Knutsford, Macclesfield, Alsager and Crewe,
- b. The permanent closure of the HWRC sites at Bollington, Middlewich and Poynton, and
- c. A mobile HWRC service serving rural and areas where the collected data indicates that incidents of fly tipping are at an increased level
- d. Retention of a booking system to be used as described in this report.

3. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to

- a. Take all necessary steps to implement the approved permanent household waste recycling centre service provision,
- b. Permanent close the HWRC sites at Bollington, Middlewich and Poynton,
- c. Continue with the trial mobile household waste centre mitigation measures, until commencement of the new permanent service levels, targeted for September 2025.
- d. Take all necessary steps to complete the procurement and award of a new contract to a service provider in consultation with the Director of Governance and Compliance,
- e. Undertake the associated capital site improvement works, and
- f. Develop and implement a robust operating process for the mobile HWRC service, as part of the future permanent provision in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee

Councillor J Clowes left the meeting after consideration of this item and did not return.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme.

It was noted that the Local Plan Update report which had been scheduled for the November committee would be moved to a later date. This was due to the government announcements around planning reforms and the recent consultation which had closed on 24th September. This would give officers time to consider what the implications would be.

The committee were asked to identify further areas of scrutiny that the committee could be involved in, such as policy development. A small group of Members would be involved in the development of any policies at an early stage through a task and finish group, with their recommendations being brought back to the committee for approval. The Chair would work with officers and bring some proposals back to the next meeting. The committee were invited to look at the work programme and contact the Chair or Democratic Services with any suggestions of areas for scrutiny following the meeting.

It was agreed, by majority, that the last meeting of the year would be held as a twilight meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 7A of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest would not be served in publishing this information.

9 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES REVIEW - FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee considered the confidential appendix.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 and concluded at 13.35

Councillor M Warren (Chair)

OPEN

**Environment and Communities
Committee**

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

**Second Financial Review of 2024/25
(Environment and Communities
Committee)**

**Report of: Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Customer
Services (s151 Officer)**

Report Reference No: EC/24/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Not applicable

For Decision or Scrutiny: Scrutiny and Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report provides the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2024/25 based on our income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of August 2024. It also identifies actions that are being taken to address adverse variances to urgently address our financial sustainability.
- 2 The report provides the forecast outturn for all services, to provide Members with contextual information on the position for the whole Council. Members are asked to focus their scrutiny on the forecasts and supporting information relating to services within the remit of the Committee whilst understanding the overall context as a whole.
- 3 The report highlights any changes and external pressures that are impacting the Council since setting the budget in February 2024. Annex 1, Section 2 of the report highlights what the Council is forecasting to achieve as part of the 2024/25 approved budget changes per line (growth and savings).
- 4 As set out in the First Financial Review, the requirement to continue to identify further actions in order to bring the Council back to a position where we are living within our means remains, and it will be important that these actions are closely monitored, and appropriate action taken to manage our

resources. This report includes information on the actions that are currently underway.

- 5 Reporting the financial forecast outturn at this stage, and in this format, supports the Council's vision to be an open Council as set out in the Cheshire East Council Plan 2024/25. In particular, the priorities for an open and enabling organisation, ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.
- 6 The report also requests member approval for amendments to the Council's budget in line with authorisation levels within the Constitution.

Executive Summary

- 7 The Council operates a financial cycle of planning, review, management and reporting. This report ensures that we review where we are and provides a forecast **outturn** position for the 2024/25 financial year whilst also identifying the actions that need to be taken to manage our overall resources. The information in this report also supports planning for next year's budget by identifying issues that may have medium term impacts.
- 8 The Council set its 2024/25 annual budget in February 2024. The budget was balanced, as required by statute, with planned use of reserves of £22m, plus £30m of savings to achieve in year, and included important assumptions about spending in the year. The budget is part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024 to 2028.
- 9 The Second Financial Review (FR2) forecast revenue outturn is an **adverse variance of £20.1m** (prior to the application of any Exceptional Financial Support), an improvement of £6.5m from FR1, as detailed below in **Table 1**:

Table 1 2024/25 FR2	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m	Forecast Variance FR1 £m	Movement from FR1 to FR2 £m
Service Committee					
Adults and Health	138.0	158.7	20.8	20.7	0.0
Children and Families	93.0	98.4	5.4	7.3	(1.9)
Corporate Policy	41.8	44.2	2.4	0.0	2.4
Economy and Growth	28.1	24.8	(3.3)	(2.6)	(0.7)
Environment and Communities	48.4	48.3	(0.1)	0.6	(0.7)
Highways and Transport	16.0	15.4	(0.6)	(0.5)	(0.1)
Sub-Committee					-
Finance Sub:					-
Central Budgets	30.0	25.6	(4.5)	0.9	(5.4)
Funding	(395.4)	(395.4)	0.0	-	0.0
TOTAL	(0.0)	20.1	20.1	26.5	(6.5)

- 10 Whilst an improvement on the First Financial Review of £6.5m (see mitigations in para 29), the forecast overspend of £20.1m remains a significant financial challenge for the Council. The FR2 forecast reserves, after agreed movements budgeted for in the 2024-28 MTFS, are currently £10.0m, being £0.5m of General Fund Reserves (including the forecast use of £4m for transformation costs) and £9.5m of Earmarked Reserves, as shown below. The Council's level of reserves is therefore insufficient to cover the current forecast revenue outturn for the year without further action.

Reserves & Exceptional Financial Support		£m
Reserves		
General Fund		4.5
Earmarked Reserves		9.5
Original Forecast at 31st March 2025		14.0
Forecast Transformation spend		(4.0)
Forecast Total Reserves at 31st March 2025		10.0
Exceptional Financial Support		17.6

- 11 This forecast does not assume the use of the Exceptional Finance Support (EFS) that was requested in 2023/24 and 2024/25 that was agreed in principle, subject to a number of conditions being satisfied, including the submission of a transformation plan at the end of August 2024. It also does not assume the cost of accepting that EFS support which would impact on the cost of borrowing over the medium term. A further condition of the EFS was that an independent review was undertaken by CIPFA on behalf of MHCLG to understand the Council's financial management and sustainability. The review was commissioned by and for MHCLG and the Council has not yet had sight of this review to understand any implications or improvements that could be made to existing processes. This was submitted to MHCLG in August 2024.
- 12 The FR2 forecast position indicates that further urgent action to reduce the overspend, and bring spending back in line with budget, is required. Failure to do so would require the Council to use the existing conditional Exceptional Financial Support (£17.6m) which would be the only way for the S151 Officer to avoid having to issue a S114 notice to the Council.
- 13 The level of EFS support would need to be agreed and finalised with the government and the financial impact of this would need to be built into the overall financial modelling for the Council. As reported to members in June 2024 in the 'Medium Term Financial Strategy Assumptions and Reporting Cycle for 2024/25 to 2028/29' the Council faces a significant four-year funding gap, with the shortfall in 2025/26 identified in February 2024 MTFS estimated at £41.9m. There remains a risk that pressures leading to the latest FR2 forecast position may increase that shortfall figure if further rapid action does not take place to stabilise our financial position.

- 14 The FR2 forecast position for capital spending for 2024/25 indicates forecast capital expenditure of £157.7m against the MTFS budget of £215.8m (FR1 £164.5m). The re-profiling of Capital expenditure to future years to match scheme delivery and ongoing capital review to ensure that our capital borrowing remains affordable is continuing.
- 15 **Table 2** sets out the capital programme profiling changes:

Table 2	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2024/28
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Capital Programme FR1	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,293
Funded by:					
Borrowing	51,878	53,566	10,180	27,779	143,403
Grants and other contributions	112,667	87,666	99,499	204,058	503,890
	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,293
Capital Programme FR2	157,661	151,770	115,852	225,173	650,456
Funded by:					
Borrowing	45,101	57,996	14,802	25,044	142,943
Grants and other contributions	112,560	93,774	101,050	200,129	507,513
	157,661	151,770	115,852	225,173	650,456
Movement from FR1	(6,884)	10,538	6,173	(6,664)	3,163

- 16 **Table 3** sets out the summary revised capital programme:

Table 3	FR1	SCEs	Virements	Budget	Revised
	Budget	in Quarter	in Quarter	Reductions	FR2
	2024/28	2024/25	2024/25	2024/25	Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	2024/28
	£m				£m
Adults and Health	0.8				0.8
Children and Families	108.9				108.9
Highways & Transport	287.0	2.7		(0.2)	289.5
Economy & Growth	184.7	0.9			185.6
Environment & Communities	42.0				42.0
Corporate Policy	23.8			(0.2)	23.6
	647.2	3.6	-	(0.4)	650.4

17 **Table 4** sets out the movement from FR1 by committee:

Table 4	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	2024/28 Total £000
Adults and Health	-	-	-	-	-
Children and Families	(3,576)	3,571	(1)	-	(6)
Highways & Transport	2,082	3,566	1,001	(4,123)	2,526
Economy & Growth	(2,018)	2,630	2,798	(2,563)	847
Environment & Communities	(3,624)	1,142	2,478	22	18
Corporate Policy	252	(371)	(103)	-	(222)
	(6,884)	10,538	6,173	(6,664)	3,163
Funded by:					
Government Grants	(139)	5,239	3,461	(7,735)	825
External Contributions	(4)	1,086	(969)	2,629	2,742
Revenue Contributions	55	-	-	-	55
Capital Receipts	(19)	(217)	(941)	1,177	(1)
Prudential Borrowing	(6,777)	4,430	4,622	(2,735)	(460)
	(6,884)	10,538	6,173	(6,664)	3,163

18 Significant items of slippage/reprofiling from 2024/25 to 2025/26 include:

- £2.3m for Childrens Social Care (Crewe Youth Zone and Childrens Homes Sufficiency),
- £0.8m in Education (Springfield and Wilmslow),
- £2.4m for Economy and Growth (Corporate Landlord and Crewe Town Regeneration),
- £3m for Environment & Neighbourhood (Weekly Food collections and Fleet EV).

19 Highways and Infrastructure have increased capital spend in 2024/25 partly due to bringing forward £1.7m for Network North, together with an SCE of £600,000 for Bridge Maintenance.

20 As part of the urgent actions required to reduce the Council overspend a full review of the capital programme is being undertaken with a view to removing as much future borrowing as possible. The forecast borrowing included in the capital programme at FR2 will have the following revenue impact:

Revenue Impact

Table 5	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2024-28
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Forecast borrowing to fund capital programme	45,101	57,996	14,802	25,044	142,943
MRP	-	3,857	5,036	6,498	15,391
Interest	2,264	3,712	3,537	4,288	13,801
Total annual revenue impact	2,264	7,569	8,573	10,786	29,192
Movement from FR1					
Increase / (reduction)	(346)	(143)	(288)	(370)	(1,147)

- 21 In order to alleviate the revenue pressure from external borrowing further immediate reductions in capital spend are required. This will reduce the related revenue impact of interest costs and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) both of which are charged to revenue through the Capital Financing Budget (CFB). The council must aim to optimise use of all other available sources to fund our capital programme and must minimise the use of borrowing to reduce the pressures on the revenue budget. We have also commissioned an external review of our balance sheet with our Treasury Management advisors to review our borrowing strategy.
- 22 The current forecast for achievable capital receipts in year is £2.5m, with a further £0.6m to £1.5m also achievable in year (to be updated at FR3). These receipts can be used to reduce revenue pressures from borrowing in year or could be used to assist with funding of transformation activity.
- 23 Due to the long-term nature of capital investment the revenue implications of decisions taken by the council now will extend well beyond the term of the current year and into the medium term.
- 24 In the review of the capital programme the long-term capital repayment commitments (MRP) are the initial area of focus. Reducing the annual MRP associated with any new borrowing on a scheme-by-scheme basis is a priority. There will be a secondary impact of reducing forecast interest which will also reduce the effect on the revenue account, but it is the reduction in new borrowing and new commitment to long term capital repayments that will allow the programme to remain affordable and sustainable.
- 25 Reductions in borrowing can be achieved through:
- (a) Reduce, delay or remove schemes funded by borrowing;
 - (b) Focus on existing contractual commitments, fulfilling statutory services and public safety requirements;
 - (c) Prioritise the capital projects that will have most beneficial impact on the revenue budget in the medium term;
 - (d) Remove forward funding;

- (e) Reprioritise use of grants and apply appropriate S106 contributions to schemes.

- 26 The Strategic Finance Management Board leads on a number of key tasks to urgently reduce spend and identify additional savings, including:
- Line-by-line reviews of all budgets to further identify immediately any underspends and/or additional funding;
 - Stop any non-essential spend;
 - Actively manage vacancies, particularly agency usage and reduce any overspends on staffing as soon as possible;
 - Review of Section 106 legacy budgets, the effects of which are partly reflected in the FR2 forecast outturn as a one-off contribution to reserves (to be further updated at FR3);
 - Review of capital receipts available and potential surplus assets that can be sold (for best consideration);
 - Identification of any other areas of discretionary spend including grants awarded, where spend can be reduced or stopped;
 - Review Debt management/overall level of bad debt provision – work undertaken to date, focussing on the Adult Social Care bad debt provision, has identified through adopting a new approach to reviewing and monitoring these debts, an improvement (reduction) of the Council's bad debt provision of £0.8m, further work is ongoing and will be updated at FR3.

Overall mitigations planned to manage pressures

- 27 The Strategic Finance Management Board is leading on a number of key tasks to urgently reduce spend and identify additional savings as noted above.
- 28 In addition, any directorate that is identified as being off target by more than 5% is now subject to a detailed finance and performance review on a weekly basis through a financial recovery review process. This includes a detailed action plan, identifying what can be done to sustainably reduce the pressure and gaining assurance over the management of those actions to deliver improved financial outturns. This process has been put in place for Adults Services and Children and Families and is being chaired by the S151 Officer.
- 29 As reported in paragraphs 35-57 below, work is underway across all Services to look at mitigating actions which can be taken to reduce the forecast position in-year, some of the actions below having contributed to the £6.5m improvement from FR1 position, including:

- Adults - more certainty about the FR2 projections and the delivery of in-year mitigations, including a reduction in the forecast number of placements in-year.
- Children & Families – reviewing costs of placements, establishment reviews, Reunification of children, and Work on Edge of Care Service proposals to identify early intervention and cost reduction.
- Place Services – mitigations in year through further vacancy management, reducing expenditure and maximising funding opportunities.
- Corporate – Vacancy management and some additional income.
- Finance Sub – S106 and bad debt reviews generating one-off in year contributions to assist in reducing the in year overspend and review/reset process moving forward.

30 Paragraphs 57-59 below provides a summary overview of the forecast against the approved 2024/25 budget change items, including RAG rating. In addition, there is further detail per change item with accompanying commentary, as reviewed by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, in respect of each item within **Annex 1, Section 2**.

31 **Annex 1: Detailed Second Financial Review 2024/25**

- **Section 1** 2024/25 Forecast Outturn
- **Section 2** 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items
- **Section 3** Revenue Grants for approval
- **Section 4** Capital
- **Section 5** Reserves
- **Section 6** Treasury Management

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment and Communities Committee to:

1. Review the factors leading to a forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £20.1m against a revised budget of £395.4m (5.1%). To scrutinise the contents of **Annex 1, Section 2** and review progress on the delivery of the MTFS approved budget policy change items, the RAG ratings and latest forecasts, and to understand the actions to be taken to address any adverse variances from the approved budget.
2. Review the in-year forecast capital spending of £157.7m against an approved MTFS budget of £215.8m, due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years.
3. Note the available reserves position as per **Annex 1, Section 5**.
4. To delegate to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood services to undertake all necessary steps to enter into a grant funding agreement with The Mersey Forest in order to accept a Trees For Climate grant offer of £647,173.91 for woodland creation at Buttertons Lane Farm.

Background

- 32 This single view of the financial picture of the Council provides the overall financial context.
- 33 The management structure of the Council is organised into four directorates: Adults, Health and Integration; Children's Services; Place; and Corporate Services. The Council's reporting structure provides forecasts of a potential year-end outturn within each directorate during the year, as well as highlighting activity carried out in support of each outcome contained within the Corporate Plan. Budget holders are responsible for ensuring they manage their resources in line with the objectives of the Council and within the approved budget.
- 34 For the purposes of each committee, these directorate budgets are aligned to a specific committee and the appendices to this report provides information at a level that the committee should have the ability to be able to scrutinise what is causing any variations in budget and appropriate actions to bring the council back into line in terms of managing its resources.

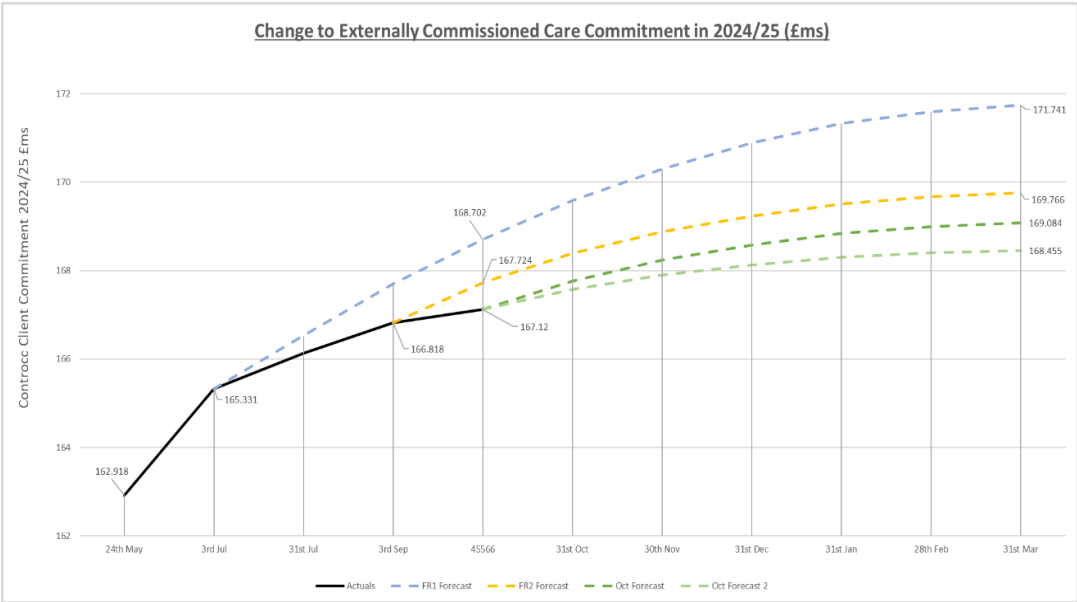
Key issues causing the pressures

- 35 There are a number of key issues causing the forecast revenue overspend, including:
- Ongoing adverse effects of the extended period of high inflation and interest rates;
 - Continued increasing demand and complexity of care beyond the levels that had been previously identified;
 - Increase in staff costs, including use of agency staff and impact of National Living Wage which also impacts on our third party commissioned contracts;
 - Increased borrowing costs associated with the unfunded Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit;
 - Non delivery of some previously agreed savings and/or income targets;
 - The financial impact of investment in transformation and improvement activity over the medium term.

Specific commentary on the forecast outturn position by Committee

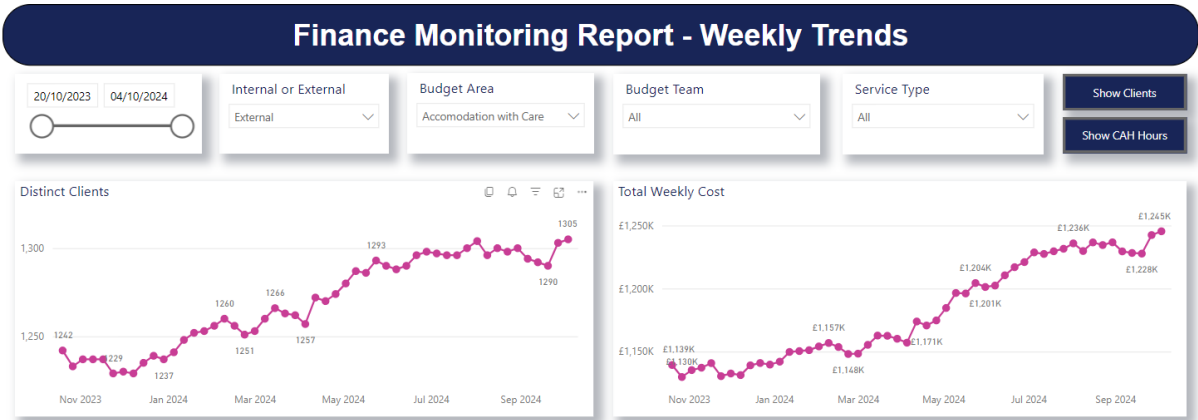
Adults and Health adverse variance of £20.7m

- 36 The Adults, Health and Integration budget is forecast to overspend by £20.7m. The £20.7m is primarily driven by an overspend of £22.5m linked to care costs and pressures on staffing of £3.1m. These pressures are reduced by a favourable variance in client income of £3.8m, and other mitigations totalling £1.1m. The key drivers of forecast expenditure remain price increases, staff costs and increase in complexity.
- 37 Although the forecast has not changed since FR1 there is more certainty about the projections and the delivery of in-year mitigations, including a reduction in the forecast number of placements in-year as shown in the graph below.

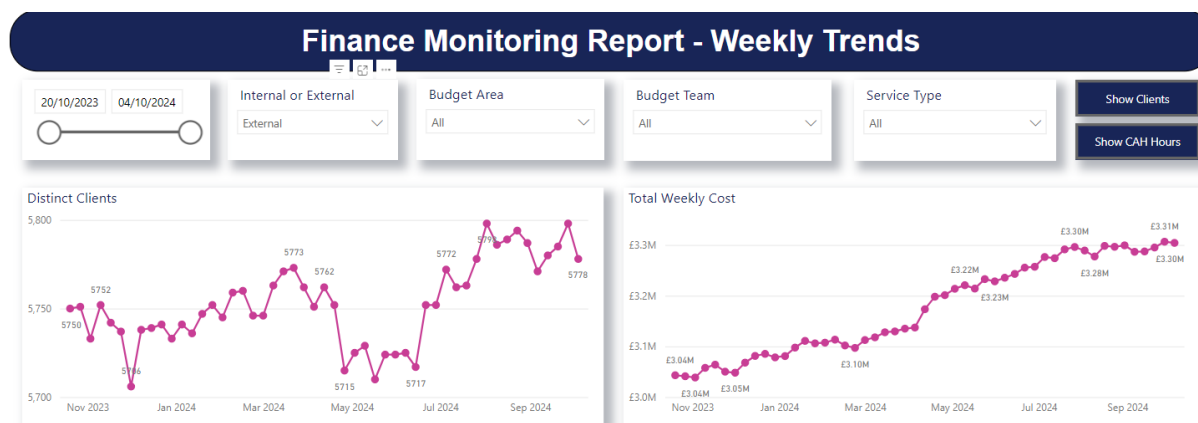


- 38
- As noted previously the key driver of expenditure in adult social care is the number of people in receipt of care and the cost of each individual's care. The forecast has stabilised because we believe we will make fewer new placements in the second half of the year than we made in the first half of the year.
- 39
- There is close alignment between the work being undertaken to manage budget pressures and the transformation plan. There will be some impact in-year including in respect of pricing, the focus on the review of supported living services, and services to support people at home. However, there are also risks including the reduction in the number of agency staff which has led to an increase in waiting times for services and disputes with providers in respect of price increases.

Residential and Nursing placements for 65+



All Service Users in Adults services



Children and Families adverse variance of £5.4m

- 40 At the end of the last financial year the outturn for Children and Families was an overspend of £8.2m. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy included growth to address the pressures that were emerging throughout 2023/24. The costs of children's social care are a concern for many local authorities and not unique to Cheshire East. The Second Financial Review for 2024/25 reflects a £5.4m in-year pressure.

The key pressure areas for the directorate include:

- 41 Children's social care placements (£2.6m adverse variance) where the complexity of children in care has continued to increase and the number of children in care has increased from 528 at April 2024 to 555 at October 2024 (compared to a decrease from 586 at April 2023 to 573 at June 2023). Placement costs are increasing by significantly more than inflation and more than was projected for growth in-year.
- 42 The use and cost of agency staff in children's social care to cover vacancies, sick absence, and maternity leave.
- 43 The number of staff is greater than the planned establishment to ensure we are able to meet our statutory needs. Work is underway to ensure the staffing structure is suitably funded and factored into the MTFS for 2025/26.
- 44 Home to school transport costs (£0.3m adverse variance) – where a mix of increasing numbers of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), and increasing fuel costs have seen overall costs rise.
- 45 Schools Catering (£0.5m adverse variance) – where the costs of the service are above the current charged income level and base budget.

- 46 Work is underway in the services to look at mitigating actions which can be taken to reduce this forecast position in-year, and these pressures will be considered as part of the developing MTFS for 2025/26. These include:
- Reviewing costs of placements as more detailed reviews are underway focusing on the expected length that some placements may need to be in place for;
 - Staffing establishment reviews now scheduled on a 6 weekly basis including a review of agency staff and alternative working;
 - Reunification children to be identified with targeted work in place for individual cases;
 - Tracking of similar spend across teams to be held in the same place as residential and supported accommodation spend to increase overall grip and understanding;
 - Work on Edge of Care Service proposals to identify early intervention that may reduce admissions and costs.

Dedicated School Grant (DSG)

- 47 The key pressure on DSG relates to the high needs block where the SEND service continues to see a significant increase in the number of pupils with an EHCPs, and the associated school placement costs.
- 48 This has placed pressure on the grant used to provide funding for children with SEND in various settings and led to a £31.7m deficit in 2023/24. This adds on to the brought forward deficit of £46.9m to take the DSG Reserve to a £78.6m deficit position at the end of 2023/24.
- 49 This is an improvement on the budget gap as determined by the Council's DSG Management Plan that was reported to Children and Families Committee in April 2024 and set out the planned expenditure and income on high needs over the medium term.
- 50 The current forecast is showing an in-year deficit of £41.5m which would increase the overall deficit to £120.1m.

Corporate Policy adverse variance of £2.4m

- 51 The Corporate Services Directorate has a net budget of £41.7m. At Second Finance Review (FR2), the budget is forecast to overspend by £2.4m compared to a £23,000 overspend at First Finance Review (FR1). The main reason for this change is that the forecast cost of the Transformation Programme (£2.8m) has now been included within Corporate Services. Without this, the forecast would be a £0.5m underspend. It also must be noted that, following a recent review of staffing establishments, there are pending staffing budgets realignments to be actioned which will change individual service forecasts but not the overall figure for Corporate Services.

There is a compensating underspend in central budgets reflecting the way in which this transformation work is being funded.

- Vacancy management in Corporate Services has resulted in the majority of services forecast an underspend on staffing budgets totalling £2.1m (£2m at FR1);
- Vacancy management has been combined with tighter control on non-pay spending across all services which is achieving a forecast underspend of £0.7m; and
- additional income of £0.3m is forecast in the Registrations Service.
- However, these underspends have been offset by the following:
- forecast spend of £2.8m on the Transformation Programme. The cost of the programme will be met from reserves or use of flexible capital receipts, the financial impact of these are shown elsewhere in the accounts;
- a forecast £1.3m under-recovery of Rent Allowances;
- a forecast overspend of £0.4m on the Transactional Service Centre (TSC), hosted by Cheshire West and Chester, mainly due to the additional costs of the stabilisation programme which has been put in place to improve the performance of the service and recognises the need to change the way in which Unit4 is used. This was an issue highlighted in the Corporate Peer Review that needs significant attention;
- a £0.5m shortfall in charging staff time to capital projects within ICT Strategy. This partially offsets savings from vacancy management within ICT Strategy included in the vacancy management figure above, and a forecast balanced position in ICT Shared Service - this is an improvement over the £0.1m overspend due to lower than budgeted project income and schools recharge income reported at FR1;
- There is a forecast overspend of £0.3m (£0.4m at FR1) in Accountancy mainly due to additional costs including Bank Charges and External Audit fees; and
- a staff budget pressure of £0.1m across Corporate Services relating to the estimated impact of the latest pay award offer versus the amount included in the MTFS.

Place Directorate favourable variance of £4.0m

- 52 Overall, the Place Directorate is forecasting an underspend of £4m at the second Financial Review stage against a £92.5m budget. Pressures from reducing planning application income (£0.5m), increased waste collection and disposal costs (£0.7m) and yet to be secured savings against leisure (£0.2m) have been mitigated through further vacancy management, reducing expenditure and maximising funding opportunities.

Economy & Growth favourable variance of £3.3m

- 53 Growth and Enterprise Directorate and Place Directorate are forecasting an underspend of £3.3m against a net budget of £28.1m which is a £0.7m improvement on the FR1 position. The key reasons for the underspend are:
- Facilities Management: there is a £1.9m underspend forecast. This includes pressures against maintenance budgets of £0.5m (additional pressures and delivery of savings), costs of workplace initiatives and equipment of £0.5m, the transfer of underspends to offset Place MTFS targets across the Directorate £0.6m and these have been offset by:
 - Savings against gas and electricity compared to much higher budgeted costs £3.1m.
 - Business rates underspend of £0.1m due to revaluations and appeals.
 - Underspends from vacancy management £0.3m.
 - Economic Development: £0.3m underspend from vacancy management, reduced supplies £0.1m and increased income £0.1m.
 - Housing: £0.5m underspend from vacancies and extra grant funding.
 - Green infrastructure and Cultural Economy £0.4m due to vacancies.

Environment & Communities favourable variance of £0.1m

- 54 Environment and Neighbourhood Services is forecasting an underspend of £0.1m against a net budget of £48.4m. This is a £0.7m improvement from FR1. The key reasons for the forecasting underspend are:
- Development Management: £0.4m overspend reflecting pressures from a shortfall in income from planning applications £0.5m and pressures on supplies and services of £0.1m. These are offset by vacancy management £0.1m and funding the one-off costs of the new planning system £0.1m from reserves.
 - Environmental – Commissioning: ANSA reporting a £0.1m overspend overall including pressures from the ANSA contract of net £0.2m and Cheshire East pressures from recycling costs of £0.4m. These are being offset by the use of the ASDV reserve of £0.5m.
 - Libraries: £0.1m overspend including pressures of £0.5m from the delivery of the MTFS savings which is offset by £0.3m vacancy management and £0.1m underspend from MTFS growth for exploring a charitable trust model. This is an improvement of £0.1m since the FR1 position due to additional vacancies.
 - Leisure Commissioning: £0.2m overspend (delivery of MTFS savings) unchanged from FR1.

- Other service issues: £0.9m underspend, which is an improvement of £0.1m on the FR1 position:
 - Building Control: £0.2m underspend (£0.2m building control offset by £0.4m vacancies).
 - Local Land Charges and Planning Support: £0.2m underspend from vacancies.
 - Strategic Planning: £0.3m (£0.1m vacancy management plus £0.2m delayed Local Plan costs).
 - Regulatory Services: £0.2m (£0.3m vacancies offset by £0.1m CCTV costs).

Highways & Transport favourable variance of £0.6m

55 Highways & Infrastructure are forecasting an underspend of £0.6m against a net budget of £16m. The key reasons for the underspend are:

- Car Parking: £0.4m underspend through vacancies of £0.1m and increased income of £0.3m.
- Strategic Transport: £0.1m underspend from vacancies.
- Rail and Transport Integration: £0.1m underspend from vacancies.

Finance Sub favourable variance of £4.5m

56 Finance Sub Committee are reporting a positive variance of £4.5m against a revised net budget of £30.0m.

- Financing and Investment £0.3m net pressure reflecting £1.4m increased cost of interest payments on borrowing offset by £1.1m increased interest receipts from investments.
- Reserves use of £3.5m (net change from MTFS) reflects £0.5m additional Flexible Capital Receipts offset by £1m reduction in available Capital Financing Reserve at outturn compared to forecast balance reflected in the February 2024 MTFS. There is also an additional £4m use of the General Fund reserve forecast to fund transformation activities.
- There is a further £1.2m positive variance as a result of in year reviews of S106 balances/schemes and bad debt. The S106 Review identifying a one off contribution in year where work has been completed in prior years but has not been reflected in transferring money from S106 into the general fund, £0.5m initially reflected at FR2 with potential for further increased contributions at FR3; £0.8m reduction in the Adult Social Care bad debt provision, as referred to in para 74 below.

Progress on delivery of the 2024/25 approved budget change items

- 57 Table 5 presents a summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 approved budget change items. For items rated as Amber these are for items where there are risks and/or mitigating actions in place. For items rated as red these are for items where services are projecting an adverse variance and there is risk of in year non delivery/achievement. New mitigation items have also been included that have come forward since the approval of the MTFS to help the in-year position where identified.
- 58 As the green and blue columns show, £21.5m of the budget change items are either delivered or on track to be delivered or even exceed in some cases. However, there is also a pressure of £59.3m as shown in the red column that has a high risk of not being achieved within this financial year. There are new in year mitigations of £16.8m, unrelated to the change item rows that has been identified to assist the outturn position. The table below summarises the progress by Committee:

Table 5: Summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 approved budget change items

Committee	Approved Change Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Completed £'000	Could Exceed £'000	Green £'000	Amber £'000	Red £'000	Mitigations £'000
Adults & Health	1,136	21,900	-2,723	0	-9,482	0	37,468	-3,363
Children & Families	9,909	15,311	922	0	-856	273	15,751	-779
Corporate Policy	489	2,866	-173	0	2,013	0	1,581	-555
Economy & Growth	3,316	41	-61	0	3,861	38	690	-4,487
Environment & Communities	-52	-178	-2,220	-1,480	3,273	-1,523	3,510	-1,738
Finance Sub	-19,667	-24,082	600	0	-19,348	0	0	-5,334
Highways & Transport	4,869	4,267	2,488	0	1,700	305	328	-554
TOTAL	-	20,124	-1,167	-1,480	-18,839	-907	59,328	-16,811

- 59 A complete list of all approved budget change items, with progress noted against each item, can be found in **Annex 1, Section 2**.

Revenue Grants for Approval

- 60 Approvals for Supplementary Revenue Estimates for allocation of additional grant funding are detailed in **Annex 1, Section 3**.

Reserves Position

- 61 On 1 April 2024, Earmarked Reserves totalled £32.278m and the General Fund Reserve Balance totalled £5.580m. Of the total earmarked reserves, more than £22m (70.5%) will be spent in 2024/25, on supporting the revenue budget for 2024/25.
- 62 Table 6 and 7 shows the forecast level of Earmarked and General reserves by the end of 2024/25.

Table 6: Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked Reserves by Committee	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000
Adults and Health	5,226	(2,795)	(110)	0	2,321
Children and Families	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0
Corporate Policy	20,773	(6,551)	(2,830)	(4,545)	6,847
Economy and Growth	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346
Environment and Communities	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0
Highways and Transport	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0
EARMARKED RESERVES TOTAL	32,278	(10,603)	(6,354)	(5,807)	9,514

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

* Total excludes schools' balances

Table 7: General Fund Reserve

General Fund Reserve	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast	Additional Forecast Movement £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000
General Fund Reserve	5,580	(1,051)	0	(4,043)	486
GENERAL FUND RESERVE TOTAL	5,580	(1,051)	0	(4,043)	486

- 63 At FR1 stage the closing balance at 31 March 2025 in the Council's General Fund Reserve was forecast to be £4.5m. However, at the FR2 stage, a further £4m transformational spend has been included within the service forecasts which will be funded from General reserves, reducing the forecast balance to £0.5m. If it is possible to identify additional capital receipts these could potentially be used to capitalise this expenditure and this will remain an area that is under review.
- 64 The Council is currently forecast to have £9.534m of earmarked reserves at the end of the financial year 2024/25. Of this £2.279m can be considered ringfenced, with specific conditions limiting their use.

65 A full list of all earmarked reserves can be found in **Annex 1, Section 5**.

Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve

- 66 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is ring-fenced funding received for: schools; high needs / special educational needs; and early years provision. In recent years there has been a pressure on the DSG high needs block where funding has not kept pace with the increasing numbers and cost of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This has created a deficit DSG reserve balance which is held in an unusable reserve.
- 67 The on-going pressure is regularly reviewed; at the end of 2023/24 the deficit was £78.6m and this is forecast to increase by £41.5m by the end of 2024/25. This is an improvement on the Council's DSG Management Plan approved in April 2024, which sets out the planned expenditure and income on high needs over the medium term. The DSG Management Plan is currently being updated and will be reported to Committee on completion.

Table 8: Dedicated Schools Grant

Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit	£m
Deficit Balance Brought forward	78.6
Additional In-year Pressures	41.5
Deficit Balance at 31 March 2025	120.1

Debt

- 68 Sundry debt includes all invoiced income due to the Council except for statutory taxes (Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates). The balance of outstanding debt at 30th September 2024 has increased by £0.516m since FR1 (end of July 2024).
- 69 Annually, the Council raises invoices with a total value of over £80m. Around a quarter of the Council's overall sundry debt portfolio relates to charges for Adult Social Care, the remainder being spread across a range of functions including Highways, Property Services, Licensing and Building Control.
- 70 The Revenue Recovery team (using their experience gained in collecting Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates) engage with services to offer advice and assistance in all aspects of debt management, including facilitating access to debt collection services (currently provided by Bristow & Sutor).
- 71 After allowing for debt still within the payment terms, the amount of outstanding service debt at the end of September 2024 was £17.8m.
- 72 The total amount of service debt over six months old is £10.5m; split as £9m of Adult Social Care debt and £1.5m of Sundry Debt. A provision of £6.8m was made at year ended 31st March 2024 to cover doubtful debt in the

event that it needs to be written off. There is an ongoing in year review of the Bad Debt provision which has to date focussed on Adult Social Care debt, has identified a forecast £0.8m reduction in the provision in 2024/25, reflected in the FR2 position.

- 73 The level of Adult Social Care debt can fluctuate depending on when in the month the snapshot is taken, for example if it is before or after the Direct Debit income is received and allocated. The debt also has different levels of risk depending on the type of debt. For example, around £3.5m is linked to deferred arrangements which is debt that is secured on property or assets, and therefore carries a low risk. There is also around £5m of debt which is deemed to be lower risk as its linked to areas such as probate, property sales or deputyship. As noted above, the current review of Debt provision for Adult Social Care has identified an £0.8m reduction in the ASC debt provision having reviewed the provision process across the 3 main categories of ASC all of which have distinct provision calculations. Further work is ongoing and will extend to wider Council debt throughout the review.
- 74 The Highways position for outstanding debt is consistent throughout the year. The debt is generally made up of three elements: the movement of funds from Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Borough Council in relation to the Cheshire Road Safety Group (these are settled quickly); third party claims for damage to the highway; and permit fees. The third party claims are often paid in instalments.

The previous outturn positions are:

- 31 March 2024 Outstanding debt £1.6m, over 6 months old £0.7m.
 - 31 March 2023 Outstanding debt £1m, over 6 months old £0.5m
- 74 The Council has robust processes in place to ensure that all outstanding debt is chased up (where commercially viable) and, where necessary, payment plans are put in place with advice from Legal Services.

Table 9 – Debt Summary as at 30th September 2024

	Outstanding Debt £000			Over 6 months old £000		
	FR1	FR2	Increase / (Decrease)	FR1	FR2	Increase / (Decrease)
Adults and Health Committee						
Adults, Public Health and Communities	14,534	14,967	433	9,091	9,060	(31)
Children and Families Committee						
Children's Social Care (Incl. Directorate)	182	189	8	14	-	(14)
Prevention and Early Help	72	69	(3)	(7)	(7)	-
Schools	22	17	(5)	2	2	0
Highways and Transport Committee						
Highways and Infrastructure	1,189	1,115	(75)	751	760	9
Economy and Growth Committee						
Growth and Enterprise	704	740	37	393	394	0
Environment and Communities Committee						
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	355	398	43	209	215	7
Corporate Policy Committee						
Finance and Customer Services	109	135	25	73	69	(3)
Governance and Compliance	37	(1)	(37)	-	-	-
Human Resources	8	-	(8)	1	-	(1)
ICT	119	217	98	1	2	2
Total	17,331	17,846	516	10,527	10,496	(31)

Council Tax and Business Rates

Council Tax

- 75 **Table 10** details each precepting authorities share of the budgeted collectable rates income.

Table 10	Band D	Collectable
Share of Council Tax Collectable Rates	Charge	Rates
		£m
Cheshire East Council	1,792.59	287.1
Town and Parish Councils	71.57	11.5
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner	262.94	42.1
Cheshire Fire Authority	90.09	14.4
Total	2,217.19	355.1

- 76 The collectable rates valuation is based on the assumption that of the total amount billed, at least 99% will be collected. **Table 11** demonstrates that, excluding a slight reduction during the Covid-19 pandemic, the target to collect at least 99% of Council Tax within three years continues to be achieved.

Table 11	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Council Tax Collection Rates	%	%	%	%	%
After 1 year	97.4	97.8	98.2	98.0	*55.58
After 2 years	98.6	98.5	98.8	**	**
After 3 years	98.9	99.0	**	**	**

* 2024/25 rate is up to 30th September 2024.

** Data is not yet available.

- 77 After accounting adjustments, the Council Tax Collection Fund is forecasting a £0.080m surplus for 2024/25, of which, £0.067m is attributable to Cheshire East Council. This surplus will be paid out in 2025/26 and will be held in the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve until such time.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)

- 78 Collectable rates are distributed between Cheshire East Council (49%), Cheshire Fire Authority (1%), and Central Government (50%).
- 79 Non-domestic Rates valuations for 2024/25 were set out in the NNDR1 return to Central Government in January 2024. Any variance to this forecast is included in the following years' NNDR1 return and any gain or loss will be recovered in 2025/26. The total Net Rates Payable into the Collection Fund was forecast at £155.7m.
- 80 **Table 12** demonstrates that the target to collect at least 99% of Non-Domestic Rates within three years continues to be achieved.

Table 12 Non-Domestic Collection Rates	2020/21 %	2021/22 %	2022/23 %	2023/24 %	2024/25 %
After 1 year	92.4	95.6	98.2	97.7	*56.43
After 2 years	97.4	98.3	98.8	**	**
After 3 years	99.0	99.2	**	**	**

* 2024/25 rate is up to 30th September 2024.

** Data is not yet available.

- 81 After accounting adjustments, the Non-Domestic Rates Collection Fund is forecasting a £2.1m deficit for 2024/25, of which, £1.0m is attributable to Cheshire East Council. This deficit will be repayable in 2025/26 and will be managed through the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve.

Treasury Management Strategy update

- 82 Treasury Management income to 30 September 2024 is £1.5m which is higher than the budgeted £0.9m. However, borrowing costs are also higher than budgeted at £9.2m compared to budget of £8m. This is caused by a combination of increasing interest rates with an increased borrowing requirement. From the projected cash flows for the remainder of 2024/25 the net additional financing costs (borrowing less investment interest) is expected to be £0.7m in excess of that budgeted.
- 83 Interest rates have seen substantial rises over the last two years which has significantly increased the cost of borrowing. The expectation is that borrowing costs will start to fall although market uncertainty and tightening liquidity in the markets suggests we will not benefit from lower rates until 2025/26.

- 84 At the moment, cash shortfalls are generally being met by temporary borrowing from other local authorities which for a number of years has been considerably cheaper than other sources of borrowing and allowed the Council to keep financing costs low. The cost of these loans is currently relatively high compared with longer term loans but interest forecasts suggest it is still the cheaper option in the long term. However, liquidity risk remains an issue as funds become more scarce towards year end and the request to the Government for exceptional financial support has raised credit worthiness concerns with some lenders. To reduce liquidity risk and any potential credit related penalisation on interest costs, consideration is being given to taking more longer term PWLB loans.
- 85 The cost of short term borrowing for the first six months of 2024/25 is 5.45% which is an increase from 4.82% in 2023/24. These costs are now expected to reduce as the outlook is for reducing interest rates.

Investment Strategy

- 86 There have not been any material changes to the Investment Strategy since that reported at Final Outturn 2023/24, see link [Final Outturn 2023-24 Annex 1.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

Receipt of Grant Funding

- 87 Cheshire East Council took a decision in May 2019 to be carbon neutral for its own operations by 2025. In May 2020 an action plan to achieve carbon neutrality through a combination of reducing and offsetting emissions was approved. As a key element of this action plan a target was agreed of 120ha of trees to be planted within Cheshire East. In 2024 the target for carbon neutrality was amended to 2027 due to delays following the Covid-19 pandemic and the Council's financial position.
- 88 Cheshire East Council entered into a partnership with The Mersey Forest to bring forward woodland planting schemes and has to date planted 7ha of woodland at Leighton Grange (planted by The Mersey Forest) and 15ha of woodland at Long Lane in Peover (planted by Cheshire East Council). The Council has received grant funding from the Trees for Climate Fund for the completed Long Lane planting scheme and for two schemes to be planted in the 2024/25 planting season.
- 89 The Mersey Forest has worked with Cheshire East Council to develop and gain approvals for a mixed woodland planting scheme at Buttertons Lane Farm, to be planted in the 2025/26 planting season. A Trees for
-

Climate Fund grant offer is available to cover the capital costs of the planting scheme and the revenue costs of maintaining the trees for an initial period of fifteen years.

- 90 The Environment and Communities Committee is requested to approve the use of this funding of £647,173.91.

Consultation and Engagement

- 91 As part of the budget setting process the Pre-Budget Consultation provided an opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the Council's Budget proposals. The budget proposals described in the consultation document were Council wide proposals and that consultation was invited on the broad budget proposals. Where the implications of individual proposals were much wider for individuals affected by each proposal, further full and proper consultation was undertaken with people who would potentially be affected by individual budget proposals.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 92 The overall process for managing the Council's resources focuses on value for money, good governance and stewardship. The budget and policy framework sets out rules for managing the Council's financial affairs and contains the financial limits that apply in various parts of the Constitution. As part of sound financial management and to comply with the constitution any changes to the budgets agreed by Council in the MTFS require approval in line with the financial limits within the Finance Procedure Rules.
- 93 This report provides strong links between the Council's statutory reporting requirements and the in-year monitoring and management processes for financial and non-financial management of resources.

Other Options Considered

- 94 None. This report is important to ensure Members of the Committee are sighted on the financial pressure the Council is facing and the activity to date to try and mitigate this issue and are given an opportunity to scrutinise this activity and identify any further actions that could be taken to learn to live within our means Do nothing. Impact – Members are not updated on the financial position of the Council. Risks – Not abiding by the Constitution to provide regular reports.
-

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 95 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget and require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
 - 96 The provisions of section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
 - 97 The Council should therefore have robust processes in place so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty. It must ensure that all available resources are directed towards the delivery of statutory functions, savings and efficiency plans. Local authorities are creatures of statute and are regulated through the legislative regime and whilst they have in more recent times been given a general power of competence, this must operate within that regime. Within the statutory framework there are specific obligations placed upon a local authority to support communities. These duties encompass general and specific duties and there is often significant local discretion in respect of how those services or duties are discharged. These will need to be assessed and advised on as each circumstance is considered.
 - 98 The financial position of the Council must therefore be closely monitored, and Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings or alternative mitigations.
 - 99 This report provides an update on progress for 2024/25 for all services.
 - 100 It also provides updates and comments regarding the Council's request for Exceptional Financial Support under The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which inserted an amended Section 12A as a
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trigger event within the Local Government Act 2003, in relation to capital finance risk management. The legislation also provides for risk mitigation directions to be given to the Council which limit the ability to undertake certain financial action. The limitations are based on identified risk thresholds.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 101 The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and communities. Monitoring and managing performance helps to ensure that resources are used effectively, and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.
 - 102 Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council. If spending associated with in-year delivery of services is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves.
 - 103 The unplanned use of financial reserves could require the Council to deliver a greater level of future savings to replenish reserve balances and / or revise the level of risks associated with the development of the Reserves Strategy in future.
 - 104 As part of the process to produce this report, senior officers review expenditure and income across all services to support the development of mitigation plans that will return the outturn to a balanced position at year-end.
 - 105 Forecasts contained within this review provide important information in the process of developing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Analysis of variances during the year will identify whether such performance is likely to continue, and this enables more robust estimates to be established.
 - 106 The risk associated with the scale of these challenges is that the Council could act illegally, triggering the requirement for a s.114 report from the Chief Financial Officer. Illegal behaviour in this context could materialise from two distinct sources:
 1. Spending decisions could be made that exceed the available resources of the Council. This would unbalance the budget, which is unlawful.
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2. Spending decisions to restrict or hide pressures could be made that avoid an immediate deficit, but in fact are based on unlawful activity.

107 The consequences of the Council undermining a budget with illegal activity, or planned illegal activity, is the requirement to issue a s.114 report. Under these circumstances statutory services will continue and existing contracts and commitments must be honoured. But any spending that is not essential or which can be postponed must not take place.

108 Further consequences would be highly likely and could include the appointment of Commissioners from the MHCLG, and potential restrictions on the decision-making powers of local leaders.

Policy

109 This report is a backward look at Council activities and predicts the year-end position. It supports the Corporate Plan aim Open and priority to be an open and enabling organisation.

110 The forecast outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2025 to 2029 Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

111 The approval of supplementary estimates and virements are governed by the Finance Procedure Rules section of the Constitution.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

112 Any equality implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Human Resources

113 This report is a backward look at Council activities at outturn and states the year end position. Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Risk Management

114 Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2023/24 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2024/25 financial scenario, budget, and reserves strategy.

Rural Communities

115 The report provides details of service provision across the borough.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

116 The report provides details of service provision across the borough and notes the pressure on Children in Care.

Public Health

117 This report is a backward look at Council activities at the first review and provides the forecast year end position. Any public health implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Climate Change

118 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	<p>Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer) adele.taylor@cheshireeast.gov.uk Paul Goodwin, Head of Finance & Deputy Chief Finance Officer paul.goodwin@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	<p>Annex 1 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 2024/25 Forecast Outturn • Section 2 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items • Section 3 Revenue Grants for approval • Section 4 Capital • Section 5 Reserves • Section 6 Treasury Management
Background Papers:	<p>The following are links to key background documents: Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2028</p>

	First Financial Review 2024/25
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Second Financial Review 2024/25

Results to end of August 2024

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Section 1: 2024/25 Forecast Outturn

- 1.1 Table 1 provides a service summary of financial performance based on information available as at the end of August 2024. The current forecast is that services will be £24.5m over budget in the current year.
- 2.1 It also shows that central budgets are forecast to be £4.5m under budget resulting in an overall outturn of £20.1m overspend against a net revenue budget of £395.4m, an improvement of £6.5m from FR1.
- 3.1 The overall revenue position does not include the impact of applying any Exceptional Financial Support.
- 4.1 The forecast outturn position is based on a full financial management review across all service and reflects the following assumptions:
 - Includes those savings that have been identified as non-achievable though the tracker on our High Level Business Cases (HLBC) with no/some alternative actions currently presented;
 - A review of the on-going impacts of adverse variances identified in 2023/24;
 - Any identified, emerging items of significance:
 - Within Adult Social Care, significant growth is forecast for care costs in line with position seen year to date, less mitigations linked to delivery of the Impower savings;
 - Includes the assumptions around additional revenue resources in Childrens Services to resource the draft improvement plan in relation to the recent OFSTED inspection;
 - Forecast impact of the proposed increased 2024/25 pay award £1.6m (unfunded);
 - Detailed review of any vacancy underspends in all areas;
 - One-off items that have been identified so far through line by line reviews and/or identification of additional funding that has been announced since the MTFS was set.
 - Mitigation activities delivered or forecast to be delivered by 31 March as reflected in paragraph 28 of the main covering report.
 - Review of Section 106 legacy budgets, the effects of which are partly reflected in the FR2 forecast out-turn as a one off contributions to reserves (to be further updated at FR3), work undertaken to date has identified an improvement (reduction) of the Council's bad debt provision of £0.8m,

Further items impacting on the level of the Council's balances are detailed in **Section 5**.

2024/25 FR2	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m	Forecast Variance from FR1 to FR2 £m	Movement from FR1 to FR2 £m
SERVICE DIRECTORATES					
Adult Social Care - Operations	145.9	167.8	21.9	21.7	0.2
Commissioning	(8.0)	(9.1)	(1.1)	(1.0)	(0.1)
Public Health	-	-	-	-	-
Adults and Health Committee	138.0	158.7	20.8	20.7	0.0
Directorate	2.3	3.4	1.1	1.3	(0.2)
Children's Social Care	55.3	58.9	3.6	4.6	(1.0)
Education, Strong Start & Integration	35.4	36.1	0.7	1.4	(0.7)
Children and Families Committee	93.0	98.4	5.4	7.3	(1.9)
Directorate	(0.34)	(0.37)	(0.03)	(0.03)	-
Growth & Enterprise	28.4	25.2	(3.2)	(2.6)	(0.7)
Economy and Growth Committee	28.1	24.8	(3.3)	(2.6)	(0.7)
Environment & Neighbourhood Services	48.4	48.3	(0.1)	0.6	(0.7)
Environment and Communities Committee	48.4	48.3	(0.1)	0.6	(0.7)
Highways & Infrastructure	16.0	15.4	(0.6)	(0.5)	(0.1)
Highways and Transport Committee	16.0	15.4	(0.6)	(0.5)	(0.1)
Directorate	1.4	1.2	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.0)
Finance & Customer Services	12.2	14.0	1.8	1.9	(0.1)
Transformation	-	2.8	2.8	1.9	0.9
Governance & Compliance Services	10.9	9.6	(1.3)	(1.2)	(0.1)
Communications	0.7	0.7	(0.0)	(0.0)	0.0
HR	2.4	2.1	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.0)
ICT	12.2	11.9	(0.3)	(0.1)	(0.2)
Policy & Change	2.0	1.8	(0.1)	(0.0)	(0.1)
Corporate Policy Committee	41.8	44.2	2.4	0.0	2.4
TOTAL SERVICES NET EXPENDITURE	365.3	389.9	24.5	25.6	(1.1)
CENTRAL BUDGETS					
Capital Financing	31.7	32.0	0.3	0.4	(0.1)
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(13.0)	(16.5)	(3.5)	0.6	(4.1)
Parish Precepts & Other Operating Expenditure	11.4	10.1	(1.3)	(0.1)	(1.2)
Finance Sub-Committee - Central Budgets	30.0	25.6	(4.5)	0.9	(5.4)
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	395.4	415.4	20.1	26.5	(6.5)
Business Rates Retention Scheme	(69.5)	(69.5)	0.0	-	0.0
Specific Grants	(32.4)	(32.4)	-	-	-
Council Tax	(293.5)	(293.5)	-	-	-
Finance Sub-Committee - Net Funding	(395.4)	(395.4)	0.0	-	0.0
NET (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	(0.0)	20.1	20.1	26.5	(6.5)

Section 2: 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items

The following table provides up detailed commentary on the progress against the approved budget change items that were agreed as part of the budget agreed in February 2024. These are split by relevant committee.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Adults and Health Committee	+1.136	+21.900	+20.764	
1	Fees and Charges	-1.800	-1.800	0	Green – see below
2	Client Contributions Increase	-0.800	-4.649	-3.849	Green - £3.85m surplus vs client contribution budget forecasted for 2024/25. This is in addition to achieving the budgeted increase for Fees and Charges & Client Contribution increase in-year (£2.6m)
3	Working Age Adults - Prevent, Reduce, Delay	-1.467	-1.467	0	Green - Multiple activities contributing to these savings. Validation of delivery and measures being developed by SROs and Finance.
4	Older People – Prevent, Reduce, Delay	-1.566	-1.566	0	Green - Multiple activities contributing to these savings. Validation of delivery and measures being developed by SROs and Finance.
5	Market Sustainability and Workforce grant	-1.100	-1.100	0	Completed
6	Revenue grants for Adult Social Care	-2.480	-2.480	0	Completed
7	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.493	-0.493	0	Completed
8	Investment in Adult Social Care	+7.600	+30.133	+22.533	Red – MTFS growth for Care Costs not sufficient to cover the pressure seen in 2023/24 plus the expected growth in 2024/25. Mitigations to reduce pressure reported separately.
9	Pay Inflation	+1.892	+2.104	+0.212	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS.
10	Resettlement Revenue Grants – reversal of 2023/24 use	+0.850*	+0.850*	0	Completed
11	Adult Social Care Transformation Earmarked Reserve Release – reversal of 2023/24 use	+0.500*	+0.500*	0	Completed

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
12	Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care – Removal of Grant Income	-	-	-	Completed - Now a 2025/26 Item
13	Asset Management	TBC	TBC	-	Green - It is expected that the NHS will confirm their intentions for usage of one of the key CEC sites in question by September 2024. Once this is received, the business case for future usage of the site will be revisited and taken through the appropriate CEC governance procedures. The model of care in relation to high-cost adult social care and health provisions will be part of this work.
14	Investigate potential agency creation	TBC	TBC	-	Green - This proposal has been consistently delivered in relation to the usage of a Care Workers agency in all but name. Care4CE, the Council's in house care provider, has been utilising workers, both casual and agency, as a bank of workers for several years to successfully deliver operational requirements. The establishment of a CEC.
In year	Other variances to reconcile to 2024/25 FR2 forecast	0	+2.888	+2.888	
In year	Mitigations reducing the FR2 reported forecast position	0	-1.020	-1.020	

** Item represented a one-off spend in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.*

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Children and Families Committee	+9.909	+15.311	+5.402	
15	Discretionary offer to children with disabilities	-0.900	-0.903	-0.003	Green - On track, project team progressing multiple improvements to redesign the service offer, ensuring consistency and efficiency.
16	Remove school catering subsidy	-0.516	-0.049	+0.467	Red - In progress, rate uplift applied from September 2024 in order to cover the costs of the service through to the end of March 2025 when it ends. However, as some schools are making their own arrangements before the end of the financial year, this will impact on the savings target.
17	Review of structure to further integrate children and families services	-1.000	-0.200	+0.800	Red - Delivery Planning in progress to address saving. Including: further Establishment review, service redesign, cross directorate risk management.
18	Reduce discretionary Post-16 Travel Support	-0.400	-0.250	+0.150	Red - Agreed by Committee so progressing, too early to confirm take-up.
19	Achieve the Family Hub model	-0.250	-0.250	0	Green - Committee approved permission to consult. Following the consultation period, a report will go back to Committee in November for a decision to move forward with the new model. Savings are not going to be delivered in year therefore alternative saving being found to cover this.
20a	Other Service Reviews – Review of commissioned services across the C&F directorate. Review of the current Domestic Abuse Service	-0.100	-0.143	-0.043	Completed.
20b	Other Service Reviews – Maximise grant allocation to cover all costs	-0.100	0	+0.100	Red - Plan to explore current / future grants to ensure where T&Cs allow, contribution to fund base costs (e.g. staffing and on costs) is maximised.
20c	Other Service Reviews – Traded services	-0.050	+0.020	+0.070	Red - Part delivered but may need to look for alternative options to cover the remaining saving for this year.
21a	Reduce Growth in expenditure – review of high cost, low outcome external residential placements	-1.000	-1.000	0	Red - Whilst work has been taking place to open CE Children's Homes and our first open is now open, with our second due in autumn/winter, our collaboration with Foster4 working well to increase our foster carers, we still are seeing more children coming into carer. There is also increasing

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					instability with the residential market,, driving up prices. Complex young people need high packages of support, which are extremely expensive. We are due to review all high cost placements and other placements to identify children for whom reunification to family would be appropriate. Processes are also in place by the Head of Provider Services to review costs being paid to providers.
21b	Reduce Growth in expenditure – increase commissioning approach to establish greater opportunities to provide accommodation for +16 young people	-0.400	-0.200	+0.200	Red - 16+ and 18+ Commissioning Plans / Market Shaping in Progress. Responding to increasing demand and complexity.
21c	Reduce Growth in expenditure – Foster Care	-0.250	-0.250	0	Amber - Developing a Delivery Plan to increase Foster Care provision.
21d	Reduce Growth in expenditure – reduced spend on expert assessment in court proceedings and services post public law proceedings	-0.250	-0.250	0	Amber - Establishing a Task & Finish Group to explore and develop processes and capacity to reduce costly legal proceedings.
22	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.515	-0.342	+0.173	Red - Teacher's pension legacy costs are not reducing as anticipated. Completed - CEC pension reduction.
23	Growth to deliver statutory Youth Justice service, and growth to ensure budget is sufficient to meet Safeguarding Partnership duties	+0.170	+0.197	+0.027	Amber - It is incumbent upon the three statutory safeguarding partners, the police, health and the Local Authority, to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership so it can fulfil its statutory functions in delivering the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. An internal audit identified the Local Authority had not reviewed its contributions to the partnership and was insufficiently contributing to the delivery of the partnership arrangements. As a result, growth was approved by committee. This has been supported by an increase in contributions from all partner agencies. A vacancy has also been held in the business unit.
24	Growth to provide capacity to deliver transformation for SEND	+0.500	+0.297	-0.203	Green.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
25	Wraparound Childcare Programme (funded)	+0.587	+0.587	0	Amber - Currently reviewing sufficiency and funding details to manage delivery within budget.
25	Wraparound Childcare Programme (funded)	-0.587	-0.587	0	Amber - Currently reviewing sufficiency and funding details to manage delivery within budget.
26	Legal Proceeding - Child Protection	+0.770	+0.576	-0.194	Amber
27	Growth in School Transport budget	+0.936	+1.036	+0.100	Red.
28	Pay Inflation	+1.374	+1.915	+0.541	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS.
29	Use of Children & Families Transformation Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use	+1.065*	+1.065*	0	Completed.
30	Growth in Childrens Placement costs	+10.825	+12.987	+2.162	Red - Will need to be closely monitored throughout the year to ensure that funding is sufficient to meet demand and complexity.
31	Revenue costs for the Crewe Youth Zone (as above) aligned to Supporting Families Funding	-	-	-	Green
31	Early Help budget to support funding towards the Crewe Youth Zone	-	-	-	Green
32	SEND Capital Modification	TBC	TBC	-	Amber - Contingent upon wider asset management and associated timelines. Extensive work underway to plan and progress development opportunities. Captured as part of the Capital Program reported to Committee.
33	Childrens Social Work Bank	TBC	TBC	-	Red - Various options currently being explored as part of wider C&F Establishment review and potential peripatetic resource options.
34	Safe Walking Routes to School	TBC	TBC	-	Green - Features as part of School Transport Programme.
35	Withdrawal of the CEC School Meals Service	TBC	TBC	-	Green - Features as part of School Catering subsidy project - CF2428-16.
In year	In-year emerging variance Education, Strong Start and Integration	0	-0.779	-0.779	Green. Underspend relates to vacancy management, reduced spend and income generation across services.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
In year	In-year emerging variance Children and Families Directorate	0	+0.165	+0.165	Red. Overspend relates to supplier compensation payment, external Quality Assurance Agency costs and cost of establishment.
In year	In-Year emerging variance Children's Social Care	0	+1.669	+1.669	Red. Overspend mainly relates to staffing costs.

** Item represented a one-off spend in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.*

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Corporate Policy Committee	+0.489	+2.966	+2.477	
36	Reduce leadership and management costs	-0.540	-	+0.540	Red - The feedback from the DMA review is that senior management vacancies will require recruitment to in order to complete the complement of Corporate Managers. In year vacancy savings will continue but will be time limited. There is potential to increase costs by additional management support during transformation. This will result in increased budget pressure. This pressure is being mitigated through the four in-year items at the end of this table. Most of those will be permanent and used to deliver this saving.
37	Close the Emergency Assistance Scheme	-0.220	-0.220	0	Completed
38	Reduce election costs and increase charges where possible	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green - The proposal is to make a payment during 2024/25 of £70k-£80k from the existing election account, as part of this one-off saving. The remainder will be delivered by reducing the sum which would normally be paid into the election reserve. This might be mitigated in the year of the next local elections by monies which will be raised by charging town and parish councils for their elections in 2027. However, this will not be sufficient and will be likely to lead to the need for a supplementary estimate.
39a	Accelerate Digital Transformation (ICT Operational efficiencies)	-0.100	-0.100	0	Green – third party costs have been reduced and there are plans to reduce further during the year.
39b	Accelerate Digital (Digital efficiencies)	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green – Removal of temporary budget for Solutions Architect Resource, now covered by an Earmarked Reserve.
40	Enforce prompt debt recovery and increase charges for costs	-0.150	-0.150	0	Completed - The award of costs is a matter for the Magistrates at each court hearing. However, only by exception will they vary from the level already agreed by us with the Court Manager. The approach to the Court Manager has been made and the revised level agreed. The action is therefore complete, but the financial benefits will accrue as we continue

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					the regular recovery process during the year.
41a	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – School Subsidy (ICT)	-0.032	-0.033	-0.001	Green
41b	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Organisational Development	-0.100	-0.100	0	Completed
41c	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Registration Services	-0.050	-0.050	0	Green
41d	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – School Subsidy	-0.018	0	+0.018	Amber - Part of the £50k School Subsidy saving - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41e	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services	-0.010	0	+0.010	Amber - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41f	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Printing	-0.050	0	+0.050	Amber - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41g	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Hybrid working / mileage	-0.050	0	+0.050	Amber – Options being considered regarding reduced travel spend including ensuring efficient planning around meeting attendance and minimising unnecessary movements across the area. This maximises efficient use of time as well for teams.
42	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.378	-0.378	0	Completed
43	Mitigation of reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant	+0.136	+0.136	0	Completed
44	Pay Inflation	+1.446	+1.581	+0.135	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS.
45	Legal Services Capacity	+0.455	+0.455	0	Completed
46	ICT Review 1	+0.450	+0.450	0	Green
47	Workforce Strategy Review	TBC	-	-	Amber - There are no savings attributed to this area in 2024/2025. Opportunities to explore workforce options are being considered alongside transformation work. Any savings are likely to be realised in

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					2025/26 at the earliest. It is recommended that this item is removed from the list.
In year	Recognising the increased level of Registration service income of £350k.	0	-0.350	-0.350	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red ranked items above.
In year	Recognising the receipt of £45k of Police and Crime Commissioner grant income.	0	-0.045	-0.045	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red / Amber ranked items above.
In year	Taking the underspend on phones in corporate services (mobiles and rental) compared to budget.	0	-0.060	-0.060	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red / Amber ranked items above.
In year	Additional mitigations to balance to FR1 position of +£23k for corporate incl ICT.	0	+2.130	+2.130	These will be a mix of permanent and temporary items to assist the in-year position. This includes Transformation costs.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Economy and Growth Committee	+3.316	+0.041	-3.275	
49	Service Restructures within Place based Services	-0.787	0	+0.787	Amber – achievement through permanent savings remains challenging without a full restructure – which is pending the LGA review. Mitigation is through offset of underspend 'in year' and proposals are to be considered to offset permanently.
50	Reduce opening hours for main offices	-0.050	-0.050	0	Completed
51	Office estate rationalisation	-0.550	-0.250	+0.300	Amber - due to the timeline for the transfer of buildings being extended. This item is being mitigated by in year savings and by the items at the end of the table which are a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
52	Tatton Park	-0.046	-0.046	0	Amber - Savings can be achieved through investment in the Tatton Vision Programme. To date this programme has achieved cumulative MTFS savings of £624k. Amber rating reflects the fact that the Tatton Vision capital programme is currently under review. Lack of investment to maintain infrastructure or develop visitor attractions is likely to reduce savings.
53	Transfer of Congleton Visitor Information Centre	-0.020	-0.020	0	Green - Transfer of Congleton VIC to the Town Council has already occurred.
54	Pension costs adjustment	-0.157	-0.157	0	Completed
55	Tatton Park ticketing and electronic point of sale (EPOS) upgrade	+0.005	+0.005	0	Green - A procurement process is currently underway to source a supplier who can ensure onsite and web-based delivery of a new system which aligns with present and future needs. Improved functionality should enable future savings delivery.
56c	West Park collection	+0.012	+0.012	0	Green - Cost for vital conservation and storage of West Park Museum collections and ongoing temporary storage requirements.
56d	CEC archives	+0.008	0	-0.008	Amber - Timescales for implementation of the Archives capital project have slipped due to grant funding decisions, with revised opening date of Spring 2026.
57	Property Information and Management System - Estates – Revenue Adjustment	+0.030	+0.031	+0.001	Completed

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
58	Housing	+0.035	+0.035	0	Green - Consultation on the Housing Restructure commences 22 May and includes the post that the funding is attributed to. The new structure will be implemented by 1 August 2024.
59	Environmental Hub Waste Transfer Station	+0.040	+0.040	0	Green - Project on track delivery Q1/2. The replacement of bay 1 in the Councils Environmental Hub Residual Waste Transfer Station building with a new design more likely to provide long-term resilience to wear and tear, to enable the continuation of waste processing at the transfer station.
60	Rural and Visitor Economy	+0.045	+0.045	0	Green - Additional revenue support is required to cover the increase in electricity charges for the Rural and Culture Economy Service to maintain existing service provision at Tatton Park and Countryside sites.
61	Minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) - Estates - Revenue Adjustment	+0.079	+0.079	0	Amber – Prioritised negotiations with 3rd parties/tenants occupying premises being expedited to avoid delays on obtaining access for surveys, completing necessary improvement works and legally completing lease renewals.
62	Public Rights of Way Income Realignment	+0.115	+0.115	0	Completed. Adjustments made to budget forecasts 2024/25
63	Pay inflation	+0.788	+0.940	+0.152	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS. This item is being mitigated by the items at the end of the table which are a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
64	Crewe town centre maintenance and operation	+0.650	+0.630	-0.020	Green
65	Assets - Buildings and Operational	+3.119	+3.119	0	Green
66	Landfill Site Assessments revenue adjustment - Estates – CE Owned Landfill sites (53 sites) Review and Risk Assessment completions	-	-	-	Amber - £10k cost growth in for 25/26. Second stage of the review to commence shortly. Internal capacity within Environmental Services to be identified.
67	Tatton Park Estate Dwellings Refurbishment	-	-	-	Completed - Provision for response maintenance issues for 8 onsite dwellings to ensure properties meet standards required as part of tenancy agreements and the National Trust lease.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
68	Improving Crewe Rented Housing Standards	-	-	-	Green
In year	Growth & Enterprise 2024/25 mitigations to balance back to finance review position	0	-3.672	-3.672	
In year	Place Directorate 2024/25 mitigations to balance back to finance review position	0	-0.815	-0.815	

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Environment and Communities Committee	-0.052	-0.178	-0.126	
69	Refresh wholly owned company overheads and contributions	-1.000	-1.500	-0.500	Green - ASDV Review recommendations have now been approved in full by Finance Sub-Committee in their role as shareholder of the wholly owned companies. The process of insourcing these services is now underway which will release an element of their reserves in year to meet this one-off contribution.
70	Strategic Leisure Review (Stage 2)	-1.305	-1.185	+0.120	Amber - Initial savings secured via committee decision on 11th March 2024. Proposals are being developed with EHL and town and parish councils to secure the residual £250k amount - dialogue is ongoing.
71	Mitigate the impact of contract inflation and tonnage growth	-0.490	-0.490	0	Completed - Mitigate the impact of contract inflation and tonnage growth.
72	Emergency reduction of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) to four core sites	-0.263	-0.200	+0.063	Amber - Full saving on basis of original HLBC will not be achieved due to introduction of mobile provision offer as a result of Full Council decision and costs associated with trial of booking system. Following implementation of temporary closures final negotiations with supply chain are nearing conclusion in relation to savings in year, which include adjustment for waste diversion. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
73	Libraries Strategy	-0.365	-0.302	+0.063	Amber - Development of and consultation on Libraries Strategy is now reaching a conclusion following public consultation. Need to secure committee decision to implement final Strategy (target Nov 2024) – engagement with Town and Parish Councils undertaken to shape the Strategy proposals and seek funding contributions, which is continuing and producing results. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table, which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures, principally vacancy management.
74	Reduce costs of street cleansing operations	-0.200	-0.200	0	Green - Value of saving now reduced from ANSA Management Fee for 2024/25, proposals to achieve which include immediate reductions in service

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					resilience, due to removal of any vacancies and under utilised fleet.
75	Reduce revenue impact of carbon reduction capital schemes	-0.336	0	+0.336	Amber – Carbon Neutral Council target deferred from 2025 to 27, as agreed at Full Council on 27.02.24, large scale prudential borrowing funded schemes spend now reprofiled to suit, however budget not sat within E&C Committee. Discussion with Corporate Financing team to re-allocate. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
76	Increase Garden Waste charges to recover costs	-0.045	-0.045	0	Green – Increase Garden Waste charges for the calendar year 2025 to recover costs
77	MTFS 80 (Feb 23) – Waste Disposal – Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth (updated forecast)	+3.577	+3.977	+0.400	Green – rating due to fluctuations in waste markets relating to recyclates and continued levels of inflation, outside CEC control and not aligned to projections. Mitigation is to continue with monthly financial monitoring and detailed update of forecasting to year end, based on market intelligence from suppliers and historical seasonal trends data.
78	Pay Inflation – CEC & ASDV	+1.861	+2.397	+0.536	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
79	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.151	-0.151	0	Completed
80	MTFS 90 (Feb 23) Strategic Leisure Review	+1.250	+1.250	0	Completed - Growth item budget adjustment only - replacing 2023/24 £1.3m savings target.
81	MTFS 91 (Feb 23) – Green Spaces Maintenance Review	-0.200	-0.200	0	Green - Year 2 saving - Policy now implemented and full saving secured from ANSA contract.
82	MTFS 92 (Feb 23) - Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	-3.150	-3.150	0	Green - Subscription levels in line with original business model.
83	Review MTFS 92 (Feb 23) Garden waste subscription financial model in line with latest subscription levels and with actual observed	-0.429	-0.429	0	Green - Continued monitoring of subscription levels and any adverse impacts is already in place, update to original business plan assumptions.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	position on any waste migration				
84	MTFS 93 (Feb 23) Libraries - Service Review	-0.200	-0.200	0	Amber - Year 2 of Service Review - reduction in staffing levels have been implemented and now include vacancy management in year to ensure achievement of saving. Currently covered temporarily by vacancy savings
85	Explore a Trust delivery model for Libraries and other services	+0.150	+0.020	-0.130	Green - Growth item to cover one off costs relating to implementation of alternative delivery model(s) for libraries service. Aligned to development of Libraries Strategy.
86	CCTV – Service Efficiencies	-0.030	-0.030	0	Green – Ongoing actions to increase customer base for existing services, identification of new chargeable services/customers and service efficiency savings as well as increased fees and charges to meet the target.
87	Congleton Town Council Collaboration Agreement – Grounds Maintenance	-0.062	-0.062	0	Completed - Congleton Town Council Collaboration Agreement on Grounds Maintenance Cheshire East Contribution reduced in line with reductions in Cheshire East Maintained green space.
88	Closed Cemeteries	+0.005	+0.005	0	Completed - Inflationary adjustment to previous budget allocation only.
89	Environmental Hub maintenance	+0.023	+0.023	0	Completed - Inflationary adjustment to previous budget allocation only.
90	Review Closed Landfill Sites	+0.300*	+0.300*	0	Completed - The Council has responsibility for a number of closed landfill sites across the borough for which it holds a provision.
91	Land Charge Income Adjustment	+0.050	+0.064	+0.014	Amber - Uncertainty around implementation timescales of HMLR changes to centralise some aspects of land charges functions hence understanding of actual impact, to be regularly monitored.
92	Building Control Income Alignment	+0.203	+0.403	+0.200	Amber - Due to current national trend of downturn in planning and related building control income. To be monitored through more regular financial forecasting in service. Reforms to national planning policy recently consulted upon may have a positive impact on this position moving forward due to uplift in both volume and pace of developments coming forward. To be considered in due course following Govt announcement. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
93	Local Plan Review	+0.255	+0.255	0	Completed - Budget adjustment to provide additional one-off funding towards development of new Local Plan, now commenced.
94	Planning income	+0.400	+0.910	+0.510	Amber – Forecast reduced income in year due to current national trend of downturn in planning applications and hence income. Proactively monitored through regular financial forecasting in service. Partially mitigated by continued high level of vacancies and the item at the end of the table. Recent national planning policy forms announced by Govt which were subject to a consultation process may help to alleviate the income position, but will require vacancies to be filled to cater for the likely increase in applications. To be considered as and when further announcement made.
95	Planning Service Restructure	-	-	-	Green - No action for 2024/25. Growth for 2025/26 to be kept under review.
96	Review of Household Waste Recycling Centres	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - all activities are on track for completion on time following decision at Environment and Communities Committee on 26 September 2024 to proceed with preferred option and finalisation of new operating contract procurement process.
In year	Environment & Neighbourhood Services mitigations 2024/25 to balance back to finance review position	0	-1.738	-1.738	

* Item represented a one-off saving in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Highways and Transport Committee	+4.869	+4.267	-0.602	
97	Highway maintenance savings	-0.750	-0.750	0	Green - Savings are being achieved through: - reducing the number of cuts on grass verges from 10 to 8; - directly employing staff to carry out surveys, rather than sub-contracting; - reductions in staffing and vacancy management; and - reliance on the Council's adverse weather reserve for snow clearance. Service budgets have been reduced to reflect the savings being made.
98	Introduce annual increases to car parking charges	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green - Annual inflation adjustment to existing P&D tariffs can be implemented by 1st July 2024, in advance of bringing charges into effect in the "free towns". This is 3 months earlier than planned.
99	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.052	-0.052	0	Completed
100	Highways	-0.031	-0.031	0	Completed - This saving was delivered by changes to response times to defects in 2023/24.
101	Safe Haven outside schools (Parking)	-0.023	-0.023	0	Red - Introduction of CCTV camera enforcement of waiting/loading restrictions at school gates on a trial basis using bespoke equipment that is type approved and proven for these purposes in order to improve road safety and increase enforcement capacity at these high risk locations.
102	Transport and Infrastructure Strategy Team - Restructure	+0.120	+0.060	-0.060	Amber - Vacancies in existing structure provide some flexibilities of resourcing and recruitment planning.
103	Pay Inflation	+0.339	+0.351	+0.012	Red - NJC Pay Claim now approved - over spend against budget as a result of £1,290/2.5% increase. Increase compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3% within original MTFS. This item is being mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures.
104	Parking - PDA / Back Office System contract	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - Market testing completed - exploring a direct award opportunity with implementation testing and data migration.
105	Flood and Water Management Act 2010 SuDS & SABs Schedule 3 Implementation	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - The requirement is to be ready to implement changes when regulations are implemented nationally.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					A training plan for existing staff has been identified. Recruitment is to be progressed.
106	Energy saving measures from streetlights	+0.242	+0.242	0	Completed - This entry was in the MTFS to cancel an unachievable saving from 2022/23. There is no further action.
107	Parking	+0.245	+0.245	0	Amber - Following decisions in January 2024, arrangements are in place to adjust existing Pay & Display tariffs from 1 July 2024 and extend pay and display to car parks in "free towns" by October 2024. Statutory consultations on Sunday and Evening charges will start in July. A trial of demand-responsive tariffs will begin with the opening of the new multistorey car park in Crewe.
108	Highways Revenue Services	+2.479	+2.479	0	Completed - This is a growth item. The growth has been factored into 2024/25 service levels and business plans. No further action.
109	Local Bus	+2.250	+2.250	0	Green
110	FlexiLink Service Improvement Plan	-	-	-	Green - A bus service review consultation is underway, including proposals relating to flexible transport. Committee received a report updating on the outcomes of the consultation and the approach to procurement on 19 September 2024.
111	Highways Depot Improvements	-	-	-	Red - This later year saving is subject to the approval of the business case for capital investment in depots. This will be reviewed during 2024/25.
112	Bus Stop Advertising Revenue Generation	-	-	-	Amber - Opportunity to shadow CWAC council's extension of the existing contract in the interim period.
In year	Highways & Infrastructure 2024-25 mitigations to balance to finance review	0	-0.554	-0.554	

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Central Budgets	2024/25 £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Finance Sub-Committee	-19.667	-24.138	-4.471	
113	Capital Financing - Minimum Revenue Provision	+9.508	+9.846	+0.338	Amber – assumes use of reserve of £2.135m (subject to approval). Ongoing capital review seeking to significantly reduce spend funded by borrowing.
114	Central Bad Debt Provision adjustment	+0.600	+0.600	0	Completed - budget adjustment.
115	Use of Earmarked Reserves – MTFS Reserve	+0.255	+0.255	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
115	MTFS Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use	+1.536	+1.536	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
116	Collection Fund Reserve - Use of Earmarked Reserves	-0.834	-0.834	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
116	Collection Fund Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use of reserves	+2.234	+2.234	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
117	Brighter Futures Transformation – reversal of 2023/24 use of reserves	+1.271	+1.271	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
118	Use of General Reserves – Fund in-year budget shortfall [NEW]	-11.654	-11.654	0	Completed - Drawn down in line with the MTFS forecast.
Amber 119	Council Tax - % increase	-13.527	-13.527	0	Green - Council tax and business rates income collection managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target.
120	Council Tax – Base increase	-2.461	-2.461	0	Green - Council tax and business rates income collection managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target.
121	Business Rates Retention Scheme – use of S31 compensation grants	-1.350	-1.350	0	Green - Grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG.
122	Unring-fenced Grants + Revenue Support Grant	-5.245	-5.245	0	Green - Grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG.
123	Council Tax and Business Rates Collection [NEW]	TBC	-	-	Initial case was to implement a working group to review council tax collection. No savings value was assigned to the case. The intention now is to bring

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Central Budgets	2024/25 £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
					forward via an informal briefing to include options around the council tax support scheme review (FS2428)
124	Council Tax Support [NEW]	TBC	-	-	Preparations to be made during 2024/25 with a view to amending the council tax support scheme in 2025/26. No value is assigned to 2024/25 as any savings/growth will be realised in 2025/26. Consultation dates / material to come via Finance Sub-Committee for summer launch. Final decision point will be December Council meeting 2024.
In year	Bad Debt Provision reduction (one off)	-	-0.839	-0.839	
In year	S106 (Estimate provisional – one off – may increase, still under review)	-	-0.452	-0.452	
In year	Increased use of reserves re Transformation spend included in Service FR2 forecasts	-	-4.034	-4.043	
In year	Adjustment to use of Earmarked reserves budgeted figure within Service Budgets	-	+0.525	+0.525	

Section 3: Revenue Grants for approval

- 3.1. Cheshire East Council receives two main types of Government grants; specific purpose grants and general use grants. Specific purpose grants are held within the relevant service with a corresponding expenditure budget. Whereas general use grants are held in central budgets with a corresponding expenditure budget within the allocated service area.
- 3.2. Spending in relation to specific purpose grants must be in line with the purpose for which it is provided.
- 3.3. **Table 1** shows additional specific purpose grant allocations that have been received over £1m that **Council** will be asked to approve.
- 3.4. **Table 2** shows additional specific purpose grant allocations that have been received which are over £500,000 and up to £1m, and are for **Committee** approval.

Table 1 – Council Decision

Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose) over £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families – Children’s Services	Household Support Fund (Specific Purpose)	2,200	This grant is from the Department for Work and Pensions. This is an extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF) and will cover the period from October 2024 to March 2025. The HSF is to provide crisis support to financially vulnerable households most in need.

Table 2 – Committee Decision

Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose) over £500,000 up to £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Adults and Health	Asylum Dispersal Scheme (Specific Purpose)	770	This grant is from the Home Office (HO). Funding allocated by the Home Office for Cheshire East to support the Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

Section 4: Capital

Table 1: Financial Parameters for 2023/24 to 2026/27

Parameter	Value (£m)			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Repayment of Borrowing				
Minimum Revenue Provision*	17.5	18.8	23.2	24.9
External Loan Interest	14.3	18.1	16.5	15.0
Investment Income	(3.8)	(3.5)	(2.2)	(1.8)
Contributions from Services Revenue Budgets	(1.2)	(1.3)	(1.8)	(2.4)
Total Capital Financing Costs	26.8	32.1	35.7	35.7
Use of Financing EMR	(7.9)	(2.1)	0	0
Actual CFB in MTFS	19.0	28.5	35.2	35.5
Budget Deficit	(0)	1.5	0.5	0.2
Capital Receipts targets*	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Flexible use of Capital Receipts	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

*Anticipated MRP based on achieving capital receipts targets

- 1.1. The revised programme is funded from both direct income (grants, external contributions) and the Council's own resources (prudential borrowing, revenue contributions, capital reserve). A funding summary is shown in **Table 2**.
- 1.2. **Table 3** lists details of Delegated decisions up to £500,000 for noting.
- 1.3. **Table 4** lists Capital Supplementary Estimates over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 for committee approval and Capital Virements over £500,000 and up to and including £5,000,000 that require Relevant Member(s) of CLT and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chair of Finance Sub-Committee to approve.
- 1.4. **Table 5** lists Supplementary Capital Estimates over £1,000,000 which Finance Sub-committee are asked to recommend to Council for approval.

Table 2: Capital Programme Update

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY					
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 - 2027/28					
	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	Total Forecast 2024-28 £000
Committed Schemes - In					
Adults and Health	800				800
Children and Families	32,551	25,086	16,355	17,749	91,741
Highways & Transport	46,992	36,385	27,297	126,015	236,689
Economy & Growth	43,747	32,669	44,164	61,502	182,082
Environment & Communities	13,184	17,001	3,414	22	33,621
Corporate Policy	11,962	6,627	3,173	1,834	23,596
Total Committed Schemes - In Progress	149,236	117,768	94,403	207,122	568,529
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 - 2027/28					
	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	Total Forecast 2024-28 £000
New Schemes					
Adults and Health					0
Children and Families	1,738	7,200	5,248	3,000	17,186
Highways & Transport	895	21,842	15,051	15,051	52,839
Economy & Growth	3,145	358	0	0	3,503
Environment & Communities	2,647	4,602	1,150	0	8,399
Corporate Policy					0
Total New Schemes	8,425	34,002	21,449	18,051	81,927
Total	157,661	151,770	115,852	225,173	650,456
Funding Requirement					
Indicative Funding Analysis: (See note 1)					
Government Grants	96,481	81,330	71,168	114,808	363,786
External Contributions	15,402	11,784	12,642	67,855	107,683
Revenue Contributions	444	0	0	0	444
Capital Receipts	233	660	17,240	17,466	35,599
Prudential Borrowing (See note 2)	45,101	57,996	14,802	25,044	142,943
Total	157,661	151,770	115,852	225,173	650,456

Note 1:

The funding requirement identified in the above table does not currently represent a balanced and affordable position, in the medium term. The Council will need to transform the capital programme to reduce the number of schemes requiring Cheshire East Resources and the need to borrow. The level of capital receipts are based on a prudent approach based on the work of the Asset Management team and their most recently updated Disposals Programme.

Note 2:

The schemes marked **and highlighted in the MTFs cannot proceed until the Capital Programme Review has been completed. Any urgent requests to continue prior to the reviews completion will require approval from the Chair of Finance Sub Committee and the S.151 Officer

Note 3:

Appropriate charges to the revenue budget will only commence in the year following the completion of the associated capital asset. This allows the Council to constantly review the most cost effective way of funding capital expenditure.

Table 3: Delegated Decisions – Supplementary Capital estimates and Budget virements up to £500,000

Committee / Capital Scheme	Amount Requested £	Reason and Funding Source
Supplementary Capital Estimates that have been made up to £500,000		
Highways & Transport		
Infrastructure		
S106 M6 J17 Improvements	57,295	To add S106 monies received into the Programme.
Alvaston Roundabout Works	448,281	To add S106 monies received into the Programme.
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	505,576	
£		
Capital Budget Virements that have been made up to £500,000		
Economy & Growth		
Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment	243,000	To be moved from Macc on Foot, both Shared Prosperity Fund (UK) grant funded projects.
Highways		
Programme Management	118,320	To match budget to cost alignment, funded by virement from "Client Contract and Asset Management". All funded by Local Transport Grant.
Bridge Maintenance Minor Works	254,593	Works in relation to A523 Mill house Bridge, to be funded by virements from "Transport & Infrastructure Development Studies" (£50,000); "Client Contract and Asset Management" (£154,593); "LTP Development & Monitoring Studies" (£50,000). All funded by Local Transport Grant.
Total Capital Budget Virements Approved	615,913	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements	1,121,489	

Table 4: Requests for Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) and Virements

Committee / Capital Scheme	Amount Requested £	Reason and Funding Source
Service Committee are asked to approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates above £500,000 up to and including £1,000,000		
Highways & Transport		
Transport		
Bridge Maintenance Minor Wks	602,407	Works in relation to A523 Mill house Bridge, to be funded by reimbursements in relation to insurance claims.
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	602,407	
Service committee are asked to note Capital Budget Virements above £500,000 up to and including £5,000,000 for approval by Relevant Member(s) of CLT and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chair of Finance Sub-Committee		
Highways & Transport		
Infrastructure		
Middlewich Eastern Bypass	2,243,000	} Virements from Congleton Relief Road whose revised forecasts are expected to be significantly less.
Poynton Relief Road	2,191,429	
Total Capital Virements requested	4,434,429	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements	5,036,836	

Table 5: Recommendations for Approval for Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) and Virements

Committee	Amount Requested £	Reason and Funding Source
Finance Sub Committee are asked to recommend to Council the approval of the Supplementary Capital SCEs over £1,000,000		
Highways & Transport		
Infrastructure		
Burford Roundabout Works	1,389,281	To add S106 monies received against planning app 13/2471N plus any subsequently applied interest into the Programme so that initial works can take place.
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	1,389,281	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements	1,389,281	

Section 5: Reserves

Management of Council Reserves

- 5.1. The Council's Reserves Strategy states that the Council will maintain reserves to protect against risk and support investment.
- 5.2. The opening balance at 1 April 2024 in the Council's General Fund Reserves was £5.6m, as published in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.
- 5.3. At FR1 stage the closing balance at 31 March 2025 in the Council's General Fund Reserve was forecast to be £4.5m. However, at the FR2 stage, a further £4m transformational spend has been included within the service forecasts which will be funded from General reserves, reducing the forecast balance to £0.5m.
- 5.4. The current balance on reserves is insufficient in order to provide adequate protection against established and newly emerging risks, such as inflation and particularly the DSG deficit, which is projected to rise to £120.1m by year end and has been highlighted in the MTFS as having no alternative funding.
- 5.5. The Council also maintains Earmarked Revenue Reserves for specific purposes. The opening balance at 1 April 2024 was £32.3m.
- 5.6. During 2024/25, a net total of £10.6m has been drawn down to the support the in-year deficit position. A further £6.3m is being forecast to fund expenditure specifically provided for by services. These balances fall within the forecasts approved during the MTFS budget setting process.
- 5.7. Additional drawdown requests, above those forecast during MTFS, have been made by various services to support specific expenditure totalling £5.8m. These drawdowns, as detailed in the tables below, will be subject to approval by the Section 151 Officer.
- 5.8. The closing balance at 31 March 2025, is forecast at £9.5m.
- 5.9. Unspent schools' budgets that have been delegated, as laid down in the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998, remain at the disposal of the school and are not available for Council use. These balances are therefore excluded from all reserve forecasts.

Table 1 – Reserves Balances

Reserve	2023/24 Outturn	2024/25 Forecast
	£m	£m
General Reserves	5.6	0.5
Earmarked Reserves (Excluding Schools)	32.3	9.5
Total Reserves Balance at 31st March	37.9	10.0

Table 2 - Earmarked Reserves Summary

Committee Reserves	Opening Balance 1st April 2024 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31 March 2025 £000
Adults and Health	5,226	(2,795)	(110)	0	2,321
Children and Families	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0
Corporate Policy	20,773	(6,551)	(2,830)	(4,545)	6,847
Economy and Growth	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346
Environment and Communities	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0
Highways and Transport	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENT	32,278	(10,603)	(6,354)	(5,807)	9,514

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

* Total excludes schools' balances

Adults and Health Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Adults Social Care Commissioning</u>						
PFI Equalisation - Extra Care Housing	2,857	(2,795)	0	0	62	Surplus grant set aside to meet future payments on existing PFI contract and the anticipated gap at the end of the agreement.
<u>Public Health</u>						
Public Health Reserve	2,369	0	(110)	0	2,259	Ring-fenced underspend to be invested in areas to improve performance against key targets; including the creation of an Innovation Fund to support partners to deliver initiatives that tackle key health issues.
ADULTS AND HEALTH RESERVE TOTAL	5,226	(2,795)	(110)	0	2,321	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Children and Families Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Childrens Social Care</u>						
Domestic Abuse Partnership	131	0	0	(131)	0	To sustain preventative services to vulnerable people as a result of partnership funding in previous years.
<u>Strong Start, Family Help and Integration</u>						
Troubled Families Initiative	1,593	0	(1,593)	0	0	Crewe Youth Zone and ACT have been assigned funding from shared outcomes of the Supporting Families Programme.
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RESERVE TOTAL	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Corporate Policy Committee and Central Reserves

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Corporate Directorate</u>						
Corporate Directorate Reserve	1,164	(935)	0	0	229	To support a number of widespread projects within the Corporate Directorate.
<u>Finance and Customer Service</u>						
Collection Fund Management	8,154	(1,235)	(2,915)	0	4,004	To manage cash flow implications as part of the Business Rates Retention Scheme.
Capital Financing Reserve	4,531	0	0	(4,531)	0	To provide for financing of capital schemes, other projects and initiatives
MTFS Reserve	2,914	(741)	255	0	2,428	To support the financial strategy and risk management. £1.2m of the remaining reserve balance had previously been earmarked for future voluntary redundancy costs.
Brighter Futures Transformation Programme	490	(470)	(20)	0	0	To fund the Council's four year transformation programme and its five outcomes of Culture; Estates and ICT systems; Customer Experience, Commercial Approach and Governance.
Section 31 Revenue Grants	14	0	0	(14)	0	Unspent specific use grant carried forward into 2024/25.
<u>Governance and Compliance</u>						
Insurance Reserve	3,098	(3,098)	0	0	0	To settle insurance claims and manage excess costs. The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
Elections General	132	0	0	0	132	To provide funds for Election costs every 4 years.
Brexit Funding	13	(13)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.

Corporate Policy Committee and Central Reserves Continued

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024	Drawdowns to General Fund	Approved Movement Forecast	Additional Drawdown Requests*	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025	Notes
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
<u>Human Resources</u>						
HR (CARE4CE Review, Culture Change, Pay realignment, Learning Mgt System)	59	(59)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
Pay Structure (M Grade Review)	54	0	0	0	54	Created to help fund ongoing changes to pay structure.
<u>ICT</u>						
Digital Solutions Architect	150	0	(150)	0	0	New reserve created in 23/24 to fund a role for the Digital Customer Enablement programme and will be key to realising the cost savings and efficiencies across the Council from the deployment of a number of digital initiatives.
CORPORATE POLICY AND CENTRAL RESERVE TOTAL	20,773	(6,551)	(2,830)	(4,545)	6,847	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Economy and Growth Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Directorate</u>						
Place Directorate Reserve	1,164	0	(473)	(385)	306	To support a number of widespread projects within the Place Directorate.
Investment (Sustainability)	610	0	(427)	(143)	40	To support investment that can increase longer term financial independence and stability of the Council.
<u>Growth and Enterprise</u>						
Legal Proceedings	212	0	(104)	(108)	0	To enable legal proceedings on land and property matters.
Investment Portfolio	534	(534)	0	0	0	The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
Homelessness & Housing Options - Revenue Grants	129	0	0	(129)	0	Grant committed for the purchase and refurbishment of properties to be used as temporary accommodation to house vulnerable families.
Tatton Park Trading Reserve	128	(128)	0	0	0	The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
ECONOMY AND GROWTH RESERVE TOTAL	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Environment and Communities Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Environment and Neighbourhood Services</u>						
Strategic Planning	568	(281)	(287)	0	0	To meet costs associated with the Local Plan - site allocations, minerals and waste DPD.
Trees / Structures Risk Management	139	(55)	(55)	(29)	0	To help respond to increases in risks relating to the environment, in particular the management of trees, structures and dealing with adverse weather events.
Air Quality	36	0	(17)	(19)	0	Air Quality Management - DEFRA Action Plan. Relocating electric vehicle chargepoint in Congleton.
Licensing Enforcement	8	0	0	(8)	0	Three year reserve to fund a third party review and update of the Cheshire East Council Taxi Licensing Enforcement Policies.
Flood Water Management (Emergency Planning)	2	0	(2)	0	0	Relating to Public Information Works.
Neighbourhood Planning	82	(41)	(41)	0	0	To match income and expenditure.
Spatial Planning - revenue grant	13	(13)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
Street Cleansing	22	0	0	(22)	0	Committed expenditure on voluntary litter picking equipment and electric blowers.
ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RESERVE TOTAL	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Highways and Transport Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 01 April 2024 £000	Drawdowns to General Fund £000	Approved Movement Forecast £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Closing Balance Forecast 31 March 2025 £000	Notes
<u>Highways and Infrastructure</u>						
Rail and Transport Integration	385	(185)	(200)	0	0	To support the Council's committed costs to the rail and transport networks across the borough.
Flood Recovery Works	400	0	(200)	(200)	0	To help the service manage risks such as the impact of adverse weather, specifically flooding or extensive periods where winter maintenance is required.
Highways Procurement Project	104	(20)	(15)	(69)	0	To finance the development of the next Highway Service Contract. Depot mobilisation costs, split over 7 years from start of contract in 2018.
LEP-Local Transport Body	19	0	0	(19)	0	Contribution to LEP transport studies/consultancy. Ongoing working around Transport Legacy issues.
ECONOMY AND GROWTH RESERVE TOTAL	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to approval.

Section 6: Treasury Management

Prudential Indicators revisions to: 2023/24 and 2024/25 – 2026/27 and future years

Background

- 6.1. There is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2003 for local authorities to have regard to CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the "CIPFA Prudential Code") when setting and reviewing their Prudential Indicators.

Estimates of Capital Expenditure

- 6.2. In 2024/25, the Council estimates to spend £157.7m on capital expenditure as summarised below.

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	Future years £m
Total	136.9	157.7	151.8	115.9	225.1

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Capital Financing

- 6.3. All capital expenditure must be financed either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing and Private Finance Initiative). The planned financing of capital expenditure is as follows.

Capital Financing	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	Future years £m
Capital receipts	0.1	0.2	0.7	17.2	17.5
Government Grants	61.2	96.5	81.3	71.2	114.8
External Contributions	8.8	15.4	11.8	12.7	67.8
Revenue Contributions	1.3	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Financing	71.4	112.6	93.8	101.1	200.1
Prudential Borrowing	65.5	45.1	58.0	14.8	25.0
Total Funding	65.5	45.1	58.0	14.8	25.0
Total Financing and Funding	136.9	157.7	151.8	115.9	225.1

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Replacement of debt finance

- 6.4. Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, and this is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital

assets may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP repayments are as follows.

Replacement of debt finance	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Total	17.5	18.8	23.0	24.9	25.3

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement

- 6.5. The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP repayments and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR will decrease by £2m during 2024/25. This assumes that were there has been significant forward funding of certain schemes that grants and other contributions are received in year to repay that forward funding. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows.

Capital Financing Requirement	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Total	488	486	517	506	501

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Asset disposals

- 6.6. When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Council received £3.5m of capital receipts from asset sales in 2023/24 and plans to receive a further £4.8m in future years.

Capital Receipts	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Asset Sales	3.4	2.3	4.0	4.0	4.0
Loans Repaid	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total	3.5	2.5	4.2	4.2	4.2

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

- 6.7. The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in the future. These objectives are often conflicting and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short term loans (currently available at around 4.95%) and long term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but fixed over a period when rates are expected to fall (currently 4.99%– 5.3%).
- 6.8. Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, PFI liabilities, leases are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement.

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Borrowing	337	374	439	454	480
PFI Liabilities	18	17	17	15	14
Total Debt	355	391	456	469	494
Capital Financing Req.	488	486	517	506	501

Source: Cheshire East Finance

- 6.9. Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. As can be seen from the above table, the Council expects to comply with this in the medium term.

Liability Benchmark

- 6.10. To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £20m at each year end. This benchmark is currently £331m and is forecast to rise to £415m over the next four years.

Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Outstanding Debt	337	374	439	454	480
Liability Benchmark	331	355	403	412	415

Source: Cheshire East Finance

- 6.11. The table shows that the Council expects to borrow above its liability benchmark.

Affordable borrowing limit

- 6.12. The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

	2023/24 limit £m	2024/25 limit £m	2025/26 limit £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Authorised Limit for Borrowing	540	570	590	590	590
Authorised Limit for Other Long-Term Liabilities	18	17	17	15	14
Authorised Limit for External Debt	558	587	607	605	604
Operational Boundary for Borrowing	530	560	580	580	580
Operational Boundary for Other Long-Term Liabilities	18	17	17	15	14
Operational Boundary for External Debt	548	577	597	595	594

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Investment Strategy

- 6.13. Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.
- 6.14. The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with money market funds, other local authorities or selected high quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of returns below inflation.

Treasury Management Investments	31/03/24 Actual £m	31/03/25 Estimate £m	31/03/26 Estimate £m	31/03/27 Estimate £m	31/03/28 Estimate £m
Short term	22	20	20	20	20
Long term	20	20	20	20	20
Total Investments	42	40	40	40	40

Source: Cheshire East Finance

- 6.15. Further details on treasury investments are in pages of the Treasury Management Strategy, reported here: [Final Outturn 2023-24 Annex 1.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)
- 6.16. Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Section 151 Officer and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. Quarterly reports on treasury activity are reported to Cabinet as part of the Finance Update reports. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

- 6.17. Further details on investments for service purposes and commercial activities are in the Investment Strategy, reported here: [Final Outturn 2023-24 Annex 1.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)
- 6.18. Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by an investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e., the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	31/03/24 Actual	31/03/25 Estimate	31/03/26 Estimate	31/03/27 Estimate	31/03/28 Estimate
Financing Costs (£m)	19.0	28.5	35.3	35.5	33.3
Proportion of net revenue stream %	5.38	7.20	8.77	8.60	7.84

Source: Cheshire East Finance

Treasury Management Indicators

- 6.19. The Authority measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.
- 6.20. **Interest Rate Exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limit on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates is:
- 6.21. The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates. The Council is expected to remain a net borrower in 2024/25 so a fall in rates would lead to savings rather than incurring additional cost so a limit of £0 was set. Rates are now more likely to reduce than increase so full revenue impact of changing rates is likely to be beneficial.

Interest Rate Risk Indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	£2,270,000
Likely revenue impact in 2024/25 of a 1% rise in interest rates	£1,240,000

- 6.22. **Maturity Structure of Borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. Lower limits have been set at 0%. The upper limits on the maturity structure of borrowing and the actual maturity profiles as at 30 September 2024 are:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper Limit	Actual
Under 12 months	75%	68%

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper Limit	Actual
12 months and within 24 months	75%	1%
24 months and within 5 years	75%	6%
5 years and within 10 years	75%	12%
10 years and within 20 years	100%	5%
20 years and above	100%	8%

- 6.23. Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment. The upper limit for loans maturing in under 12 months is relatively high as short term has been considerably cheaper than alternatives and allows for LOBO loans which have the potential to be repaid early. This will be kept under review as it does increase the risk of higher financing costs in the future.
- 6.24. **Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 364 days:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the total principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end will be:

Price Risk Indicator	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£25m	£15m	£10m
Actual amounts committed beyond year end	£0m	£0m	£0m

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**Environment and Communities
Committee**

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

**Medium Term Financial Strategy Update
2025/26 - 2028/29 (Environment &
Communities Committee)**

**Report of: Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Customer
Services (s151 Officer)**

Report Reference No: EC/25/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

For Decision or Scrutiny: Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out how the Council will resource the achievement of the Council Plan and is subject to consultation and approval on an annual basis. The Finance Sub-committee approved the financial assumptions underpinning the current MTFS at their meeting in June 2024, with a further funding update received in September 2024.
- 2 This report sets out progress since that time and further development activity required before the final MTFS 2025-29 is presented for approval to the budget setting Council in February 2025.
- 3 Developing the MTFS requires a wide range of stakeholder engagement. Members are key stakeholders in their capacity as community leaders, but also in their capacity as decision makers in setting the Council's budget. The Finance-Sub Committee formed a working group to scrutinise the financial assumptions underpinning the current MTFS.

- 4 Individual Committees are being asked to review the in-year budget position and consider how this performance will impact on services they are responsible for (see Second Financial Review Report on the Agenda).
- 5 Stakeholder engagement will follow when financial proposals have been considered and identified for consultation; it is planned that this will be approved at the meeting of the Corporate Policy Committee on 28 November. The January cycle of Committee meetings will be the forum to scrutinise the draft proposals put forward, alongside other feedback from consultees. All feedback will be collated and provided as evidence to the Corporate Policy Committee on 6 February 2025.
- 6 This paper is being published after the new Chancellor's budget on Wednesday 30 October; this had the potential of having a significant impact on some of the assumptions underpinning the MTFS and officers will assess the impact of any announcements made. The formal Local Government Finance settlement will follow, which will include more specific details for individual councils; this is likely to be in mid-to late December. At the meeting of Finance Sub-Committee, officer provided an update on any potential consequences that are known at the time of the meeting itself.
- 7 Final approval of the 2025/26 budget will take place at full Council on 26 February 2025, following recommendation from the Corporate Policy Committee.

Executive Summary

- 8 Financial strategies underpin how Cheshire East Council will allocate resources, achieve the Corporate Plan and provide in the region of 500 local services every day. The strategies must be affordable, based on robust estimates and balanced against adequate reserves.
- 9 There have been two previous reports to Finance Sub-Committee during 2024 setting out the budget assumptions underpinning the MTFS, including assumptions relating to funding, based on current expectations.
- 10 There has been a significant amount of work since that time to capture all the proposed budget changes required for 2025/26 and over the medium term, both from the transformation work and also outside of that programme, to ensure that a complete picture is being recorded.
- 11 The proposed budget changes put forward to date have been scrutinised in a series of officer challenge sessions to ensure accuracy,

completeness and likelihood of success, to ensure that any future budget estimates are robust.

- 12 The proposed changes that have been compiled to date do not yet go far enough to balancing the budget in line with the revised funding envelope for 2025/26 as it is currently known. Further information on the coming years funding allocations and other important underpinning funding assumptions will be announced at the Budget on 30 October, but more detail will follow, most likely as part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in late December.
- 13 The Second Financial Review (FR2) forecasts (separate report on the agenda) have shown an improvement of £6.5m compared to FR1 (reported to September committee meetings) but are still projecting an in-year adverse variance of £20.1m - this remains a significant financial challenge for the Council. The FR2 forecast reserves, after agreed movements budgeted for in the 2024-28 MTFS, are currently £10.0m, being £0.5m of General Fund Reserves (including the forecast use of £4m for transformation costs) and £9.5m of Earmarked Reserves. The Council's level of reserves is therefore insufficient to cover the current forecast revenue outturn for the year without further action.
- 14 Both the in-year and future projections clearly show that further work needs to happen, at pace, if a balanced budget position is to be achieved by full Council in February 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment and Communities Committee is being asked to:

- (a) Note the progress to date on the development of the MTFS for 2025-29;
- (b) Note that officers will continue to challenge draft proposals and develop further proposals in consultation with Members prior to approval by Council;
- (c) Note that Committees will be presented with the opportunity to review the full set of financial proposals, designed to achieve a balanced budget, as part of their January cycle of meetings prior to recommendations being made to Council for approval.

Background

- 15 The Council's financial resources are provided from a combination of local taxes, government grants, investment returns on assets and other direct contributions from individuals or organisations. Financial plans are based on estimated spending and income over the next four years and the report of the Chief Finance Officer brings Members' attention to the processes and risks associated with developing these estimates.
- 16 The Council aims to achieve value for money based on Economy (how much we pay for things), Efficiency (how well we use things) and Effectiveness (how we use things to achieve outcomes). Public feedback and internal and external scrutiny create the necessary framework to hold the Council to account for achieving these aims.
- 17 All councils are legally required to set a balanced budget each year and the immediate focus will be on balancing the 2025/26 financial year, rather than on the whole medium term, as has been the case previously. This replicates the focus last year and reflects the extremely challenging circumstances all councils are still facing.
- 18 Finance Sub-Committee received a report in June setting out the MTFS 2025-29 original planned timetable and budget assumptions underpinning the current MTFS. A working group then met during August to discuss these assumptions and their suitability for the medium term.
- 19 A further update report was then received in September setting out likely improvements to the funding envelope forecast over the medium term which reduced the overall 4-year target down from a savings position of c.£100m to c.£78m.

Table 3 – medium scenario	Estimated Position 2025/26 £m	Estimated Position 2026/27	Estimated Position 2027/28 £m
Revised Funding Position - June 2024	41.9	76.3	100.0
Social care unringfenced grant continuing over the medium term	(3.0)	(3.0)	(3.0)
New Homes Bonus – one year only	(3.5)	-	-
Additional Council Tax income	(5.9)	(12.3)	(19.3)
Revised Cumulative position	29.5	61.0	77.7

- 20 There have been some further refinements to the funding envelope for 2025/26 following the calculation of the taxbase for next year. Therefore, the revised funding envelope for 2025/26 has increased from £380.3m (as set out in the MTFS in February 2024) to £394.8m as at October 2024. This is an increase of £14.5m. For context, the funding envelope for 2024/25 was approved at £375.7m.
- 21 Any further changes from the budget announcements by central Government on 30 October will be factored into the funding envelope where possible. It is more likely that actual allocation changes will have to wait until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which is due to be received in min to late December 2024.
- 22 There has been a substantial amount of work undertaken since the September update to bring forward a list of proposed budget change items for 2025/26 and the later years. An internal management “MTFS tracker” system has been put in place to capture all proposals in one place. This includes all items identified by our transformation partner as per the Transformation Plan that was approved by the Corporate Policy Committee in August 2024.
- 23 Challenge sessions have since been held during October with every directorate to ensure that all proposals that have been put forward as changes for the next MTFS have been fully scrutinised for accuracy and completeness, including the ongoing effects of the pressures forecast for 2024/25. Some of the items that have been considered are as follows:
- Growth – demand/ complexity/ cost changes; to reflect elements that affect future years, respectively;
 - Contractual inflation;
 - Revenue effects of capital projects – central financing and service budgets as part of the ongoing Capital Programme Review; and to bring the programme back to an affordable position;
 - Housekeeping – items that are one-year only as opposed to permanent – to ensure correctly reflected in the tracker;
 - Fees and charges – price/ income increases – all years;
 - What discretionary services/ functions can be reduced/ stopped;
 - Savings – transformation/ other - clarity on the level of actual savings and the realistic profile to ensure that these savings are deliverable.

- 24 Transformation plan ideas have been reviewed with relevant officers and support from Inner Circle, our transformation partner, to understand, interpret and develop the ideas initially put forward. All transformation proposals in the MTFS tracker have been reviewed against the following criteria:
- Clarity around what can change; how/ when can it be delivered - is the phasing correct and deliverable;
 - Fully reflect the costs and benefits of change (net deliverable positions);
 - Reflect realistic and deliverable savings per year - important to consider/ document the detail, establish expenditure and income budget impacts.
- 25 The Second Financial Review (FR2) projections (separate report) have shown an improvement on FR1 of £6.5m; but are forecasting an in-year adverse variance of £20.1m – this remains a significant financial challenge for the Council.
- 26 FR2 forecast reserves, after agreed movements budgeted for in the 2024-28 MTFS, are currently £10.0m, being £0.5m of General Fund Reserves (including the forecast use of £4m for transformation costs) and £9.5m of Earmarked Reserves. The Council's level of reserves is therefore insufficient to cover the current forecast revenue outturn for the year without further action.
- 27 This forecast does not assume the use of the Exceptional Finance Support (EFS) that was requested in 2023/24 and 2024/25, or therefore the cost of borrowing to finance any related borrowing costs. The EFS was agreed in principle, subject to a number of conditions being satisfied, including the submission of a transformation plan by the end of August 2024.
- 28 Both the in-year and future projections clearly show that further work needs to happen, at pace, if a balanced budget position is to be achieved by full Council in February 2025.
- 29 The work identified to be done during November includes:
- Review of any impact from the Chancellor's budget on 30 October;
 - Determine the approach and commence budget consultation – to be approved at 28 November Corporate Policy Committee;

- High Level Business Cases to be developed, to provide supporting information for each proposed budget change item;
- Further challenge of current proposals, plus the identification of additional proposals, to help towards closing the gap for the 2025/26 budget;

30 It will also be important to determine whether a request for any additional Exceptional Financial Support needs to be made to central Government.

Consultation and Engagement

- 31 This report forms part of the pre consultation process for Members on the budget setting for 2025/26. Each committee will receive the same report to ensure transparency across all committee areas.
- 32 Once a set of draft budget change proposals have been prepared there will be opportunity during the January cycle of Committee meetings to give formal feedback, from each Committee, to the Corporate Policy Committee, ahead of the full Budget Council meeting in February 2025.
- 33 There are plans for a series of engagement events with wider stakeholders to gather opinion and collate ideas on the final budget for 2025/26.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 34 In accordance with the Constitution, Committees play an important role in planning, monitoring and reporting on the Council's finances. Each Committee has specific financial responsibilities.
- 35 The Council's annual budget must be balanced. The proposals within it must be robust and the strategy should be supported by adequate reserves. The assessment of these criteria is supported by each Committee having the opportunity to help develop the budget and financial proposals before they are approved by Full Council.

Other Options Considered

- 36 The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced annual budget taking regard of the report from the Chief Finance Officer. As such options cannot be considered that would breach this duty. Any feedback from the Committee must still recognise the requirement for Council to fulfil this duty.
- 37 There is no option to "do nothing". The Council has statutory obligations to provide certain services, which would be unaffordable if the Council failed to levy an appropriate Council Tax.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 38 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget and require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 39 The provisions of section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 40 The Council should therefore have robust processes in place so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty. It must ensure that all available resources are directed towards the delivery of statutory functions, savings and efficiency plans. Local authorities are creatures of statute and are regulated through the legislative regime and whilst they have in more recent times been given a general power of competence, this must operate within that regime. Within the statutory framework there are specific obligations placed upon a local authority to support communities. These duties encompass general and specific duties and there is often significant local discretion in respect of how those services or duties are discharged. These will need to be assessed and advised on as each circumstance is considered.
- 41 The financial position of the Council must therefore be closely monitored, and Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered, and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings or alternative mitigations.
- 42 This report provides an update on progress for 2024/25.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 43 The current financial assumptions and revised timescales within this report provide up-to-date information on the Council's MTFS progress

for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29, specifically aimed to setting the budget for 2025/26 which legally has to be completed by March 2025. Further details are contained within the body of this report.

Policy

- 44 The new Council Plan approved in February 2024 will drive and inform Council policy and priorities for service delivery. The priorities and actions may have direct policy implications and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 45 Under the Equality Act 2010, decision makers must show “due regard” to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
 - (c) Foster good relations between those groups.
- 46 The protected characteristics are age, disability, sex, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.
- 47 Having “due regard” is a legal term which requires the Council to consider what is proportionate and relevant in terms of the decisions they take.
- 48 The Council needs to ensure that in taking decisions on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Budget that the impacts on those with protected characteristics are considered. The Council undertakes equality impact assessments where necessary and continues to do so as proposals and projects develop across the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The process assists us to consider what actions could mitigate any adverse impacts identified. Completed equality impact assessments form part of any detailed Business Cases.
- 49 The proposals within the MTFS include positive and negative impacts. A separate Equality Impact Assessment for the budget as a whole is routinely included in the full MTFS report each year.
- 50 The Council Plan’s vision reinforces the Council’s commitment to meeting its equalities duties, promoting fairness and working openly for everyone. Cheshire East is a diverse place and we want to make sure that people are able to live, work and enjoy Cheshire East regardless of their background, needs or characteristics.

Human Resources

- 51 Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that the budget report deals with will be dealt with in the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Risk Management

- 52 Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if and when required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2024/25 budget and the assumptions underpinning it were factored into the 2024/25 financial scenario, budget and reserves strategy.

Rural Communities

- 53 The budget report, as approved at Council on 27 February 2024, provides details of service provision across the borough.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 54 The budget report, as approved at Council on 27 February 2024, provides details of service provision across the borough.

Public Health

- 55 Public health implications that arise from activities that the budget report deals with will be dealt with as separate reports to Members or Officer Decision Records as required.

Climate Change

- 56 Any climate change implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that the budget report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Adele Taylor Interim Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)

	adele.taylor@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	<p>The following are links to key background documents:</p> <p>Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-28</p> <p>Corporate Policy Committee 21 August 2024 - Approved Transformation Plan</p> <p>Finance Sub Committee 24 June 2024 Agenda</p> <p>Finance Sub Committee 12 September 2024 Agenda</p>

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Environment and Communities Committee

27 November 2024

Libraries Strategy 2024-28 - Implementation

**Report of: Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director of Planning and
Environment**

Report Reference No: EC/13/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All Cheshire East Wards

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the progress with the development of the Cheshire East Libraries Strategy (the "Strategy") following the approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-28 ("MTFS") at Full Council on 27 February 2024
2. To update the Committee, in relation to the outcome of the related public consultation process approved at the Environment and Communities Committee 18th July 2024 meeting, and how the draft Strategy has been amended to reflect that feedback.
3. To seek Committee approval to the implementation of the Strategy and the details associated.

Executive Summary

4. This report is seeking approval to the implementation of the Libraries Strategy 2024-28 to take effect from 1st January 2025.
5. If these proposals are not delivered that would result in an overspend within Library Services for the current and future years This overspend would have a material impact of the Council's MTFS.

6. Following a Committee approval at its meeting of 18 July 2024 a public consultation was carried out on the detail of the Strategy including revised opening hours proposals for Tier 3 sites, the results of which are summarised at paragraphs 26 to 36 of this report. The full consultation report is contained at Appendix A supported by an updated Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix B.
7. The opening hours for Tier 3 sites also included at the point of consultation a number of top up proposals from the related local councils.
8. In parallel with the formal consultation, engagement was undertaken with Town and Parish Councils in relation to the potential for funding 'top up' library services. Crewe and Nantwich Town Councils already work with Cheshire East Council in supporting their local library site and as a result of this engagement a further four local councils have formally agreed to follow suit.
9. The final Strategy (contained at Appendix C) now informed by feedback from the consultation sets out a series of objectives to shape the library service moving forward alongside continuing to promote the introduction of a tiered system for the boroughs libraries with libraries assigned to tiers through a site assessment scoring matrix.
10. The site assessment matrix has been updated since being presented at Committee in July and is contained at Appendix D.
11. An updated schedule of opening hours for Tier 2 and 3 libraries is contained at Appendix E, which also sets out where Council funded opening times are proposed to be supplemented either by financial contributions from local councils and/or community led volunteer provision, subject to Committee approval. This includes narrative as to any impacts the final opening hours have on regular events and activities held within libraries.
12. As a result of the feedback received through the public consultation the preferred option identified as the alternative service delivery model is a community managed approach. This reflects also the increased importance of libraries as sites for delivery of complementary Council and partner services such as Family Hubs and existing and emerging early intervention and prevention activity. Hence the need to retain direct control of these facilities and the offer, whilst working with local councils and the community to deliver the core library offer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment and Communities Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the feedback from the recent public consultation exercise.
2. Approve the Cheshire East Libraries Strategy 2024-28, as contained at Appendix C.
3. Approve the final details of the changes to library opening hours, as included at Appendix E.
4. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Planning and Environment to;
 - a. take all necessary steps to implement the Libraries Strategy, and, to make all consequent changes to service provision including staff restructure and consultations.
 - b. take all necessary steps to enter into top up funding agreements with Town and Parish Councils.

Background

13. As a commitment made in the report to Committee in July 2023 regarding the Libraries Service Review and subsequently as now an approved element of the MTFS a Libraries Strategy has been developed.
14. The Council has statutory duty under the 'Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964' to deliver library services. The act outlines that "It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof".
15. The Act allows for joint working between library authorities, and councils may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities, or providing access to Wi-Fi and computers).
16. In providing this service, Councils must, among other things:
 - encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service;

- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.
17. The Act also states that it is up to each local area to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service.
- This must however be done:
- in consultation with their communities;
 - through analysis of evidence around local needs; and,
 - in accordance with their statutory duties.
18. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) have also stated that Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service and can design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs and there are no longer prescribed national standards.
19. It is on the basis of these criteria that the approach to developing a Libraries Strategy has been approached.
20. Prior to the implementation of any recommendations the Council has notified DCMS of the proposal with 'such information as the Secretary of State may require for carrying out their duties' as it is required to do.
21. The high level timeline for the next stages of implementation of the service review is as follows;
- (a) Committee approval to implement – 14 November
 - Entry in to top up funding agreements – November and December
 - Staff consultation launch (service restructure) – January 2025
 - (b) Strategy implemented and revised opening hours Tier 3 sites commence – 1 January 2025 (target)
 - Service restructure implemented and Tier 2 opening hours adjusted – 1 April 2025

Consultation and Engagement

Pre Engagement and Consultation

22. The Libraries Strategy was included as a specific proposal within the consultation materials for the MTFS 2024-28. A summary of the feedback received is contained at paragraph 29-30 of the related report, considered by Members in July 2024.
23. A significant level of pre-engagement prior to bringing the draft Strategy in front of the Committee was undertaken with local councils. This is set out at paragraph 36 of the related report.

Engagement with DCMS

24. The Service engaged with DCMS Libraries team about the content of the Strategy and the more detailed proposals before public engagement or consultation began. DCMS Libraries team offered feedback which is recorded as part of the consultation report and has been used to shape the final version.
25. A follow up meeting on the final draft Strategy and related proposals was held with DCMS on 17 October, to ensure that they continue to be sighted on how this has changed through the various stages of development. DCMS have subsequently provided comments which have been considered as part of the final draft presented at Appendix C.

Proposal for Consultation

26. The report to Committee in July 2024 set out the basis to go out to consultation. The Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods developed the specific details of the consultation materials in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson.
27. It should be noted that in between the committee decision to move to consultation and its launch further engagement was undertaken with the local councils with Tier 3 library sites, specifically Bollington, Disley and Handforth.
28. This further pre consultation engagement re-introduced 23.50 hours of opening time within the related libraries, which was captured and set out in the consultation materials as part of the core proposals.

Consultation summary

29. The formal consultation was undertaken for six weeks between 5 August and 15 September. It was widely promoted and received a total of 3,596 consultation engagements, including 3,534 survey responses, 39 lots of written feedback, and 23 event attendees.

30. Formal consultation followed pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils. The formal consultation material was co-designed with these Town and Parish Councils during the pre-consultation engagement
31. Overall, of survey respondents:
 - 81% supported the proposed strategy objectives, 14% opposed them
 - 49% supported the proposed Tier System, 37% opposed it
 - 45% agreed libraries had been assigned to the correct Tiers through the assessment matrix, 33% disagreed
 - 49% agreed it is appropriate that Local Authorities looks for alternative ways of operating libraries, 35% disagreed
32. Level of support for the proposed Tier 3 was lower than for Tiers 1 and 2 – Overall, 36% supported the proposed Tier 3, 41% opposed it
33. Levels of support for proposals for each of the Tier 3 libraries varied significantly, for example 40% of Bollington Library users supported proposals, while just 13% of Handforth Library users did
34. Respondents generally felt the strategy and consultation proposals could be improved by:
 - Not proposing further cuts to library opening hours
 - Promoting an equal library service in all towns
 - Promoting the service more to increase usage of it
 - Increasing the level of Cheshire East Council funding from 1.5 days for the Tier 3 libraries
 - Amending the assessment matrix
35. The alternative service delivery model with most respondent support was “Community Managed Libraries” – 45% agreed the council should exploring using this model, 37% disagreed
36. 38% of survey respondents agreed the council should explore extending opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology, while 48% disagreed.
37. Feedback from Town and Parish Councils was mixed, from those who supported the strategy and Tier System, through to those who strongly

opposed it, particularly for Tier 3 libraries. Many Town and Parish Councils expressed interest in supporting the library service through top-up funding, volunteer arrangements, unstaffed libraries, and through other means.

38. More detailed feedback was offered relating to specific sites around proposed changes to opening hours, in particular from those residents who access library services through the Tier 3 sites.
39. A full consultation feedback report is contained at Appendix A.

Children's Services – Family Hubs

40. In parallel with the development of the Strategy, officers have already been working with colleagues in Children's Services to develop a joint service offer and there are now a series of confirmed plans to co-locate Family Hubs with several libraries. These plans as with those of other joint working opportunities will continue to evolve.

Town and Parish Council Engagement

41. During the public consultation proactive engagement has been undertaken with Town and Parish Councils including arranging specific meetings to discuss the proposals and seek opportunities to work together to ensure continued library service provision for their area.
42. The ability for Town and Parish Councils to fund 'top up' services is well established with both Crewe and Nantwich Town Councils already having three year funding agreements in place for their respective local sites.
43. As a result of the entire engagement process with town and parish councils the following can be reported;
 - Alderley Edge Parish Council – providing funding to secure Saturday morning opening hours, alongside continued volunteer led provision on a Tuesday afternoon each week.
 - Bollington Town Council – funding for 50% of current opening time (16 hours)
 - Disley Parish Council – funding for 3.5 hours on a Saturday morning
 - Handforth Parish Council - funding for 3.5 hours on a Monday afternoon.

- Macclesfield Town Council – are currently proposing as part of their budget setting process to divert an existing £30k of funding to the library service by combining the Visitor Information Centre into the offer.
 - Poynton Town Council – have confirmed funding for the Wednesday morning opening each week.
 - When combined with the existing secured provision for Crewe and Nantwich this equates to a total local council investment in library services of £166,471.72, which delivers 41.5 hours of additional service time per week.
44. Dialogue with other Town and Parish Councils continues on the same basis, including in some areas where there is an intention to bring forward small allocations of time delivered on a volunteer led basis.

Volunteer led provision

45. A number of local councils have expressed an interest in developing volunteer led provision for their local site. Information and guidance has been provided to them. In order that the Council can enable this shift to a community managed model it has put in place incentives with these organisations in order that the direct costs of establishing their occupation of a library space outside staffed times is affordable.

Alternative Service Delivery Models

46. As can be seen from the consultation feedback the preferred option for any move to alternative ways of delivering library services is to adopt a community managed approach.
47. This is the model which has now been adopted across all Tier 3 sites where the Council is working not only with the local council but also a range of community and friends groups to not only maintain but enhance the service offer. Similar initiatives are developing across a range of both Tier 1 and Tier 2 sites in addition.
48. The Council is embarking on a significant transformation journey which will be delivered over the same time period as this Strategy and beyond.
49. It is envisaged that libraries either in terms of the services offered now or in the future or by virtue of their central locations within the borough's towns will be a core part of the delivery of several aspects of the associated transformation plan. This plan has now been approved for implementation.

50. There will be a keen focus on how libraries play a role in the provision of targeted and needs based services, specifically both the promotion and delivery of early intervention and prevention activity, working jointly with the Council's Adult and Children's social care and Public Health teams, alongside other partner organisations such as the NHS.
51. Through the objectives and guiding principles which adopting the Strategy will establish the further development and implementation of the service offers at each library site will therefore be a core part of this transformation process, as it continues to evolve in its own right.

Final Strategy – for approval

52. In considering the significant feedback received, the Strategy document has been updated and is contained at Appendix C. A summary of the changes driven by the consultation feedback is as follows;
- Introduced a Vision Statement "*Cheshire East libraries will become the venue of choice for enabling and connecting residents to enrich their lives. Our library spaces and services will continue to develop to meet the needs of our communities.*"
 - Align with reference to Council's ambitious transformation plan, specifically early intervention and prevention approach
 - Make clear legal position with statutory provision of Libraries
 - Make clear what the "core" library offer is
 - Retain tier system – developing scope of offer for Tier 1 sites
 - Update site assessment to include reference comparison of population v's usage, but no changes to assignment of sites
 - Confirm alternative service delivery model will be a shift to develop further and bring more sites into Community Managed model, building on the work undertaken across the Tier 3 sites with stakeholders
 - Use of technology to increase unstaffed opening hours, retained as an option to explore in the future but not proposed not to be progressed immediately due to public feedback and also need to develop a clear business case.
 - Develop increased promotional activity
53. The following details relating to library operations are proposed for approval by the committee;

- Working with stakeholders internal and external to develop detailed service offers for the Tier 1 sites, including where appropriate bringing forward plans for any investments required to drive growth and increased income.
- Implement revised opening hours for Tier 2 and Tier 3 sites as shown at Appendix E, working with local councils and communities to develop future operation models on the basis of a community managed approach, enhancing the service offer wherever possible.
- Amend the library service management staffing structure to reflect the implications of the Strategy and associated detailed operational considerations.

Promotion of the Strategy

54. The libraries service already undertakes a significant volume of promotional work for the services which it delivers. It has its own social media channels – individual Facebook accounts for each site, and a central X (Twitter) account.
55. The Facebook accounts already receive relatively high levels of engagement, with the majority of accounts having more than 1,500 followers. Crewe, Macclesfield and Nantwich libraries have more than 3,000 followers each.
56. In addition to the social media accounts, there are more than 25,500 subscribers to the monthly libraries e-newsletter, which promotes the service's events, activities and resources. The format of this newsletter and the type of content featured in it is being reviewed at the moment.
57. The service has well established pages on the council's website. However, work is already underway to develop and refresh these pages further. This work, in particular, considers how the library events, activities and online resources are promoted. New webpages will go live aligned to the branding contained within the Strategy in late 2024 in readiness for the operational changes to be implemented in January 2025.
58. The webpages will also be adapted to reflect the ongoing development of a joint service offer with the likes of Family Hubs, promotion of activities to be delivered under the One You contract banner and where appropriate the presence of community and private sector businesses.

Staff Engagement

59. Due to the changes proposed to the structure of the libraries service, formal consultation will need to be entered into with both staff and the Trade Unions.
60. As part of the staff engagement already undertaken in developing the proposals three all staff briefings have or are due to be held in July and late November.
61. These briefings were also used to update staff on the current position with the service review and to give advance notice of planned next steps. Informal briefings have also been held with the Trade Unions in advance of the formal engagement processes.
62. A further staff engagement session is planned for week commencing 9 December, subject to Committee decision.

Reasons for Recommendations

63. The proposal supports Open and enabling objective of the Corporate Plan, delivering the priority set out to:
 - a. Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation.

Other Options Considered

64. A number of options have been considered in relation to developing the Strategy which were set out in the report in July 2024.
65. Similarly, a range of options around how the core library service is delivered were also explored, as set out in the public consultation.
66. As always there is an option to decide to make no changes however this would have an adverse impact on the MTFS and this budget would need to be found from another similar service review initiative within the remit of Environment and Communities.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

67. Following the completion of the public consultation process a Public Consultation report (Appendix A) has been produced. The full findings of the consultation have been made available.

68. Members should consider the findings of the consultation but in doing so need to bear in mind that the consultation outcome is one of a number of considerations that they need to take into account alongside other factors, such as the Council's financial position, the duty to achieve a balanced budget, and the affordability of any alternative options or doing nothing.
69. The recommendation made in this report is based on overall service provision and affordability. Whilst Members are not bound to follow the officer recommendation, if an alternative decision is made then this needs to be based on sound principles of reasonableness which take into account the need to achieve a balanced Budget.
70. In addition to considering the findings of the public consultation, the Committee should also have regard to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In this regard, Members should consider the Equality Impact Assessment provided at Appendix B.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

Service Review – Financial Implications

71. Within the draft emerging MTFS 2025 – 29 the Libraries Strategy has a combined savings target of £657k across 3 years, split as follows;
 - 2024/25 - £365k
 - 2025/26 - £100k
 - 2026/27 - £192k
72. The savings targets have been adjusted to suit the proposals now contained within the final Strategy for adoption and take into consideration those values identified in the Transformation Plan.
73. It should be noted that the above figures do not include the implications of any potential staff hours buy out costs which would reduce the savings made as a one off. There is the potential to fund this via use of flexible capital receipts hence avoiding any negative impacts on the base revenue budget. It is estimated that these could be in the range of £30-50k, however this will be heavily impacted by the positive impact to the service of take up of any 'top up' services by Town and Parish Councils and the ability to offer alternative employment at other adjacent sites, based on available vacancies across the service.

Progress to date

74. In terms of the position to date relating to proposals to meet the permanent base budget reductions the following can be advised;
- (c) Reduction in opening times across Tier 3 sites, to be implemented from 1st January 2025 equating to an in year saving of £24k and a full year effect of £98k;
 - (d) Revised opening hours across five of the Tier 2 sites, targeted to be implemented from 1st April 2025, equating to a full year saving of £122k in 2025/26.
 - (e) The re-design of the libraries management team to reflect the revised operating needs of the service, realising a further £55k per annum from April 2025;
- In addition to the above the service has seen an increase in income in 2024/25 of circa £30k is also forecasting an increase in income in 2025/26 onwards of £40,000, with further increases subject to additional commercial income growth and;
 - Proactive vacancy management across all library sites has secured £255k of one off in year savings with the proposal to remove the majority of these vacancies and any within the service re-design. This further reduces the impacts on staff.
75. Therefore, in summary the permanent base budget savings target associated with the implementation of the Libraries Strategy has been secured for the combined value of £315k for 2024/25 and 2025/26, in addition to the one off savings highlighted above.
76. As dialogue is ongoing the impacts of any investment in the service from the likes of the 'top up' scheme which has not yet been confirmed will be considered in addition to the figures above, with the financial impacts to be reflected in 2025/26 onwards.
77. Future years savings needed will be driven by a further shift to a community managed approach for all library sites, enabled by the Strategy and on the basis of continual review as the usage and need for services for that area.
78. A robust review of the current operating agreement with Cheshire West and Chester, which currently has a forecast cost of £390k for 2025/26 and which delivers the "back office" functions needed to enable the service as to whether this can be undertaken more efficiently.

Growth – Alternative Service Models

79. Members should also note that included as part of the MTFS was a growth item to the value of £150k. This was to forward fund the investigation of alternative service delivery models as the Strategy was developed and led in 2025/25 to a further saving of £200k against the libraries service.
80. As the proposal is now to move towards a community managed model for some library sites and with the existing savings included in the MTFS it is proposed to remove this additional savings target, now included for consideration in the development of the draft MTFS 2025-29 proposals, as it is no longer deliverable. This saving will need to be found from elsewhere within the Committee's remit in order that a balanced position can be maintained.

Policy

81. The proposal primarily supports the following priorities from the Corporate Plan 2021-25 as show in the table overleaf.

An open and enabling organisation	A council which empowers and cares about people	A thriving and sustainable place
<i>Priority: Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents</i>	<i>Priority: Work together with our residents and our partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.</i>	<i>Priority: A great place for people to live, work and visit</i>
Residents and staff to be aware of the council and the services we provide	All services to be developed together with our residents and communities, so they are based on what works for people in Cheshire East.	A high-quality accessible library service, that remains relevant to the changing needs of Cheshire East residents and delivers value for money by working with local councils and community groups to maintain and tailor provision

82. The proposal to reduce opening hours of some libraries during the week will potentially negatively impact the wider customer experience, as set out in the Customer Experience Strategy (2021-24), for residents that access council services via library sites.
83. Whilst for the majority, digital media is accessible from home or work for some residents the libraries are a key resource in enabling them to

access digital and therefore support the delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy (2022-24).

84. As referenced previously, the Council has a statutory duty under the 'Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964' to deliver library services.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

85. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and updated with the feedback from the public consultation. This is contained at Appendix B to this report.

86. The following are the key mitigations which are to be put in place to address issues identified;

- co-designed proposals agreed in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to minimise disruption as far as possible to library users
- alternative timings for social inclusion groups suggested at Tier 3 sites
- signposting to alternative library provision e.g other libraries open with in the borough on a particular day
- continued review of mobile library routes and stops to see if these align with proposals for opening at proposed tier 3 sites.
- providing travel information to assist in getting to other sites e.g bus timetables, car parking information.
- promoting library and wider council digital services
- offering customer service point appointments at libraries in Tiers 2 & 3
- promoting access to Home Library Service if appropriate
- extending the Home Library Service to include children and adults with long term health issues/disabilities.
- working across teams and services the council will look to try and mitigate any negative impacts due to adoption of any of the proposals.

Human Resources

87. The option proposed will require a reduction in staffing levels and the costs associated with this i.e. redundancy pay, statutory notice and pension strain will have a negative impact on savings, as described at paragraph 74.
88. During the period of change and subsequent adjustment to the new ways of working, as this is viewed by many staff that the change is detrimental to the service and our residents, there is a risk the Service could suffer from the loss of morale, goodwill, and elevated levels of sickness absence.

Risk Management

89. Table 4 sets out the key risks to the implementation of the Strategy implementation and ongoing mitigating actions taken;

Risk	Mitigating Actions
Budget savings attached to review proposal do not include redundancy costs	Recent recruitment undertaken on fixed term contract basis and continued vacancy management within service to minimise potential for redundancies
Impact on staff, increased sickness levels, objections from Trade Unions to proposals	Commenced service re-design work and seeking of approvals at earliest opportunity, developed and now delivering a clear communications and engagement strategy with staff and Trade Unions. Trade Union engagement ongoing.
Strategy and associated proposals are not considered appropriate by DCMS [statutory consultee] leading to delay for all stakeholders and impact on Council finances.	Early and continued engagement undertaken with DCMS on proposals. Input given to public consultation materials with further briefing held post consultation close.
Failure to establish community managed model at specific sites.	Ensure clear obligations on each party within any funding agreements and also include within any formal governance structure the option to include related community groups who may provide additional services, funding or activities to enhance the offer. Provide guidance and advice to local councils and community groups as regards how to successfully establish community managed libraries (available from DCMS) This should include peer learning where these arrangements are already established.

Table 4: summary of key service review risks and proposed mitigations

Rural Communities

90. The councils' rural committees are serviced to a greater extent by the Mobile Library service which has a total of 93 stopping points across a 3

week period, servicing some of the most remote communities in the borough. There are no plans as part of these proposal to change that part of the library service offer.

91. As the changes to the proposed open hours have been applied consistently across each site it is not considered that there would be an adverse impact on rural communities as a result.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

92. The proposal would mean reduced access during the working week for activities such Children & Families contact visits, tutoring of excluded pupils, Cheshire East Chatters - Speech & Language Therapists and After school and holiday activities, therefore having a negative impact.

Public Health

93. This proposal is likely to have a negative impact on the wellbeing of some residents who are regular users of the Library Service and access support, information and companionship from their regular interactions with staff and fellow library users. Closures during the working week would reduce access to a wide range of services and activities dependent on the day. The provision of various amounts of additional opening time through partnerships with Town and parish Councils is positive and will result in some of the council's most deprived areas maintaining a significant proportion of the current access to these services.
94. In particular the Library Service, as part of its role providing Customer Contact Centres, supports vulnerable residents who are digitally excluded to access online services, information and advice, both of the Council but also national government departments (for example driving licence renewal applications, NHS Patient Choice, benefit claims etc). Reduced opening hours will impact upon these people's ability to access the support they need when they need it.
95. Additionally, as part of the National Health Literacy Partnership the Library Service signposts to accredited sources of health and wellbeing information and stocks collections of health related books available for people to access when they need information, advice and guidance. Reducing the opening hours will reduce access to such information.

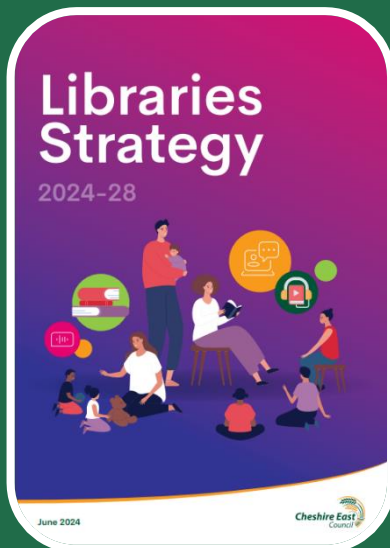
Climate Change

96. This proposal will not have a material impact on the council's carbon agenda, although the buildings will open less, advice received states that the impact will be a marginal reduction in utility costs.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	<p>Joanne Shannon</p> <p>Library Service Manager</p> <p>joanne.shannon@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix A – Libraries Service Review – Consultation Report</p> <p>Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (updated post consultation)</p> <p>Appendix C – Cheshire East Libraries Strategy 2024-28 (final for approval)</p> <p>Appendix D1 – Site Assessment Matrix (updated)</p> <p>Appendix D2 – Site Assessment Matrix weightings</p> <p>Appendix D3 – Population data comparison</p> <p>Appendix E – Proposed Opening Hours Tier 2 and 3 sites</p>
Background Papers:	<p>MTFS 2024-28 cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/budget-report/appendix-c-mtfs-2024-2028.pdf</p> <p>Committee report, Libraries Strategy 2024-28 – Initial Proposals, July 2024 CEC Report Template (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p>

Full report of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Library Strategy Consultation 2024



Executive Summary

Introduction

During 2024, Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft Libraries Strategy for 2024 to 2028. The purpose of the strategy was to consider the medium and long-term future of the Library Service, in particular how it becomes more financially self-sustainable through income generation.

The consultation consisted of 2 stages:

1) Pre-consultation engagement – 17 to 22 June 2024

Prior to formal consultation on a draft Libraries Strategy, Cheshire East Council conducted pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils.

The purpose of this pre-consultation engagement was to involve Town and Parish Councils in the development of the draft strategy before it was formally consulted on, so that consultation proposals were co-designed. [Read a full summary of this pre-consultation engagement here \(PDF, 496KB\)](#).

2) Formal consultation – 5 August to 15 September 2024

Pre-consultation engagement was followed up with formal consultation, which was widely publicised, with responses invited from anyone who wished to respond – the consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust sample survey.

In total there were 3,596 formal consultation responses, including 3,534 survey responses, 39 lots of written feedback, and 23 event attendees.

Alongside these consultation responses, Alderley Edge Parish Council and Handforth Town Council conducted their own surveys to support the consultation. 6 newspaper articles were also published about the consultation.

About survey respondents

94% of survey respondents use a Cheshire East library, while 83% are residents of Cheshire East.

More survey responses were received from some towns in Cheshire East than expected, when compared to the number of households in each town, including Bollington (received 3.7 times more responses than expected), Disley (received 3.6 times more responses than expected), and Handforth (received 3.4 times more responses than expected).

Overall views of the strategy and its objectives

81% of survey respondents supported the proposed strategy objectives, 14% opposed them. Support for the strategy included that:

- It makes sense, respondents agree with the objectives
- Libraries are vital, the hub and heart of communities
- Libraries provide education, learning, and safe spaces
- Libraries offer free resources for those unable them
- Libraries are important for good mental health

Respondents generally felt the strategy could be improved by:

- Not proposing further cuts to library opening hours
- Promoting an equal library service in all towns
- Emphasising the overall importance of libraries and librarians more
- Having more long-term focus, and not only focusing on cost cutting
- Promoting the service more to increase usage of it
- Including more detail, particularly around opening hours for Tier 2 libraries

Overall views on the proposed Tier System

49% of survey respondents supported the proposed Tier System, 37% opposed it. Those supportive of the Tier System were so:

- If it helps keep libraries open
- As it seems sensible
- As long as the tiers are regularly reviewed, that they are meeting needs, and libraries can be moved between tiers according to needs and finances

General improvements for the proposed Tier System included:

- Strong opposition to proposed service reductions for the Tier 3 libraries. Some felt the Tier System will result in closure of the lower Tier libraries in time
- Concern that there should be equal library provision across all towns, and that reductions in library services in smaller towns is unfair, and that it deprives, isolates, and marginalises smaller, rural areas

Level of support for each Tier

The level of survey respondent support for each proposed Tier varied significantly:

- 63% supported the proposed Tier 1 “Library Hubs”, 23% were opposed
- 58% supported the proposed Tier 2 “Local Libraries”, 25% were opposed

- 36% supported the proposed Tier 3 “Community Libraries”, 41% were opposed

General feedback on the proposed Tier 2 “Local Libraries” included concern about the proposed review of opening times – respondents felt hours should be maintained, and not reduced. Some felt that some Tier 2 libraries should be in Tier 1.

General feedback on the proposed Tier 3 “Community Libraries” included:

- Opposition to a reduction in Tier 3 opening hours and service reductions
- That 1.5. days of Cheshire East Council funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough
- That it’s a slippery slope towards further cuts and then full closure of Tier 3 libraries; that they need to be protected

Levels of support for proposals for each of the Tier 3 libraries varied depending on which Tier 3 library respondents used. For example, 40% of Bollington Library users supported proposals, while just 13% of Handforth Library users supported proposals.

Views on the site assessment matrix

Libraries have been assigned to Tiers 1 to 3 through the use of a site assessment matrix. Survey respondent views on the assessment matrix were fairly mixed:

- 51% agreed the correct metrics have been used in the assessment matrix, 26% disagreed
- 45% agreed libraries have been assigned to the correct tiers, 33% disagreed

Suggestions as to how the assessment matrix could be further improved included:

- It should measure the proportion of the local population using each library, instead of the total number of library users, as this favours the larger towns
- It fails to assess how isolated local areas are that libraries serve, and how easily local residents could access alternative libraries if needed
- It fails to assess future demand for local libraries, based on projected population figures as set out in the Local Plan

Views on delivering library services differently

49% of survey respondents agreed it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries, 35% disagreed.

Alternative service delivery models

The level of agreement on which alternative service delivery models the council should explore for use varied significantly among survey respondents:

- Community Managed Libraries (45% agree, 37% disagree)
- Shared Services Models (31% agree, 40% disagree)
- Trusts & Charitable Incorporated Organisations (28% agree, 43% disagree)
- Social Enterprises (27% agree, 44% disagree)
- Public Service Mutuals (24% agree, 44% disagree)
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) (11% agree, 69% disagree)
- Outsourcing to external providers (8% agree, 80% disagree)

Unstaffed libraries

38% of survey respondents agreed the council should explore extending opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology, while 48% disagreed.

Reasons for opposition to unstaffed libraries included:

- Safety concerns – Worry about safety in an unstaffed building, with 84% of respondents with this concern being female
- Anti-Social Behaviour concerns – Worry that unstaffed libraries would attract anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, gangs, drinkers and the homeless
- Concerns around the importance of librarians and human contact
- Concerns that the costs to administer this system would outweigh the benefits

Using volunteers in libraries

Throughout the survey respondents stressed the importance of professional library staff, and expressed concern about the use of volunteers, including that:

- Libraries need paid professional staff that are experienced
- Volunteers would not be able to answer queries
- Using volunteers could lead to data protection issues
- There aren't enough volunteers in some areas to make this viable

Town and Parish Council feedback

Throughout the consultation there was extensive engagement conducted with local Town and Parish Councils, including individual meetings as well as formal email responses received from them.

In summary of all Town and Parish Council feedback:

- Most were strongly opposed to any further reductions in opening hours
- Several were pleased to be assigned to Tiers 1 or 2. Some felt proposals were positive, and were generally supportive of them
- Some were supportive of the assessment matrix, though some were concerned that it favours the larger sites unfairly

- Some were supportive of libraries being used as community / family hubs
- Clarification was sought over how other services would be incorporated into libraries, and were keen to understand Cheshire East Council's long term policies on library services, Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking as a whole – they felt these need to be connected together as much as possible
- Some expressed an interest in top-up funding, and were keen to understand exactly what was being asked of Town and Parish Councils in relation to this
- Some were open to exploring the use of volunteer arrangements and unstaffed libraries, though there were also concerns raised
- Some were supportive of the “Community Managed Libraries” concept
- Tier 2 libraries – Concern expressed about the proposed opening hours review and what this means. Town and Parish Councils were keen to understand proposals for opening hours as soon as possible
- Tier 3 libraries – Felt the 1.5 days CEC funding was not enough, some wondered if it was negotiable. Others challenged the assessment matrix, and sought clarity over length of arrangements
- Some enquired whether Town and Parish Councils could ask surrounding local councils to contribute to funding, given their residents also use their libraries
- Some enquired about other possible arrangements e.g. having access to / renting the top floor or ground floors of libraries for their own use, and even taking over the running of libraries completely

Furthermore, during the consultation 2 Town and Parish Councils conducted their own surveys to support the consultation. Alderley Edge Parish Council received 133 responses, and Handforth Town Council received 758 responses. In both cases the vast majority of respondents:

- Agreed with the Town or Parish Council providing top-up funding
- Disagreed with the CE proposals to reduce opening hours at these libraries

Other email feedback

A further 30 emails were received during the consultation from other stakeholders, including Councillor Braithwaite, Chester West and Chester Council, and local residents. A significant proportion of these emails were opposed to library closures or reductions in hours.

Brief summaries of other key responses are provided below:

- Councillor Braithwaite – Feels the Tier system is pre-determined and should be revisited. Feels the strategy should include more detail about what the Key Performance Indicators will be. Feels library usage by postcode needs assessing to clarify the areas that libraries serve

- Cheshire West and Chester Council, Communities Department – Concerned about the risk that different levels of service across the authority will result in a “postcode lottery” service delivery. Felt a clarity of language may be helpful
- Suggestion for a review of the management structure, a review of the pay scale of CEC library management, and a reduction in management hours of the CEC Library Service
- Suggestion that the draft strategy does not align with the council's Local Plan, and does not take into account future demand from new housing development already committed to
- Typo – Compliment/complement is misspelled on pages 5 & 8 of the strategy

Conclusions

Transformation of Library Services

It is important to note the amount of effort that has gone into conducting this consultation. Any transformation of how library services are delivered is always going to be a complex and controversial process, given how important libraries are to local communities.

That the council has been able to put forward co-designed proposals in partnership with Town and Parish Councils is testament to the hard work of the Library Services management team, and to the willingness of Town and Parish Council colleagues to engage. Hopefully as a result of these efforts the amount of service disruption felt by library users is minimised as far as possible, while the service continues to move towards being financially sustainable.

It is also positive to note such a large response to the consultation, despite the consultation survey being extremely lengthy and complex – people remain passionate about libraries.

Overall support for the strategy

On the whole, large proportions of survey respondents and Town and Parish Councils were supportive of the overall strategy. We saw strong support for the strategy objectives, overall support for the proposed Tier System, and overall support for many aspects of the assessment matrix.

This is most likely because the large and medium sized libraries are not negatively impacted by the proposals, and so most are pleased to keep service provision as is.

Opposition to proposals for Tier 3 libraries

However, it is noted that proposals for the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly opposed. There is concern that Tier 3 libraries may become neglected and slip

toward eventual closure as a result of the Tier System; Cheshire East Council and local communities must work hard to ensure this does not happen.

It is interesting to note that proposals for some of the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly supported than others. For example, Bollington Library users were more likely to support proposals for their library, and this is likely as a result of the Town Council stepping in to provide top-up funding, to ensure the library hours are maintained. Handforth library users were least likely to support the proposals, and this library is seeing the biggest potential loss in opening hours of all the Tier 3 libraries.

The strategy favours larger towns unfairly

There are concerns that the strategy and assessment matrix favour the largest towns too heavily, and that this is unfair on the residents in the smaller towns who pay the same amount of Council Tax as everyone else.

Respondents point out that the assessment matrix does not measure the proportion of a town's population that uses a library, and therefore the importance of the library for those towns. Furthermore, these are towns that have fewer services than larger towns as it is, and poorer public transport networks, and so reducing the library provision in these areas may have a larger overall impact on those residents.

How the council might manage local services in future

Concerns have been raised that having different management approaches and different levels of service provision at different libraries will lead to a "postcode lottery" for library service provision – the council will need to manage this carefully to ensure library service provision does not become disparate and confusing across the borough.

Concern was also raised as to how library services would be delivered in harmony with other council services, such as Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking, to ensure services that compliment each other at a local level. Again, this will need careful management by the council, especially if each town is going to have its own unique service delivery model for all these services.

Alternative service delivery models to be considered

It is noted that the only alternative service delivery model which received net overall support by respondents was "Community Managed Libraries", and it may be that this becomes the preferred service delivery model in future. Respondents do seem open to the council exploring different ways of delivering libraries.

Unstaffed libraries are marginally disliked, though some Town and Parish Councils were keen to trial the use of such a system, as long as it was not at the expense of staffed library hours, and only used to extend opening hours. There were many

concerns around safety and anti-social behaviour of using such a system, particularly from female respondents, and these concerns would need allaying through trials before being widely adopted.

Some Town and Parish Councils were enthusiastic about embracing different ways of delivering the service, with several already embracing top-up funding, and others open to exploring the use of volunteers in libraries, though again this would need trialling before being rolled out widely. Others were open to exploring other ways of managing the library too, including hiring out floors, and even possibly taking over the running of individual libraries entirely.

Further engagement

Although much progress has been made, the transformation of libraries services is not wholly complete at this point. Continued engagement will be required with local communities and Town and Parish Councils to complete this process.

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Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

In February 2024, Cheshire East Council approved its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) for 2024 to 2028 at Full Council. This approved MTFS included proposal 73: "Libraries Strategy", which set out the ambition to develop a Libraries Strategy to consider the medium and long-term future of the Library Service, in particular how it becomes more financially self-sustainable through income generation. This proposal set a further savings target of £615,000 for the Library Service.

To deliver this MTFS proposal Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft Libraries Strategy for 2024 to 2028. This draft strategy was developed based on feedback from past Library Service Consultations and in collaboration with key council services including Adults, Childrens, Communities, Customer Services, Public Health, and Leisure Services. Additionally, Cheshire East Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils were engaged in the co-design of the draft strategy.

The final Libraries Strategy will be revised to incorporate consultation feedback, with Environment and Communities Committee making the final decision on adoption later in 2024.

Consultation methodology

The consultation consisted of 2 key stages:

- Pre-consultation engagement, conducted between 17 and 22 June 2024
- Formal consultation, conducted between 5 August and 15 September 2024

Pre-consultation engagement

Prior to formal consultation on a draft Libraries Strategy, Cheshire East Council conducted pre-consultation engagement with 11 local Town and Parish Councils.

The purpose of this pre-consultation engagement was to involve Town and Parish Councils in the development of the draft strategy before it was formally consulted on. In particular, Town and Parish Councils were to be asked to consider whether they wished to submit an "expression of interest" as to how local communities might take on the management of local libraries in some capacity. [Read a full summary of this pre-consultation engagement here \(PDF, 496KB\)](#).

Formal consultation

Formal consultation was conducted between 5 August and 15 September 2024, and was widely publicised, with responses invited from anyone who wished to respond – the consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust sample survey. The consultation was widely publicised via:

- Council press releases
- Council website promotion
- Council social media promotion (X and Facebook)
- Members bulletin
- Town and parish council newsletter
- Computer screensavers and receipts in all libraries
- Posters at all libraries
- Paper consultation packs available in all libraries
- Libraries enewsletter
- Schools bulletin, particularly from 2 September 2024 after the new school term began
- Council staff news feeds
- The council's Digital Influence Panel

Number of consultation responses

In total there were 3,596 consultation responses, including:

- 3,424 online survey responses
- 110 paper survey responses
- 32 emails
- 23 event attendees
- 3 letters
- 2 complaints
- 2 Customer Services feedback

Alongside these consultation responses, Alderley Edge Parish Council and Handforth Town Council conducted their own surveys to support the consultation, which received 891 responses in total (see Appendix 3). 6 newspaper articles were also published in relation to the consultation (see appendix 5).

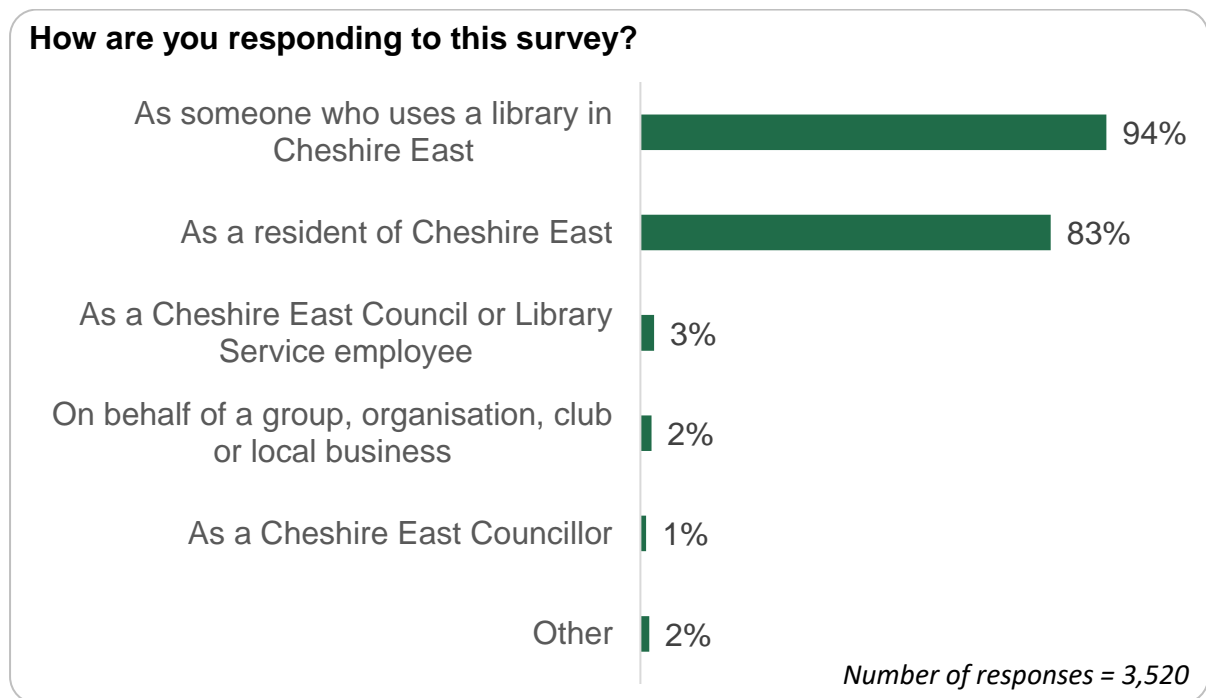
Reading this report

The main sections of this report contain an analysis of the survey responses received during the consultation. A summary of feedback received via other means is provided in the appendices.

About survey respondents

Respondent type

94% of survey respondents use a Cheshire East library, while 83% are residents of Cheshire East.



Respondent over / under representation

60% of those completing the survey provided a postcode which matched an address inside Cheshire East.

Analysis of this postcode data shows that more responses than expected were received from some places than others, when compared by the total number of households in each area.

The table below includes data for all Cheshire East postal towns which received 20 or more responses. It shows how many responses were received in each of these postal towns, as compared to the number of households in each area.

The postal towns which received more responses than expected when compared to the number of households in each town included:

- Bollington (received 3.7 times more responses than expected)
- Disley (received 3.6 times more responses than expected)
- Handforth (received 3.4 times more responses than expected)

- Holmes Chapel (received 2.4 times more responses than expected)
- Poynton (received 2.0 times more responses than expected)
- Alderley Edge (received 1.8 times more responses than expected)

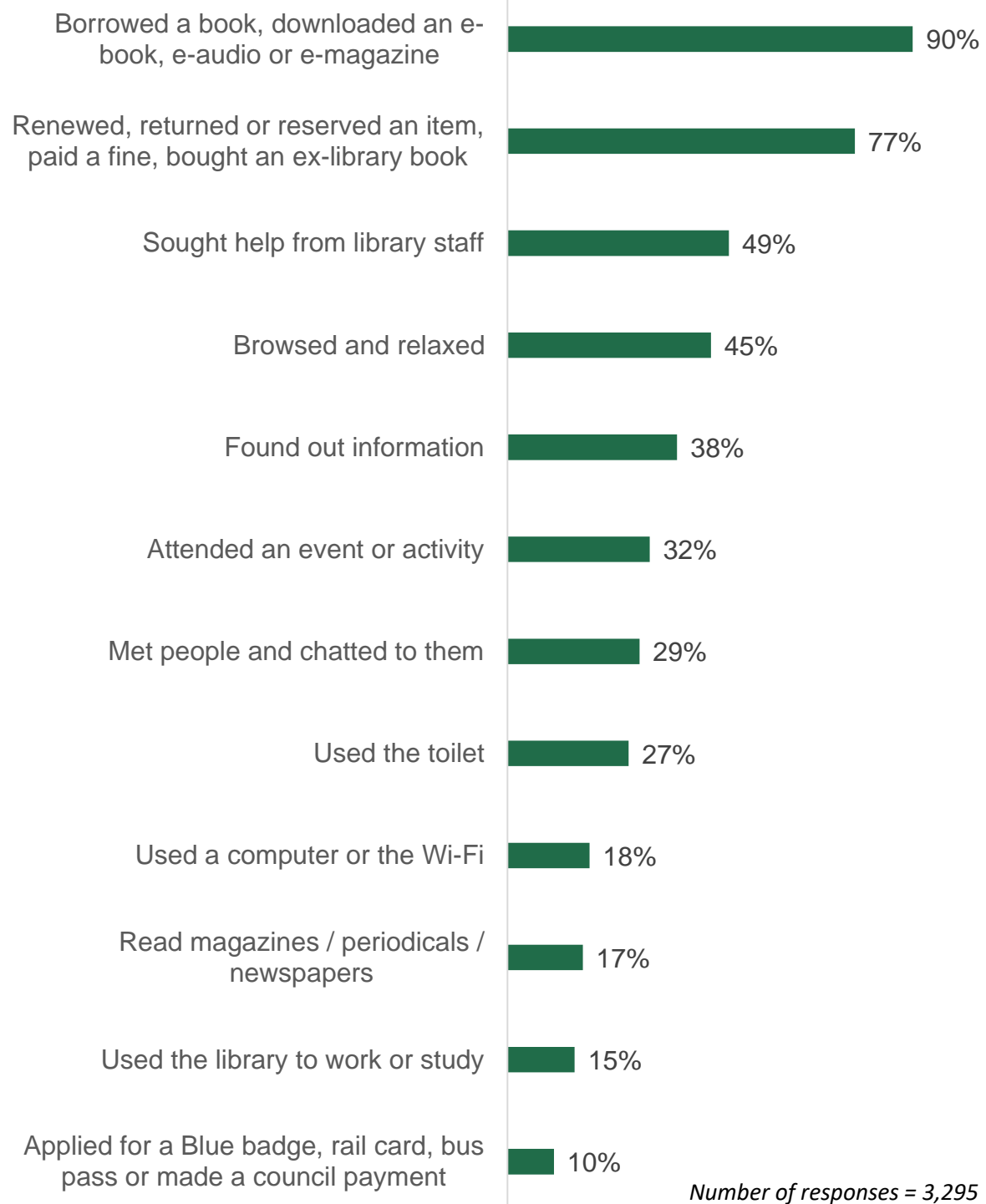
Post Town	No. CE households	No. survey responses	Survey response over / under representation
Bollington	3,615	151	3.7
Disley	2,280	92	3.6
Handforth	3,486	134	3.4
Holmes Chapel	3,257	87	2.4
Poynton	6,604	149	2.0
Alderley Edge	2,906	57	1.8
Sandbach	12,678	179	1.3
Macclesfield surrounding area	6,720	84	1.1
Alsager	10,596	130	1.1
Wilmslow	12,206	142	1.0
Congleton	16,095	162	0.9
Knutsford	10,348	101	0.9
Macclesfield	25,872	223	0.8
Nantwich	16,032	131	0.7
Middlewich	6,705	52	0.7
Crewe surrounding area	18,041	133	0.7
Crewe	27,001	81	0.3
All other areas	4,806	28	0.5
Valid total	189,248	2,116	

Library activities

The most popular activities when visiting libraries were:

- Borrowing a book, downloading an e-book, e-audio or e-magazine (90% selected this option)
- Renewing, returning or reserving an item, paying a fine, buying an ex-library book (77% selected this option)
- Seeking help from library staff (49% selected this option)
- Browsed and relaxed (45% selected this option)

For the library you use the most, which of the following activities did you do last time you were there?



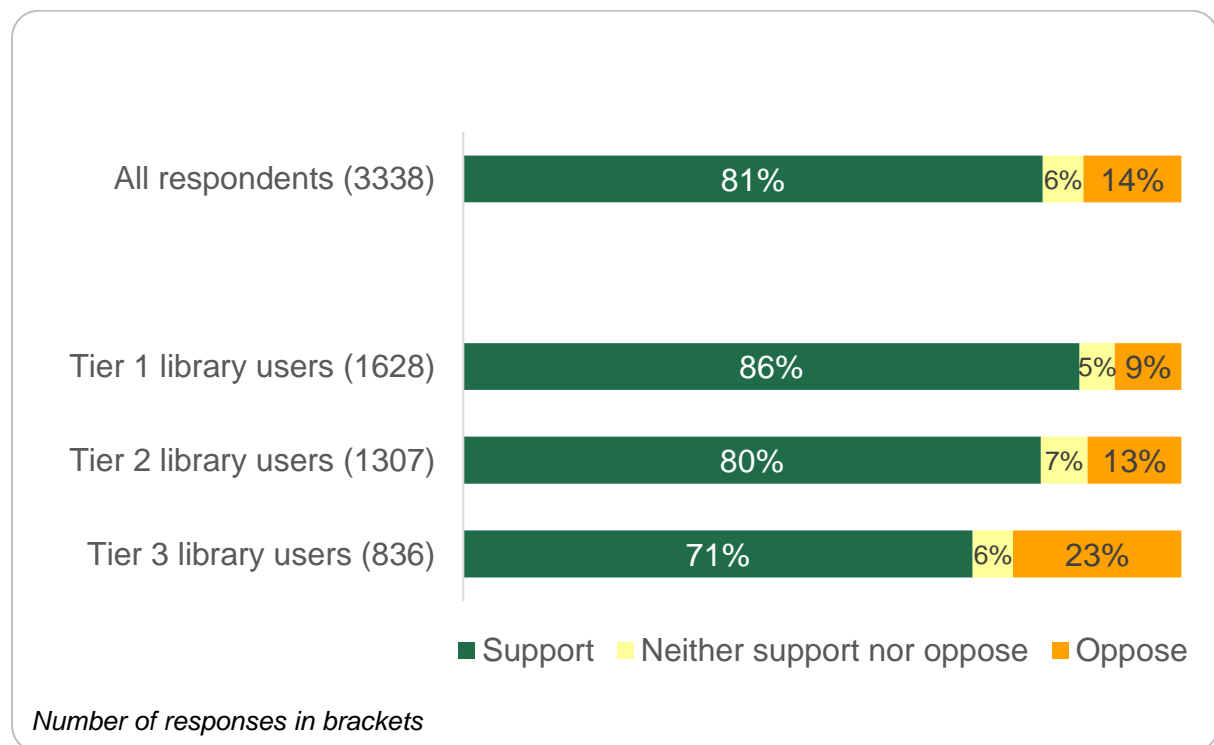
The strategy objectives

Support for the strategy objectives

Generally speaking, 81% of respondents supported the proposed strategy objectives, with 14% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the strategy objectives varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 86% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 9% were opposed
- 80% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 13% were opposed
- 71% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 23% were opposed



Comments about the strategy objectives

Survey respondents were asked if they “had any comments to make about the proposed strategy objectives”.

In total, 2,524 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Comments on the strategy	270
The strategy is ambiguous, vague, unclear	77
There is a lack of information and detail - what technology, which hours?	69

Suspicious of some of the wording used in the strategy. Suspicious of the word "affordable" ("Ensure that the service continues to be affordable for the residents of Cheshire East") - what does that mean, eventual closure?	53
Support for the strategy, it makes sense, agree with objectives	33
Support the objectives but have concerns particularly with the execution and implementation of it	24
Answering the survey doesn't mean agreeing	6
The strategy is conflicting - services for all yet reduce operating hours / days	5
The tiers are the wrong way round, Tier 1 areas already have services and infrastructure, it's the smaller towns that need these services	3

The strategy misses the overall importance of libraries	781
Libraries are vital, the hub and heart of communities	295
Libraries including the physical space must be kept open, do not close libraries	126
Libraries provide education, learning, power, heritage, wealth	89
Libraries are a safe, warm, reliable space	88
This strategy misses the point of what libraries are all about	66
Libraries offer free resource, for those unable to afford books, and lower incomes	47
Libraries are useful to those without access to computer, printers or Wi-Fi, these should be provided	39
Libraries are important for good mental health	31

The strategy misses the value of libraries for specific user groups	458
Children and young people use the libraries, this should be encouraged and promoted	114
There are lots of clubs, groups, and activities at libraries. We should not lose these and more should be encouraged	101
Libraries are well used and enjoyed by parents / grandparents with children and babies, they are a lifeline, promote this more	77
Libraries are important and well-used by the elderly, we must not take them away from the elderly	58
Libraries are important for the future of children and young people - essential they read and learn, for future generations	54
Libraries are important and well-used by the vulnerable, we must not take them away from the vulnerable	38
Libraries must remain accessible for the disabled	16

The strategy misses the importance of library staff and services	254
The staff are part of the library, they are helpful, friendly, welcoming	75
(Some) libraries include essential services e.g. blue badge which we should not lose, indeed more should be included e.g. CAB, banks, tourist info etc	61

Do not replace staff with volunteers or technology, their knowledge cannot be replaced	55
Core library services and activities must not be diluted (esp. if additional services included)	53
Technology is difficult to use for some	10

Opposed to further cuts in library opening hours	236
Do not cut opening hours further, they need to be open more not cut	127
Libraries need to be open evenings, weekends and after school, not just in the day times	60
Cutting hours / services will eventually lead to closure	27
1.5 days funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough	22

Suggestions	99
This proposal is shortsighted and needs more thought. Be innovative, think outside the box	43
Libraries need more promotion, linking in with groups, stronger partnerships, businesses, raise awareness and usage	42
Agree with volunteering, how can others get involved, volunteer, partner?	14

Locality related comments	320
Promote equality for all areas and access for all. The council should not be favouring one area over another, wealthier or larger areas	78
It would not be possible to travel to another library if ours was closed as there is poor or no public transport and we do not drive / cannot afford to drive	61
Do not close or impact Handforth, well used, deprived area, needed, ever growing	38
Do not close or impact Bollington, well used	29
Do not close or impact Disley, there is no easy way to another library	28
Do not close or impact Poynton, well used	15
Do not close or impact Holmes Chapel, well used	13
Do not close or impact Alsager, well used	13
Do not close or impact Knutsford, well used	10
Do not close or impact Alderley Edge, well used	8
Do not close or impact Sandbach, well used	7
Do not close or impact Macclesfield	7
Do not close or impact Nantwich, well used	6
Do not close or impact Congleton, well used	6
Do not close or impact Middlewich, well used	1

Finance comments	76
Spend budgets more wisely, save money elsewhere, stop wasting money	43

We pay for this, we pay Council Tax	26
CEC should fund libraries	7

Other comments	30
Only recently became aware of the consultation	8
Close libraries, most read online now, money is better spent elsewhere	8
Have more mobile library use	7
Criticism of the consultation, survey or questions	7

Overall views on the Tier System

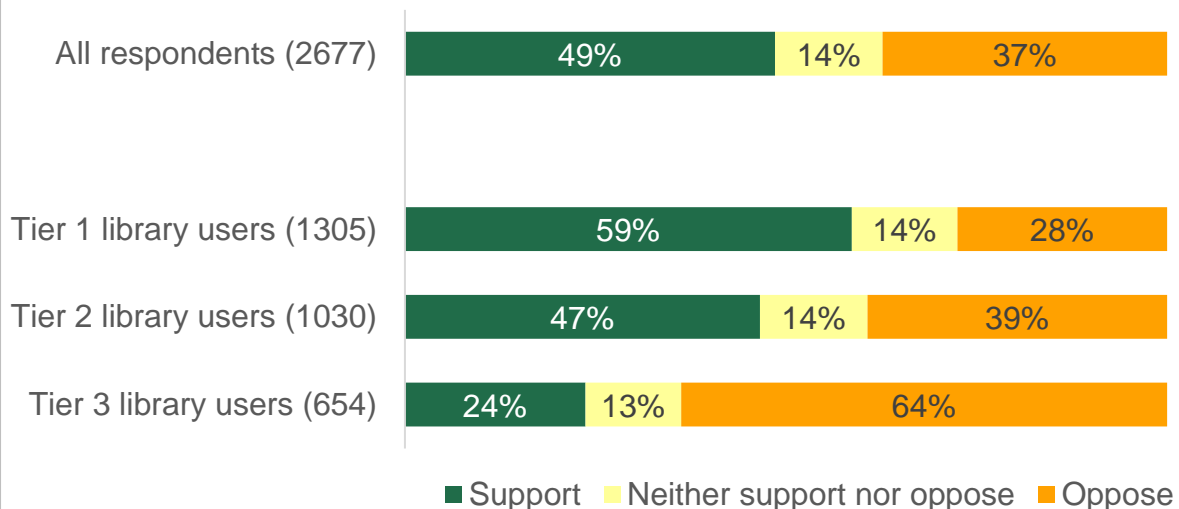
Support for the Tier System

Overall, 49% of respondents supported the proposed Tier System, while 37% opposed it.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier System varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 59% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 28% were opposed
- 47% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 39% were opposed
- 24% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 64% were opposed

Overall, how strongly do you support or oppose the proposed "Tier System"?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments about the proposed Tier System

Survey respondents were asked if they "have any final comments to make about the proposed "Tier System".

In total, 1,187 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Opposition to service reductions and the Tier System	519
Libraries are vital to the community, they should not be closed	115
Do not cut hours, hours have already been cut, library hours need to be extended. Cuts will diminish services, leading to less footfall and eventually	98

closure. So many cuts to services, always cuts, there'll be no services left if we carry on.	
General opposition to the Tier System	60
Transport and accessibility to other towns needs to be considered if there are reductions in services, is there any available? Some are unable to travel to another library. Forcing people to travel also causes more traffic and pollution.	50
Cuts to services could isolate people, including the most vulnerable. Cuts to services would impact those on low incomes, those unable to buy books. Lots of groups could miss out if services are cut.	41
Libraries are important for children and young people, for their education, and should be encouraged to read	31
Libraries are places for learning, they enrich knowledge, and help educate	31
The elderly rely on the libraries, they would be impacted if services cut	19
Libraries provide a safe and warm place	16
Lots of parents with babies and children use and rely on the library, they would be impacted if services and groups cut	15
Focus on core library service, not ancillary services	12
This is about cuts and saving money	12
Libraries are important for mental health and well-being	11
Disappointed and sad it has come to this	8

Town-specific comments	206
There should be equal library provision across all towns, regardless	130
Tier 3 libraries will have inadequate hours, insufficient	27
Handforth: vital, relied upon, is expanding, services a wide demographic	16
Bollington: very popular, community hub, largest proportion of users	13
Disley: not supported enough, too many service cuts for Disley	5
Alsager: busy, should be a Tier 1 library	4
Knutsford: should be a Tier 1 library	4
Macclesfield: what are the plans?	2
Poynton: overlooked	2
Holmes Chapel: there should be no further cuts	2
Sandbach: an important resource for the community	1

Suggestions for keeping libraries open	117
Utilise space more, collaborate, rent out, increase income, more groups	38
See which benefit the communities most, where the most need is	34
Should promote more use: collaboration, revenue generation, more groups, clubs	21
Should be open an evening, weekends, to all working people and school children to visit	16
Tier 1 and Tier 2 libraries could adjust hours and lend staff to help out Tier 3 libraries (in order to keep them open more)	5
Self-service works well elsewhere e.g. Manchester	3

Support for the Tier System	111
Supportive if this Tier System keeps libraries open, if it is a last resort, if this is the only way	75
Seems sensible, in agreement	26
Supportive as long as the tiers are regularly reviewed, that they are meeting needs, and libraries can be moved according to needs and finances	10

Comments on the use of volunteers and library staff	82
Libraries need qualified, experience, paid library staff	35
Opposed to the use of volunteers - they are inexperienced, unqualified, unreliable and can lead to data protection and safeguarding issues	21
Seems like too much pressure and reliance on volunteers and parish councils	8
Staff are helpful, they make the library	7
Have paid staff supported by volunteers	4
Use volunteers for all tiers	4
Some areas may not have volunteers available, depending on the area	3

Budgets, council tax comments	79
Save money elsewhere, stop wasting money on salaries, vanity projects	45
We all pay council tax, you have a statutory obligation to provide a library service	31
Would rather libraries didn't move to Parish Councils; wouldn't want to pay an extra precept	3

Comments on the consultation and proposals	73
This proposal needs more thought	21
How did you come to this decision, based on what? Where is the evidence to back it up?	19
The proposal needs more information e.g. proposed opening hours	15
Listen, don't just run box ticking exercises. A decision has probably already been made	13
The questionnaire is lengthy and off-putting	5

Tier 1 “Library Hubs” feedback

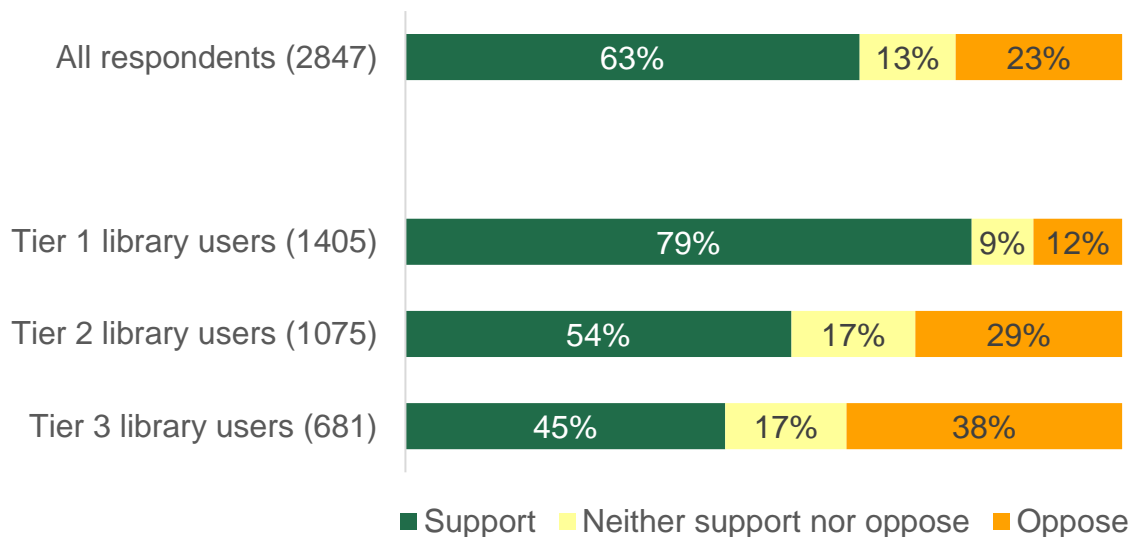
Overall support for Tier 1 “Library Hubs”

Generally speaking, 63% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 1 “Library Hubs”, with 23% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 1 “Library Hubs” varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 79% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 12% were opposed
- 54% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 29% were opposed
- 45% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 38% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 1 “Library Hubs”

Survey respondents were asked if they “have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"”.

In total, 907 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

General Tier 1 comments	160
The Tier System could result in closure of the lower tier libraries in time; supportive as long as this is not to the detriment of the smaller libraries	63

All libraries should be Tier 1	48
Disagree, dislike the Tier System, it is flawed and needs revision	36
Increasing population will mean more demand, Tier 2 will soon need to be Tier 1	8
Disagree with Wilmslow in Tier 1	3
Some libraries might be too small to house all of these services	2

Equality is needed across all towns	105
Should be equal provision across all towns: this is unfair, it deprives, isolates, and marginalises the smaller, rural areas	102
The smaller towns are the ones without banks and other amenities - they're the ones that would need them most	3

Libraries that should be in Tier 1, as they are well used and an important part of the community	59
Sandbach	16
Handforth	13
Poynton	11
Alsager	8
Knutsford	7
Holmes Chapel	4

Supportive of the Tier 1 proposal	102
Good idea, good concept, makes use of the space	59
Good idea in principle, fine if you live there	29
Supportive if this is the only option, if this is what finances dictate	9
Agree with town(s) in T1 category	5

Other general comments	481
Importance of libraries and librarians	165
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	149
General suggestions	63
Criticisms of the consultation and survey	104

Tier 2 “Local Libraries” feedback

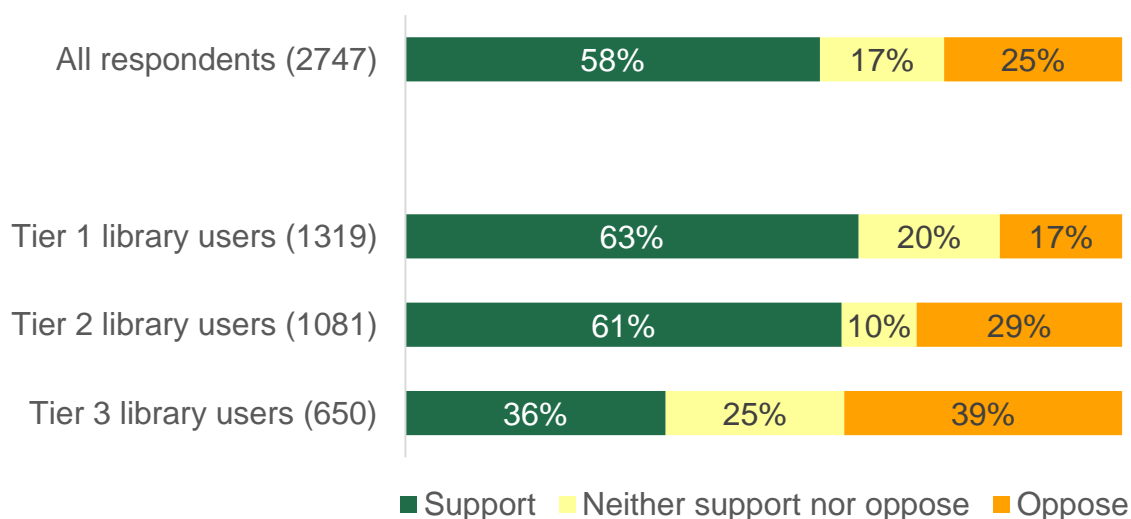
Overall support for Tier 2 “Local Libraries”

Generally speaking, 58% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 2 “Local Libraries”, with 25% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 2 “Local Libraries” varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 63% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 17% were opposed
- 61% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 29% were opposed
- 36% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 39% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 2 “Local Libraries”

Survey respondents were asked if they “have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"”.

In total, 1,018 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Comments about opening times	170
Opening times should include evenings, after school, weekends	49
Depends on what the opening times would be	36

Unclear what 'times of highest demand' means, how do you measure this? Current or future demand?	35
Limiting opening is the first step to closure	24
Opening times should be to reflect the needs of the whole community	23
Adjust hours but keep all open, rotate across libraries	3

General Tier 2 comments	126
Increasing populations mean more demand, Tier 2 will soon need to be T1	30
The Tier System is flawed, needs revision, some Tier 2 libraries need to be in Tier 1	37
Disagree, dislike the Tier System	25
All libraries should be Tier 1	16
Tier 2 libraries will be second rate libraries	13
Middlewich: excellent library, vital, should be open longer	3
Status would need to be guaranteed for set period, and then reviewed	2

Equality is needed across all towns	69
Should be equal across all towns: unfair, deprives, isolates, and marginalises the smaller, rural areas	69

Libraries that should be in Tier 1	55
Poynton: should be in Tier 1, it needs a fully functioning library	14
Sandbach: should be in Tier 1	12
Knutsford: should be in Tier 1	11
Alsager: should be in Tier 1, it's busy, growing, and important part of the community	9
Holmes Chapel: is well used and important part of the community	9

Libraries that should be in Tier 2	57
Bollington: should be in Tier 2	25
Handforth: should be included, is well used and important part of the community	15
Disley: isolated, no public transport from Disley, library is relied upon	13
Alderley Edge: should be in Tier 2	4

Supportive of the Tier 2 proposal	18
Good idea, good concept, makes use of the space	8
Supportive if this is the only option, if this is what finances dictate	6
Good idea in principle, fine if you live there	4

Other general comments	523
Importance of libraries and librarians	151
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	115
General suggestions	144
Criticisms of the consultation and survey	113

Tier 2 library opening times

Number of Tier 2 library users

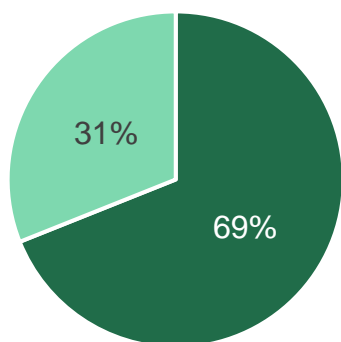
In total, 1,328 survey respondents used one of the Tier 2 libraries most regularly:

- Poynton library (356 survey responses)
- Sandbach library (310 survey responses)
- Holmes Chapel library (212 survey responses)
- Knutsford library (195 survey responses)
- Alsager library (182 survey responses)
- Middlewich library (73 survey responses)

How best to use half day library provision

69% of Tier 2 library users felt that libraries with a half day provision during the week would be better to keep this provision as it is. 31% felt it would be better to remove this provision and use these hours to extend opening hours on other days of the week.

For those Tier 2 libraries that currently have a half day provision during the week (10am to 1pm), do you think it would be better to...



- ...keep this half day provision as it is?
- ...remove this half day provision, and use these hours to extend opening hours on other days of the week e.g. open at 9am or 9:30am instead?

Number of responses = 1,182

The most popular half day slots to maintain

The most popular half day slots that users of Tier 2 libraries felt were most important to maintain were:

- Saturday morning (66% of Tier 2 respondents selected this time slot)
- Tuesday afternoon/evening (41%)
- Thursday afternoon/evening (40%)

The least popular half day slots that users of Tier 2 libraries felt were most important to maintain were:

- Monday afternoon (28% of Tier 2 respondents selected this time slot)
- Wednesday afternoon/evening (30%)
- Wednesday morning (30%)

Thinking about the Tier 2 library you use most frequently and its respective opening hours, which 6 of the following half day slots are most important for you to maintain?	Count	Percent of valid responses	Rank
Monday morning	432	33%	5
Monday afternoon	369	28%	11
Tuesday morning	403	30%	8
Tuesday afternoon/evening	542	41%	2
Wednesday morning	394	30%	9
Wednesday afternoon/evening	393	30%	10
Thursday morning	417	31%	6
Thursday afternoon/evening	526	40%	3
Friday morning	496	37%	4
Friday afternoon	408	31%	7
Saturday morning	878	66%	1
Total valid responses	1,328		

Tier 3 “Community Libraries” feedback

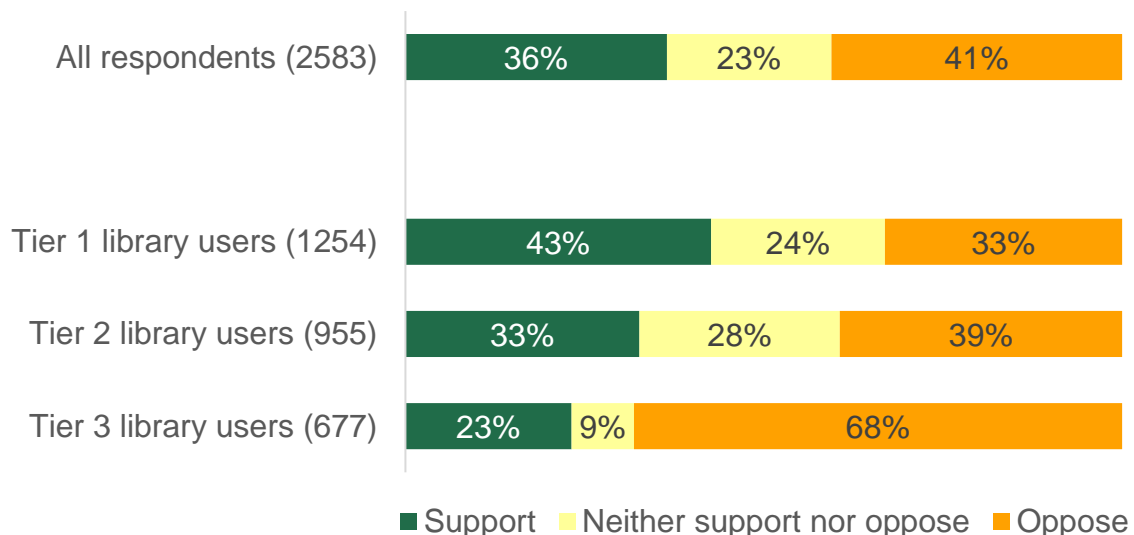
Overall support for Tier 3 “Community Libraries”

Generally speaking, 36% of respondents supported the proposed Tier 3 “Community Libraries”, with 41% opposing them.

The level of support and opposition for the Tier 3 “Community Libraries” varied depending on which library respondents used:

- 43% of Tier 1 library users were in support, 33% were opposed
- 33% of Tier 2 library users were in support, 39% were opposed
- 23% of Tier 3 library users were in support, 68% were opposed

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the proposed Tier 3 “Community Managed Libraries”?



Number of responses in brackets

Comments about Tier 3 “Community Libraries”

Survey respondents were asked if they “have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 3 “Community Libraries””.

In total, 1,451 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Opposition to a reduction in Tier 3 opening hours and service reductions	319
1.5 days CEC funding for Tier 3 libraries is not enough	109

It's a slippery slope to more cuts then closure	79
Opening hours must be regular, and longer	75
Libraries should be open evenings and weekends for those who work and for children	45
Self-service should only be used if the technology is operational, and people know how to use it	11

The importance of professional library staff, and opposition to the use of volunteers	299
Libraries need paid professional staff that are experienced	112
Volunteers would not be able to answer queries, they lack of knowledge and this would lead to data protection issues	69
Volunteers are unreliable	47
There aren't many / enough volunteers available to make this viable	40
The staff are great, friendly, welcoming, helpful	18
Volunteers would not work - There would be clashes with regular library staff, they are different people	10
Larger towns have more potential volunteers, so use that approach there and give smaller towns paid for staff	3

Libraries that should not be Tier 3	134
Handforth: is in a deprived area, it serves a more dependent population	54
Bollington: serves a wide area proportionally, it is well used	39
Disley: should not be in Tier 3, it's remote, it is very much relied upon by the residents	28
Alderley Edge: is a vital community asset, should not be Tier 3	4
Every library should be at least a Tier 2 library	5
Tier 3 libraries don't work from experience, they are pointless	4

Finance and budget comments	107
We pay for this through Council Tax, we shouldn't be relying on volunteers for something we pay for	39
CEC should be funding this	26
Disagree with Parish Councils funding libraries, residents would be paying twice (double taxation)	22
Stop wasting money	11
This will cost more in the long run	7
This is about saving money	2

Equality is needed across all towns	80
Equal library access and provision is needed for all towns, why should smaller, rural towns be deprived	80

General opposition to the Tier 3 proposal	146
Disagree with this proposal, it is unfair	68
How would this work?	55

This doesn't affect me, but it is a shame for those it does impact	16
How have you come to this decision?	7

Supportive of the Tier 3 proposal	67
Supportive, if it means they're not closed	48
Agree, proposal sounds sensible	14
Expand the services offered, more of a community centre	3
Happy to volunteer	2

Other general comments	299
Importance of libraries and librarians	185
Cuts and closures would impact on different users	76
General suggestions	38

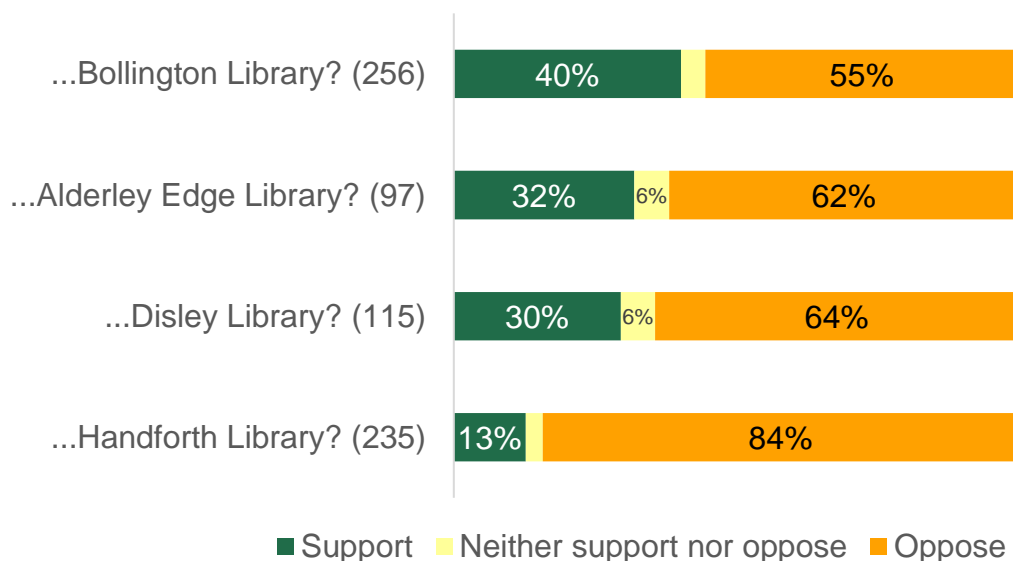
Support for specific library proposals

Within the consultation material [proposals for each of the Tier 3 libraries, including proposed opening hours, were provided \(PDF, 189KB\)](#).

Levels of support and opposition for the Tier 3 library proposals by users of these libraries varied:

- 40% of Bollington Library users supported proposals, 55% opposed them
- 32% of Alderley Edge Library users supported proposals, 62% opposed them
- 30% of Disley Library users supported proposals, 64% opposed them
- 13% of Handforth Library users supported proposals, 84% opposed them

Generally speaking, how strongly do you support or oppose the specific proposals for...



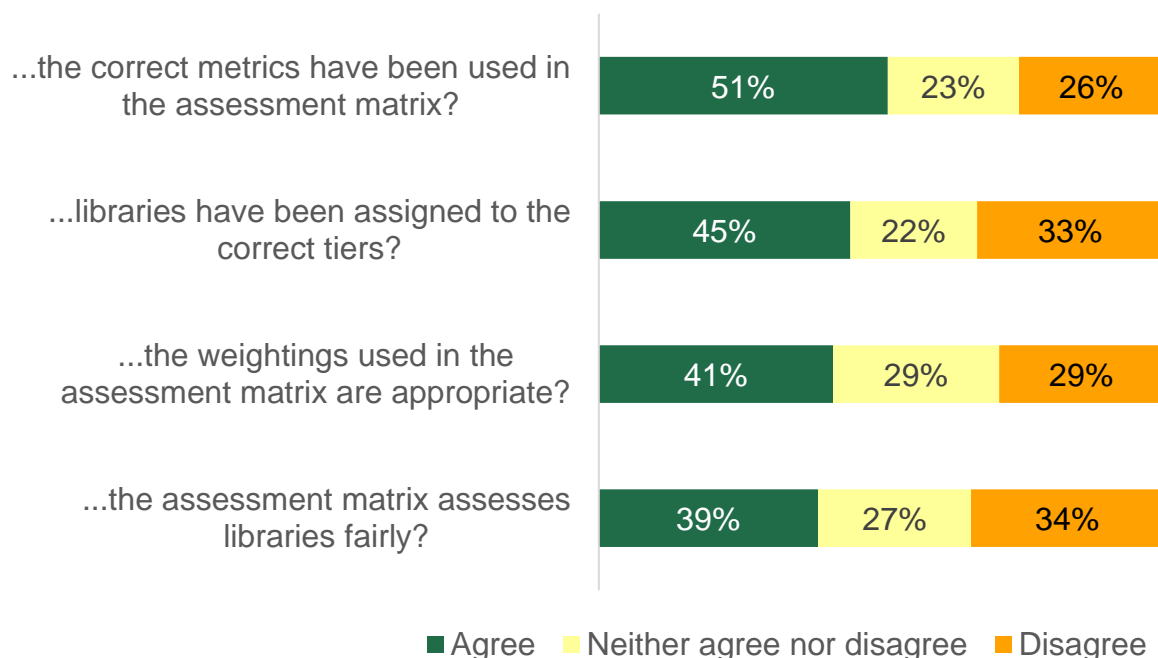
Number of responses in brackets

The site assessment matrix

Libraries have been assigned to Tiers 1 to 3 through the use of a site assessment matrix. Views on the assessment matrix were fairly split:

- 51% agreed the correct metrics have been used in the assessment matrix, 26% disagreed
- 45% agreed libraries have been assigned to the correct tiers, 33% disagreed
- 41% agreed the assessment matrix assess libraries fairly, 29% disagreed
- 39% agreed the weightings used in the assessment matrix are appropriate, 34% disagreed

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that...



Number of responses between 2,527 and 2,672

Comments on the assessment matrix

Survey respondents were asked if they “had any comments to make about the site assessment matrix”.

In total, 1,390 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Metrics missing from the Site Assessment Matrix	380
Library provision should be available in all towns, all locations are equally important to those that use them, smaller towns are suffering	110

Has accessibility to other libraries been accounted for? What about public transport provision to and from each library? Many people will be unable to travel elsewhere. Parking is expensive or difficult, if forced to drive elsewhere	106
It should be the proportion of the population in a town using the library, not the total number per town using a library. Total number favours the larger towns, whereas demand may be greater per capita in smaller towns.	78
What about the impact of it not being there, what it takes away e.g. on children being able to access books and read?	30
Has future demand been taken into account? Projected demand? Does this link to the Local Plan projections?	25
Have all demographics been accounted for when measuring library usage?	17
What about counting casual users, groups, and those attending activities, not just loaning a book?	14

Criticisms of the data used in the Site Assessment Matrix	134
Need evidence as to how these numbers have been calculated, the matrix lacks information and detail	68
The numbers are flawed, incorrect, the tiers are not correct	30
Libraries shouldn't be being assessed when services have already been reduced, this is a biased assessment	22
Tartan Rug - This is out of date, difficult to understand, and shouldn't be used	9
The user numbers aren't a true reflection of use, they don't account for several family members using the same card for example	5

Town specific comments	247
Bollington: should be Tier 2. Serves wide community, thriving usage, strong social hub, for children, considerable sized town, plays an important role	57
Handforth: crucial, busy, easier to get to, lots of vulnerable, deprived people, on the cusp, growing population	54
Tier 2 towns do not have places to go to for support, they need those services included, not forced out of town	29
Disley: no public transport to elsewhere, important and well used, hub of the community	23
Sandbach: should be Tier 1, it's always busy, growing town, new builds	20
Knutsford: should be Tier 1. Always busy, lots of events, well used	12
Holmes Chapel: is an important and well used library	10
Alsager: should be Tier 1, it's a well used community hub	10
Wilmslow: has higher priority than it should, has plenty of funding already	10
Poynton: should be a hub, vital and well used community asset	7
Alderley Edge: should be in Tier 2, needs longer hours	6
Middlewich: is well-attended, but needs more resources, will be deprived of services	4
Prestbury not mentioned	3
Tier 3 resource allocations are insufficient	2

Support for the Site Assessment Matrix	45
Ok for me, wouldn't want to be in a lower tier	23
If that's how it has to be, seems sensible	19
Needs monitoring and reviewing to ensure meeting needs	3

Comments on the importance of libraries	274
It's not just about numbers: the contribution and value of the library to the community is more important	182
Libraries are warm, safe places, impacts the vulnerable	50
Elderly rely on their local libraries, impacts them if removed, may not be able to travel elsewhere	19
Children and young people, and school use should be considered, important they have access	15
Focus should be on library services, not additional non core services	8

Make savings elsewhere	189
Volunteers are not qualified, not experienced, not reliable. Libraries need qualified paid staff	49
Save money elsewhere, what exactly do our taxes pay for?	42
Promote the service more, rather than reduce it. Advertise, collaborate, encourage more use	34
No more cuts to hours, current hours are insufficient and need increasing, they are already restrictive	30
Cuts to services, days and hours will eventually lead to closure	28
Proposals are shortsighted	6

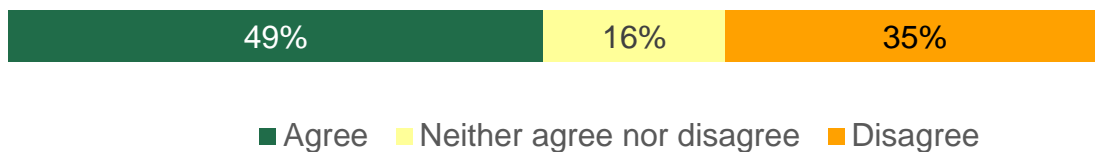
Criticisms of the consultation and survey	121
Don't understand the Site Assessment Matrix - matrix, metrics, tiers, this is jargon. Ask a simple question, do we want to keep our libraries?	105
Public opinion won't matter, this has already been decided, this survey is designed to make it look like residents agree	16

Delivering library services differently

Should councils deliver libraries in different ways

49% of survey respondents agreed it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries, 35% disagreed.

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree it is appropriate that Local Authorities look for alternative ways of operating libraries to help maintain the service?



Number of responses = 3,202

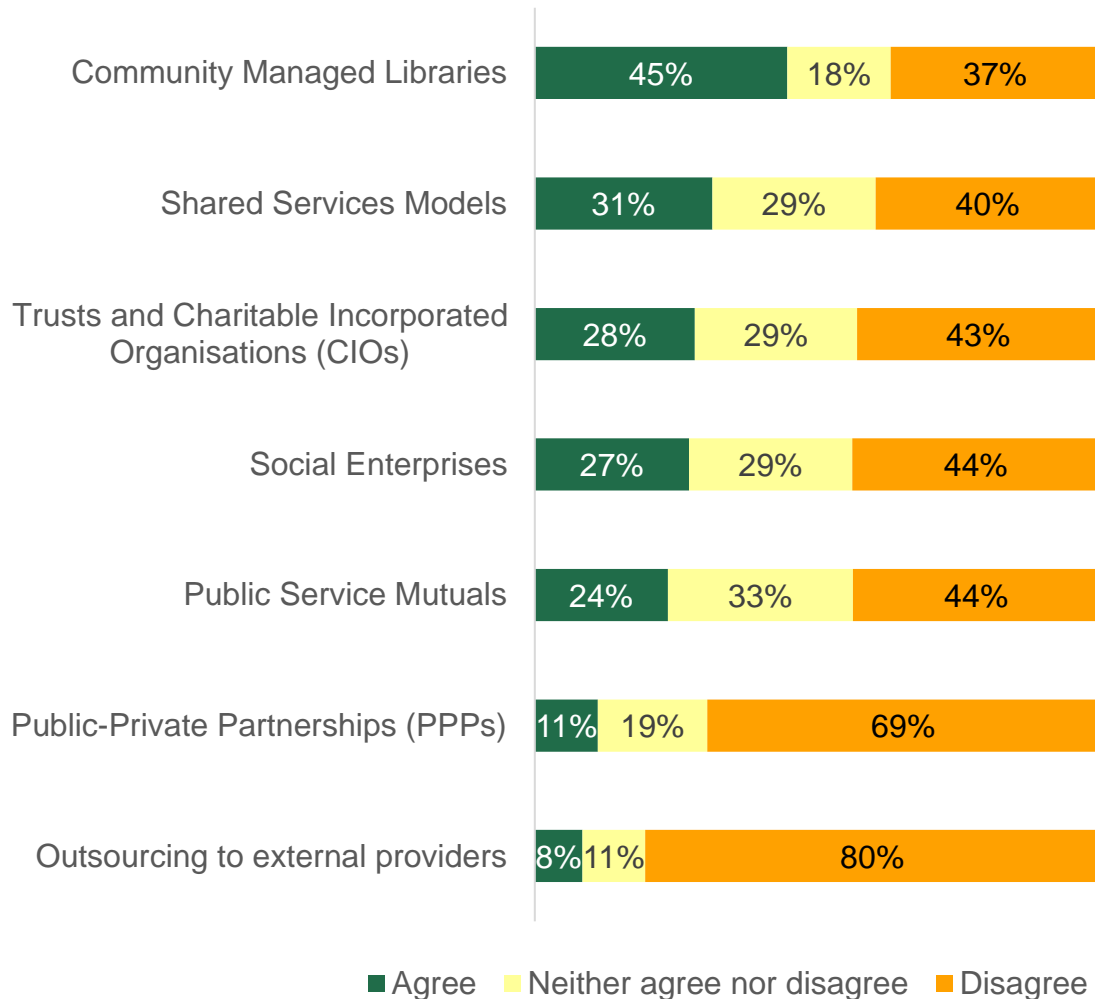
Alternative Delivery Models to consider

Within the consultation, 7 Alternative Service Delivery Models which the council could potentially consider using to deliver its libraries were briefly set out (PDF, 179KB) – [see the original consultation material here \(PDF, 179KB\)](#).

Agreement on whether the council should explore using different alternative service delivery models to deliver libraries varied significantly:

- Community Managed Libraries (8% net agreement)
- Shared Services Models (-8% net disagreement)
- Trusts and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (-15% net disagreement)
- Social Enterprises (-17% net disagreement)
- Public Service Mutuels (-20% net disagreement)
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) (-58% net disagreement)
- Outsourcing to external providers (-72% net disagreement)

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Cheshire East Council should explore using the following Alternative Service Delivery Models to deliver Cheshire East libraries?



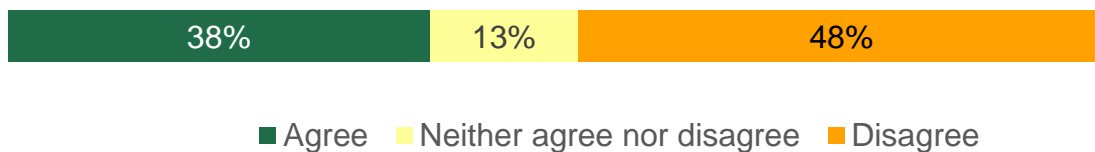
Number of responses between 1,954 and 2,351

Unstaffed libraries

Split opinion on unstaffed libraries

38% of survey respondents agreed the council should explore extending opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology, while 48% disagreed – This gave net disagreement of -10%.

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Cheshire East Council should explore extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology?



Number of responses = 2,523

Comments about unstaffed libraries

Survey respondents were asked if they “had any comments to make about extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology”.

In total, 1,126 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Concerns around safety and security		408
Safety concerns - Would be worried about safety, being in an unmanned building (84% of respondents with this concern were female)		196
Anti-Social Behaviour concerns - This could attract antisocial behaviour, vandalism, gangs, drunks, homeless		124
Book thefts - People could take advantage and steal books		48
Libraries would need security (guards) in place		40
Concerns around the importance of librarians and human contact		300
The staff are an asset, they are irreplaceable and are what make a library. Opposed to this if it means losing the staff		125
It's about community - Visiting the library is a lifeline for some, and the only time they see people		78
Face to face service would still be needed - Access to staff / expertise is essential, and would still be needed		74
This would make libraries meaningless and remove the point of them		23
Concerns unstaffed libraries would not be inclusive		114
What about those who struggle with technology, including the elderly?		107
Children would lose out - They wouldn't be able to visit, or join their clubs		7
Other concerns		151
Concerns about a reliance on technology - What if the technology fails?		48

Concerns that the costs to administer the unstaffed system would outweigh the benefits/savings, including costs such as technology investment, maintenance, insurance, surveillance	42
This has not been thought out, ridiculous, keep the libraries open, this is the thin end of the wedge	61

Support for the proposal	153
This could be useful to enable people to pick up and drop off items outside of opening hours. In support if it keeps the library open. This works in Stockport.	82
This would be ok as an additional service, ok for days when the library is not open, and would need to be open outside of core manned hours	62
Use volunteers to keep libraries open	9

Final comments on the strategy

Survey respondents were asked if they “had any final comments to make about the draft Library Strategy for 2024 to 2028”.

In total, 723 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Importance of libraries and librarians	204
Libraries are the heart of communities: they are vital, a lifeline, for everyone, all ages, genders, including the vulnerable, those on low incomes	102
Libraries are essential for education, knowledge, and learning, they are treasured wealth, and for our future generations	42
Do not get rid of the librarians, they are essential, helpful, friendly, knowledgeable. Consider the librarians and their livelihoods	19
Libraries are important for children; a safe place, a quiet place away from home, a place to study, for those whose families cannot afford books	15
There are many groups that meet up and use the library space e.g. dementia groups. Rhyme time, reading groups, support groups, activity	14
Libraries are important for good mental health	12
Strategy specific comments	192
Disagree with the strategy: do not close any libraries	82
There is a lack of evidence, information, and detail in the proposal, what are the proposed hours?	34
The strategy is confusing, complicated, do not fully understand what is being proposed	31
The strategy has missed the point of the libraries, the Tier System is based on numbers and not what libraries are all about	21
This is too short term and should be looking more long term	14
The strategy is not about efficiency it's about cost cutting	10
Cuts and finance comments	118
Stop wasting money - make cuts elsewhere, reduce management salaries, stop spending money on non-core services e.g. festivals	53
Yet more services being cut, there'll be none left, once they're gone they're gone	46
Comments about central government funding cuts, lobbying for more funding, awaiting the new government	11
The Tier System could end up costing more than the proposed savings	8
Locality comments	72

There should be equal provision for all and all towns, everyone pays Council Tax	35
Smaller communities get the raw deal, these proposals are unfair on smaller communities	12
Disagree with the Handforth proposal	7
Disagree with the Bollington proposal	7
Disagree with the Sandbach proposal	6
Disagree with the Alderley Edge proposal	2
Where is Prestbury in the proposals?	2
Disagree with the Disley proposal	1

Suggestions	56
Raise awareness and usage of libraries, have more marketing, linking in with schools, groups	23
Look at ways to generate revenue: charge nominal fees for activities, look at sponsorship, charge non library services to rent the space	21
Use volunteers to keep libraries open, I would be interested in volunteering	6
Get rid of the mobile libraries	3
Have more satellite libraries	2
Do not reduce the hours even more, do not close on Saturdays, ensure hours suit those who work, after school, revert to the opening hours before they were cut	1

Agreement with proposals	50
Appreciate you trying to save our libraries, whatever we can do to save the libraries	28
Agree with a more modern approach e.g. self service, lockers, shared space	14
Support a mobile service	8

Comments on the consultation and survey	31
This consultation is a waste of time, the council has already made a decision, this is just a tick box exercise, we do not trust CEC, you do not listen (for example the car parking charges introduced)	18
There is a lack of proper consultation: visit the libraries, speak to the users, the librarians, conduct more of a qualitative consultation	11
Comments on survey design and errors in survey	2

Conclusions

Transformation of Library Services

It is important to note the amount of effort that has gone into conducting this consultation. Any transformation of how library services are delivered is always going to be a complex and controversial process, given how important libraries are to local communities.

That the council has been able to put forward co-designed proposals in partnership with Town and Parish Councils is testament to the hard work of the Library Services management team, and to the willingness of Town and Parish Council colleagues to engage. Hopefully as a result of these efforts the amount of service disruption felt by library users is minimised as far as possible, while the service continues to move towards being financially sustainable.

It is also positive to note such a large response to the consultation, despite the consultation survey being extremely lengthy and complex – people remain passionate about libraries.

Overall support for the strategy

On the whole, large proportions of survey respondents and Town and Parish Councils were supportive of the overall strategy. We saw strong support for the strategy objectives, overall support for the proposed Tier System, and overall support for many aspects of the assessment matrix.

This is most likely because the large and medium sized libraries are not negatively impacted by the proposals, and so most are pleased to keep service provision as is.

Opposition to proposals for Tier 3 libraries

However, it is noted that proposals for the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly opposed. There is concern that Tier 3 libraries may become neglected and slip toward eventual closure as a result of the Tier System; Cheshire East Council and local communities must work hard to ensure this does not happen.

It is interesting to note that proposals for some of the Tier 3 libraries were more strongly supported than others. For example, Bollington Library users were more likely to support proposals for their library, and this is likely as a result of the Town Council stepping in to provide top-up funding, to ensure the library hours are maintained. Handforth library users were least likely to support the proposals, and this library is seeing the biggest potential loss in opening hours of all the Tier 3 libraries.

The strategy favours larger towns unfairly

There are concerns that the strategy and assessment matrix favour the largest towns too heavily, and that this is unfair on the residents in the smaller towns who pay the same amount of Council Tax as everyone else.

Respondents point out that the assessment matrix does not measure the proportion of a town's population that uses a library, and therefore the importance of the library for those towns. Furthermore, these are towns that have fewer services than larger towns as it is, and poorer public transport networks, and so reducing the library provision in these areas may have a larger overall impact on those residents.

How the council might manage local services in future

Concerns have been raised that having different management approaches and different levels of service provision at different libraries will lead to a "postcode lottery" for library service provision – the council will need to manage this carefully to ensure library service provision does not become disparate and confusing across the borough.

Concern was also raised as to how library services would be delivered in harmony with other council services, such as Family Hubs, Leisure Services, and car parking, to ensure services that compliment each other at a local level. Again, this will need careful management by the council, especially if each town is going to have its own unique service delivery model for all these services.

Alternative service delivery models to be considered

It is noted that the only alternative service delivery model which received net overall support by respondents was "Community Managed Libraries", and it may be that this becomes the preferred service delivery model in future. Respondents do seem open to the council exploring different ways of delivering libraries.

Unstaffed libraries are marginally disliked, though some Town and Parish Councils were keen to trial the use of such a system, as long as it was not at the expense of staffed library hours, and only used to extend opening hours. There were many concerns around safety and anti-social behaviour of using such a system, particularly from female respondents, and these concerns would need allaying through trials before being widely adopted.

Some Town and Parish Councils were enthusiastic about embracing different ways of delivering the service, with several already embracing top-up funding, and others open to exploring the use of volunteers in libraries, though again this would need trialling before being rolled out widely. Others were open to exploring other ways of managing the library too, including hiring out floors, and even possibly taking over the running of individual libraries entirely.

Further engagement

Although much progress has been made, the transformation of libraries services is not wholly complete at this point. Continued engagement will be required with local communities and Town and Parish Councils to complete this process.

Appendix 1 – Meeting summaries

Introduction

During the formal consultation, officers from Cheshire East Council met with 5 Town and Parish Councils via Microsoft Teams meetings.

These meetings consisted of officers from Cheshire East Council running through a short presentation at the start of the meeting, before opening the floor up for discussion.

In total there were 23 attendees across the 4 meetings that took place. Details of the 5 meetings are provided in the following table.

Town or Parish Council	Date	Number of Town or Parish Council attendees
Holmes Chapel Parish Council	02/09/2024	5
Alsager Town Council	05/06/2024	4
Poynton Town Council	09/09/2024	6
Knutsford Town Council	10/09/2024	7
Sandbach Town Council	23/09/2024	1

Summary of the meetings

The following section includes a brief summary of the feedback received during the 4 meetings.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

- Enquired whether the Parish Council could ask surrounding local councils to contribute to funding via their precepts, given their residents also use their library
- Enquired whether their library hours were going to be reduced, and when that information would become available

Alsager Town Council

- Keen to understand what is being asked of Alsager Town Council in terms of top-up funding
- Town Council interested in having use of the upstairs of the library
- Keen to understand Cheshire East Council long term policies on library services, leisure services, and car parking as a whole
- Enquired about the possibility of the Town Council taking over the library completely

Poynton Town Council

- Library opening hours need to be dovetailed with Family Hub opening hours
- Expressed interest in the new clinician's room being built at Poynton Library
- Need to see more definite detail before being able to comment
- Keen to understand what is being asked of Poynton Town Council in terms of top-up funding

Knutsford Town Council

- Felt Tier 1 libraries should not be located close together e.g. Crewe and Nantwich
- All the various services need to be connected together
- Curious as to how the Family Hub would work
- Keen to understand how the opening hours review would occur, and what that potentially meant for Knutsford Library
- Curious about how unstaffed library technology would work
- Curious about the booking system for customer services
- Felt that the Tiers should be reviewed regularly
- Keen to understand what is being asked of Poynton Town Council in terms of top-up funding

Sandbach Town Council

- The appointments system for Customer Services will apply to all libraries
- The review of opening hours for all Tier 2 libraries will take place this Autumn
- The Family Hub model makes sense and sounds quite positive, if libraries are used to deliver more core services it helps keep them relevant
- It may be possible for Tier 2 Town and Parish Councils to top-up library hours

Full meeting notes

The following section includes full notes taken from the 4 meetings.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

Date/time: 02/09/2024 13:30.

Number of attendees: 8, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

A few comments:

- We've got a very good public room for meetings in the library, which I think is reasonably well used. I don't know what the figures are, but I like to think that whatever changes are made, it's not going to reduce the use of that room.
- The local history group of the U3A were recently in discussions with Cheshire East Council. We think this is very important for Holmes Chapel and we hope that whatever changes that impact that service will improve the service.
- Re. costings for an additional half day – for a librarian and two assistants for half a day. Whether we take that up or not will be subject to some discussion this week, and might depend on whether there were significant changes to the current hours.
- Also, we're a band B meeting room, which is a £20 an hour cost and it is well used, partly by Barclays Bank. It is a good facility, our library for toddler groups, for reading groups.

Comment 1 – Response

Thanks for those comments – noted.

Comment 2

If there is a request to for us to increase funding or to provide funding for the library hours, are there any opportunities for us to have the surrounding councils contribute towards that? We have a reasonable level of precept, but we don't have a huge precept. So is it possible to seek support from surrounding councils as well?

Comment 2 – Response

Yes. We have had this raised by a number of Town Councils in relation to neighbouring parishes, because for the library service, which is obviously a free service, people may come to use it from outside of your parish boundary.

What we have said is simply on the basis that we don't have the capacity or resource to engage in those types of discussions, that that is very much over to the individual Town or Parish Council to lead on and go out and have those conversations with their neighbours to ask if they would be willing to contribute. With hundreds of different local councils Cheshire East Council simply doesn't have the capacity to conduct those conversations. Plus, you'll probably have better overall relations with those neighbouring organisations than Cheshire East Council which doesn't have a direct link with them.

Comment 3

Are our library hours going to be reduced? That information is not in the consultation and when are we likely to know whether the hours will be reduced and what by?

Comment 3 – Response

Yes that's an ongoing process.

In terms of the customer service offering, moving to an appointments based system would allow us to free up staff, an appointments system allows us to manage staff time better. But in terms of the opening hours, we'll be reviewing those over the next few weeks and then presenting something back to committee in November for a final decision.

Comment 4

Just to follow on from that – for example, if in that report that you present committee we notice that you're reducing the hours by quite a lot, would you be wanting an answer from the Parish Council before January if they were minded to kind of try and keep hours at the current level? Because at the moment we don't know how much you'll reduce hours by.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we will be looking to give you a bit of a heads up around what that would look like, and then we would be looking to get a response from local councils as to whether they have an interest in maintaining more hours as we've done with the Tier 3 sites, exactly the same process.

Alsager Town Council

Date/time: 05/09/2024 13:30.

Number of attendees: 7, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

The average contribution so far is £20k from the four Tier 3 sites. What is the ask of Alsager Town Council? Give us a number.

Comment 1 – Response

We have provided this number back in June and can provide it again. We reduced hours last December, we put forward a proposal for you to maintain hours, which you didn't take up. We have a similar offer to put forward now.

£21,973 is the number to maintain current staffing levels. Topping up guards against any future changes to opening hours, through legally binding funding agreements. Same for the Tier 1 and Tier 3 sites that are topping up funding.

Comment 2

If we say no to topping up hours, what is the impact on the library going to be?

You also mentioned a lot of other things in the presentation, around appointments, periods of highest demand open, staff free libraries etc. If we pay the top up for hours, will those things take place anyway?

Comment 2 – response

We haven't done the full assessment yet in terms of what it would mean, that's a process that's ongoing and it's the question there would be, would it close or would it be open with through the use of technology for example. That's a question in the consultation.

Comment 2

This is unprofessional, you should have the information available for us today so we can make decisions. How can we make decisions without the facts and figures?

Comment 2 – Response

We can provide all the information you need, the purpose of this conversation is not a one off conversation, it's to understand the Town Council's appetite for further dialogue. We don't need final decisions today.

Different Town Councils approach this differently, some proactively engage, some don't want to engage at all. This is simply an open discussion.

Comment 3

We've got a number of high level options that we want to discuss. Obviously we have to have an eye on what the precept will be in Alsager in future.

If we were to consider the top up funding that you're asking for, we would like a quid pro quo please. And that quid pro quo would be that we would like free use of the upstairs of the library, because we have a plan for it. So if we topped up the library funding, we would like free use of the top floor of the library given to Alsager Town Council annually free of charge.

Comment 3 – Response

We can consider that. We would need to take a steer from our Estates colleagues.

It is possible there is something we can do here. There are some things we'd have to consider because it would impact on the family hub connect offer because they are intending to use some of that space for some of the activities that have been identified.

And as you are aware we host the Dementia Cafe in there on the Friday and there's a few things like that. But you are quite right that there are things I think that jointly we could do together because we struggle with caretaking and the space doesn't get used as much as it could be in an evening. So there are a lot of possibilities.

Comment 4

Another important factor in this is a separate conversation regarding the Leisure Centre contribution. We pay a contribution toward the Leisure Centre for about £25,000, so collectively this would be a contribution of £50,000.

We also want to gauge what the effect is going to be of the car parking charges, and how they will impact on the Civic. The Civic relies heavily on people using the car park.

What we're saying to you is that within all of this, we need to understand the leisure Centre, library and car parking costs collectively, as far as finance is concerned and preparation of budgets is concerned. If we're going to have to make tough decisions we'd like some detailed information so that we can look at and make some decisions. I don't think if I'm honest with you that we could add £50,000 to our precept.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we appreciate this needs to be a joint conversation with you as a Town Council on both these services. We will provide the information that we can do to support these discussions.

Comment 5

There was one other idea – What would you pay us if we took over the library completely? We're not strangers to this idea given we have taken over the running of the Civic, which has a similar annual budget. It might be for example that you keep the asset and you outsource the operation.

Comment 5 – Response

We can provide you some overarching figures as to what it costs to run the library. If we were transferring services there would be implications for staff. If the Town Council were to operate the library you would have to take on managing and paying the staff.

This is something that is being considered within the scope of this consultation, in the consultation we have a section that relates to alternative service delivery models, so that is something that Cheshire East Council is already actively exploring. I expect it won't be a one-size-fits-all approach too.

But that's a conversation we're happy to have.

Poynton Town Council

Date/time: 09/09/2024 11:00.

Number of attendees: 9, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

With the proposal to open Family Hub services at 09:30 in the morning, will the library opening times dovetail with those?

If the library does not open at the same time as the Family Hub we will get complaints that they don't open at the same time, and that people are waiting outside the library for half an hour with their toddlers etc.

Comment 1 – Response

This is something we will have to look at, there are several options on the table, including opening libraries through the use of technology.

Comment 2

It seems surprising the council is planning on building an extra counselling room in the library. What is it you're anticipating for Poynton library?

Comment 2 – Response

Sorry no that should have been clinician's room, not an extra counselling room. We're looking at how different sites can be used to "sweat the assets" on a site-by-site basis, at the moment we're not able to say exactly what is being proposed. We're trying to run as many services as we can from single sites, to make services as accessible to residents as possible.

Comment 3

What sort of percentage of the current library area will this clinician's room take up?

Comment 3 – Response

It will measure 9 foot by 10 foot. The bookshelves will go round the external walls. The shelving will run from where it is to the local studies PC area. We're keeping that as a separate entity. But the shelving will fit around the walls that they're building, so we won't actually lose any bookshelf space. We are in effect partitioning a new room off in the existing building.

Moving forward, we're going to send you emails next week in relation to what things might look like for the Tier 2 sites moving forward. That might include changes to how we approach customer services, the review of opening hours, and the potential use of technology. If you feel that a follow-on meeting would be a benefit after that please do get in touch.

Comment 4

We just want more detail as to how the library is going to be used. The library space just is not big enough, so I would be more reassured knowing that there was not going to be a change.

The devil is in the detail, and we need to see that before being able to comment. It's ok to want to "sweat the asset", but we need to be sure that that asset is suitable to be sweated.

Comment 4 – Response

Understood. We are working alongside colleague in Children's Services, as they are the provider for these services. This is a conversation Cheshire East Council needs to have internally.

Our understanding its that people will need to have appointments for Family Hub services. They are also looking at a free phone service which available during all of our opening hours to go directly through to a family worker.

In the library there is the option to switch on self-serve machines so that people can issue and return stock and use the Children's library, and that's why in addition to the clinician they are looking to have a family worker in the library from 9:30. Unless we were to open our amend our opening hours we wouldn't have somebody there doing the customer service appointments, doing the other sort of extended library service offer, it would just be a basic issue and return and choosing books unless we changed our offer or opening times.

Comment 5

So the e-mail that's coming to us next week, we have a Town Council meeting on the 23rd (September), and so if there is going to be a financial ask, then we could do to

have that next week. As well as understanding what it will cost financially, we will need to know what we'll get in return too.

Comment 5 – Response

Yes once these current conversations have finished we will provide detail on what is being proposed which you can feed into your own decision making processes.

There are two elements to that conversation – there's the customer services part, and then the opening times element as well. Using technology is something that we're working through and that may also be part of that consideration. So where we don't have necessarily staffed time, we might be able to use enhanced technology to maintain provision. We will be in contact soon.

Knutsford Town Council

Date/time: 10/09/2024 11:00.

Number of attendees: 10, including 3 from Cheshire East Council.

The Engagement Team from Cheshire East Council ran through a short presentation.

Comment 1

Just a query about the wisdom of having two Tier 1 libraries close together geographically, such as Crewe and Nantwich, would it not be better if one was a Tier 2 library instead?

Comment 1 – Response

The site assessment process has been a consistent approach taken towards assessing libraries, that rates each library based on a variety of metrics such as usage, digital inclusion and public health factors etc. It isn't necessarily about the geographical location, it's about the amount of demand and need in that particular area.

We're not disenfranchising anyone on the basis that they're too close to their nearest neighbour. We've looked at the demand and needs so that it is a fair and equitable process.

Comment 2

One thing that struck me was about value for money and not having a duplication of services. In Knutsford we have a service provided by Citizens Advice and also the DWP which does a session a week at the Welcome Community Cafe on Longridge, which is also a Cheshire hub, so maybe something to bear in mind.

Comment 2 – Response

Discussions are ongoing around that, and again that's done in a targeted needs basis. So it's not necessarily that all libraries will provide all services, it will be a case of if there is a need in a certain area that's not currently being serviced, and if the library is an appropriate location for residents to easily access those services.

Comment 3

As long as the local communities are consulted about proposals.

Comment 3 – Response

Yes the council does consult on proposals, but if it's an external agency like DWP, that would be over to them to consult with communities.

Comment 4

What I was thinking about is connected up thinking and connected up working which is effective and value for money.

Comment 4 – Response

Yes we are looking at bringing more services into a smaller number of locations as appropriate. We're trying to "sweat the assets" rather than having multiple locations in the same close proximity. Joining those things up wherever possible makes sense from that service synergy perspective.

Comment 5

In your meeting on 21st June, you said that the family hub in the library would work with the Children's Centre on Manor Park, but this morning did I understand correctly that you said the library wouldn't have children's services?

Comment 5 – Response

We are looking at some aspects of the family Hub Connect offer at Knutsford Library and a couple of those things are some pop up sessions, such as toilet training, because we still get significant numbers of parents and carers with young children attending our pre-school events in libraries and they tell us that would be handy to have some advice where they're already coming regularly to meet.

So we are looking at having an offer and we're also looking at having a free phone telephone service, so somebody who is coming into the library can access a family support worker at any time that the library is open via the telephone link as well. So some pop up sessions and a telephone link but not the full blown family hub connect offer.

Comment 6

Re. reviewing the opening hours – Have you looked specifically at what changes you're initially thinking of for Knutsford Library? Do you have an idea of how many hours we might lose like half a day, a full day, etc?

Comment 6 – Response

We're in the process of doing that across the Tier 2 sites and the intention is that we will communicate that following this round of conversations.

But we're probably looking at half a day. That's the general sort of approach as it as it currently stands. We will look at where we've made changes last year and understanding the effectiveness of those changes to those opening hours and whether we've seen a shift in demand to different days of the week, different times of the day. That's something that the Library Service is currently working through and we will provide that information for you soon.

Comment 7

How would the unstaffed technology thing work? What technological investment is required to make it work, and how has it worked in other areas? The main concern around that is the risk to the library and its assets of vandalism and social behaviour.

Comment 7 – Response

Similar systems are used in Stockport.

The way it works is that when people join the library they are issued with library cards which can be used to access the buildings. People have to be 18 plus to get this access. You can swipe the door, you can come in, and you can use the self-service kiosk to issue and return books, you can use the public Wi-Fi and you can use the public access PCs. Toilets will not be open and obviously there are no staff, and no activities.

The technology comes with a CCTV internally to the building, but there is some monitoring required of the external CCTV.

Comment 8

Re. looking at additional services, are those things you're looking at specifically for Knutsford or are they just general across the different tiers?

Comment 8 – Response

Some of those are more general conversations, the need will be defined by the end provider. That's not for us to define where those services will be provided.

So let's say DWP comes on board as an example, if DWP already have a presence in Knutsford in a particular location and that works for them, then clearly they're probably going to say we don't need another presence in the library. But they may want more greater presence in other libraries because they don't currently have a geographical base in that area.

There are no specifics yet for Knutsford beyond what we've just suggested around the family hub provisions. But we are working through some of those details. This will be an evolution. There will be an evolving process over the course of the lifetime of strategy to try and derive some of those other things out.

But it will be done on a needs basis and demand basis rather than a blanket approach for all sites.

Comment 9

When you mention about customer services requiring appointments, what sort of things would be covered by that? Have you measured the impact of added inconvenience of booking? A lot of the people that use those services are generally older people that perhaps have a greater proclivity to just dropping in and doing things.

Comment 9 – Response

It will be for things like Blue badges, concessionary travel e.g. elderly persons bus passes, DBS checks, licencing, that type of thing.

It's just about managing our time really and being able to utilise the staffing more effectively. There would need to be a lot of comms around it to try and mitigate the impact of the changes.

Comment 10

So you'd be able to reduce the staffing hours because you can plan when and where they are going to be, so you can keep the library open but reduce staffing costs effectively? And if people call in and they haven't got an appointment, but you can service them at that time, would you be able to see if someone calls in and there is the person there and it's quiet?

Comment 10 – Response

Yes. We're not going to be precious about this if we've got the staff who aren't busy at that time that would be fine. But it would enable us by managing this to stretch the staffing over those hours.

Comment 11

In terms of the general strategy, is there something built in there of reviewing the tiers periodically so that if in five years time the metrics behind it have changed, perhaps Knutsford's got more visitors than other libraries, then would the tiers change?

Comment 11 – Response

The intention is things would be as we've done with other services such as green spaces maintenance. There will be a review process set out in the strategy. There will be a continual review process but obviously the strategy itself is time bound.

Comment 12

In the consultation it talks around exploring alternate alternative delivery models. What work has been done on that and is there any emerging thinking on options that are likely to be favoured or explored further?

Comment 12 – Response

There's no definitive answer to that at this point. The most supported approach at the moment seems to be a similar approach to what we've adopted with the Tier 3 libraries – the community managed approach.

Comment 13

Re. the registrar service – currently people have to go to Macclesfield to access any kind of registrar service. So could that be looked at perhaps?

Comment 13 – Response

That's something we can explore, it's not something that we'd previously considered. That's something we can ask the question of, but it's not within our power to be able to answer yes or no at this point.

Comment 14

If you were going to close the library for another half day and we came back and said the community and town councillors were prepared to cover library services, how would that work?

Comment 14 – Response

So there are different ways of looking at this, and this probably forms part of the follow up dialogue. We have a current staffing commitment at Knutsford, and I think I sent some half day costs to you back in June. Different approaches are being taken

in different libraries, for example Bollington and Alderley Edge are using slightly different models. So it's just picking out some of the different things that are already happening and seeing how they might be applicable to Knutsford. But that's subject to more follow-on dialogue if that's how the town council wants to move forward.

Sandbach Town Council

Comment 1

Note our formal consultation response has been submitted.

Comment 2

The following points were summarised:

- The appointments system for Customer Services will apply to all libraries
- The review of opening hours for all Tier 2 libraries will take place this Autumn
- The Family Hub model makes sense and sounds quite positive, if libraries are used to deliver more core services it helps keep them relevant
- The timescale for this is that we'll get an email detailing specifics in the next week or so
- It may be possible for Tier 2 Town and Parish Councils to top-up library hours

Appendix 2 – Emails, letters and other responses

In total 39 emails, letters, complaints and feedback via Customer Services were received in response to the consultation, with all comments made in this feedback summarised in the table below.

Formal and detailed responses from Town or Parish Councils, Councillors and members of the public have been published verbatim further below.

Opposition to library closures or reductions in hours	24
Opposed to any general reduction of the Library Service.	5
Alsager Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Disley Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Public transport from Disley to other libraries in Cheshire East is not practical as a suitable alternative. There is no direct public transport route to Poynton, Wilmslow or Macclesfield. All journeys to these areas would require at least 2 or 3 changes on trains or buses. Opposed to the closure of Disley Library on Saturdays. The council has failed to take into account the unique characteristics of Disley within its proposals.	4
Handforth Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	4
Holmes Chapel Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Provides the only public toilets in the village.	2
Knutsford Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Poynton Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	2
Poynton Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	1
Sandbach Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours. Opposed to it becoming a "Tier 2" Library.	2
Formal responses from Town and Parish Councils, Councillors and organisations (see full responses published further below)	11
Congleton Town Council - Formal response. Welcomes the CEC evaluation of library services, and CEC's commitment to providing library services across the borough. Supports Congleton being a tier 1 library and approves the core principles for tier-one libraries. Interested in renting the ground floor of the library from CEC, to make better use of the public toilets. Opposed to volunteers being used in place of professional librarians. Believes the assessment matrix is fair, but felt library accessibility (in terms of transport) should also be included in it.	1
Cranage Parish Council formal response: RESOLVED to respond that the parish council would like the Barclays banking service, which operates for 3 days in the Holmes Chapel library, to be retained as this is an essential service for our residents.	1
Crewe Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of proposals for Crewe Library. Opposed to any reduction in service at Crewe Library. Crewe Library serves a large area, and one which is significantly deprived, hence requires a full library service.	1

Knutsford Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of strategy objectives. Supportive of the concept of community managed libraries. Supportive of the site assessment matrix, and the vision for Tier 2 libraries. Opposed to further reductions in opening hours. Opposed to "outsourcing to external providers" and "public-private partnerships" alternative delivery models. Suggests a charity could be part of a community managed library delivery model. Supports the exploration of unstaffed extensions to library hours through the use of technology, but not at a reduction in current staffed hours. Open to exploring the use of volunteers to maintain library opening hours.	1
Macclesfield Library - Opposed to closure or reduction in hours.	1
Moston Parish Council - Formal response. Opposed to a reduction in library services particularly at Sandbach and Middlewich. Libraries are vital for providing internet access, warm places and social areas.	1
Nether Alderley Parish Council - Formal response. Opposed to the closure of Alderley Edge Library.	1
Poynton Town Council - Formal response. Supportive of strategy objectives. Surprised CEC is adding a room in the library for a clinicians space, when there are rooms in the Civic Hall which could be used instead. Concerned about the site assessment matrix, and that it favours large sites, the assessment matrix needs weighting more appropriately. Unclear how some scores in the matrix have been arrived at, and it lacks source detail. Requests clarification on some scores. Suggests that through collaboration with the Civic Hall, and through the delivery of services between the library and Civic Hall, that Poynton could become a Tier 1 Library. Opposed to any further reduction in opening hours. Wants clarity on what the Town Council is being asked to contribute.	1
Sandbach Town Council - Formal response. Opposed to any further reduction of service and feel that volunteers should not form part of any revised model on the grounds this may diminish the quality / professional quality of the service.	1
Detailed response from Councillor Braithwaite. Suggests the Tier System is pre-determined, as not other options presented. Feels the Tier System should be revisited. Consideration to be given to what "value for money" constitutes. Weightings used require a better explanation. The draft strategy includes reference to Key Performance Indicators but no detail of what they are. This does not meet the Gunning principle of providing sufficient information. Library usage by postcode also needs assessment to clarify the areas that libraries actually serve. There does not appear to be a plan for engaging with those who do not currently use Library Services - as a council we must make the effort to ensure that no one is left behind. Asking Town Councils that comprise of some of the most deprived wards in the Borough to provide 'top-up' funding via their precept means that the least well-off would be subsidising surrounding affluent areas, which is not promoting equality.	1
Detailed response from the Communities Department, Cheshire West and Chester Council. It would be helpful to understand approach to the consistency of services - Risk that different levels of service across the authority result in a 'postcode lottery' effect. Also need to consider data access risks as CWC library customers are included on same systems. Some clarity on language may be helpful - Community implies not delivered by the Council, Hub is a very generic word. Also interesting to see the use of the	1

word "community" in relation to the largest sites and to these, some clarity of the concept may be helpful. The word "Tier" could intimate higher and lower offers and levels of service. It's not fully clear how the £615k savings are being made, all from reduced staffing, rates reductions or other?	
Other responses	20
Criticism of the survey - The survey is too long and confusing and makes no sense.	5
Income generation ideas: Sell sponsorship to businesses, charge to borrow books, rent space to organisations such as the post office, banks etc, sell tea and coffee,	4
Opposed to libraries opening without staff, as they are the core of what libraries are. Unstaffed libraries would present a security and vandalism risk.	2
Detailed response suggesting a review of the management structure, a review of the pay scale of CEC library management and a reduction in management hours of the CEC Library Service.	1
Complaint about council financial mis-management.	1
Criticism of the consultation - The council does what it wants anyway for example green bin collection and closure of Bollington HWRC.	1
Cuts in hours lead to reductions in footfall, which is measured in the assessment matrix.	1
Detailed response requesting further information about the consultation proposals.	1
The draft Library Strategy does not align with the council's Local Plan. The Local Plan Strategy defines three types of urban areas as follows: Principal Towns - Crewe and Macclesfield; Key Service Centres - Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow; Local Service Centres - Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury. However, the Libraries Strategy defines four tiers of library service. These four tiers are only based on current usage. They do not take into account future demand from new housing development already committed to in the local plan.	1
The strategy does not take account for where library need is. You cannot emphasise the community value of libraries and potential Hub services and at the same time severely curtail services in the areas where they are most need.	1
There should be more events at libraries, particularly for those aged 20-40 who don't have children.	1
Typo - Compliment/complement is misspelled on pages 5 and 8 of the strategy.	1

Cranage Parish Council – Email response

Cranage Parish Council considered the Library Strategy and RESOLVED (129/24) to make the following comment in response to the consultation:

RESOLVED to respond that the parish council would like the Barclays banking service, which operates for 3 days in the Holmes Chapel library, to be retained as this is an essential service for our residents.

Congleton Town Council – Email response

Comments from Congleton Town Council Community Committee

Congleton Town Council's Community Committee welcomes the work that Cheshire East Library service has carried out in evaluating the services and CEC's commitment to providing library services across the borough. It is regrettable that the Borough Council is in a position where it has to make drastic cuts that will deprive many towns across the borough of essential library services.

The Community Committee approves the core principles for tier-one libraries . That Cheshire East aims to:

- Maintain the service offer for all and enhance it through the introduction of other complimentary council services focussed on enabling customers and public health and well-being - in locations where it is needed the most
- Actively promote the service, increasing visitors and becoming more accessible to residents through the use of new technologies
- Offer a library service delivered in partnership with local councils, communities and organisations with similar aims
- Ensure that the service continues to be affordable for the residents of Cheshire East

Congleton Town Council has made contact with the Head of Service about the potential of CTC renting the ground floor of the library from CEC. This would include the toilet facilities which could, with some modifications, become formal public toilets under the control of the town council. There has been no response to this proposal which would require some feasibility work. The basic principle is that Congleton Town Council would pay rent for the whole of the ground floor, which would be additional income for CEC rather than contributing a sum of money with no additional benefit to the town.

Congleton Town Councillors felt strongly that volunteers should only be used to staff partnership style activities to enhance the library, and that the professional role of a librarian should always be paid.

We thought the assessment scoring matrix seemed a fair way to make a difficult decision, but would have like to have seen the accessibility of the libraries in terms of transport networks, parking and physical accessibility taken into account.

Based on our knowledge of Congleton Library we wholeheartedly agree that Congleton Library should be a tier-one library. We are not aware of how the other libraries are used by their communities so would not want to comment on the suitability of their tier.

Congleton Town Council's Community Committee views Congleton Library and the activities and services provided out of the library as fundamental for the vitality of the town centre. Congleton is a rapidly growing key service centre, with the population in its immediate surrounds set to grow by almost 10,000. It is important to plan for the future and keep services local.

If you require clarification about any of the issues raised in this response, please do not hesitate to contact [redacted].

Crewe Town Council – Email response

On behalf of Crewe Town Council and in direct relation to services in Crewe

The strategy identifies Crewe library as Tier 1, as such to be the first priority for investment, which is supported. Additionally, the strategy identifies that the library services in Crewe are under no threat of reduction in terms of service scope or access, which is supported.

Crewe remains the most deprived town in Cheshire East with all 6 wards represented in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England. On that basis, the need to retain and enhance services in Crewe supports the communities with the greatest need, providing multiple opportunities for engagement and interventions that may work to address health and social inequalities, reflected in the Cheshire East Corporate Strategy. The need to support communities with the greatest need must remain a corporate priority for Cheshire East Council.

Crewe Library supports a large geographical area and as such should be considered as a strategic central site for library services as well as opportunities for complimentary augmented services.

Crewe Town Council supports the prioritisation of Crewe Library as a Tier 1 library site and is strongly opposed to any potential reduction in its operation capacity or breadth of services.

Knutsford Town Council – Email response

Knutsford Town Council supports the stated strategy objectives of enhancing libraries through the introduction of complimentary services and greater promotion of the service. The Town Council considers it should remain an objective that all

residents of Cheshire East have easy access to a library through comprehensive provision across the borough's towns.

The Town Council does not object to the concept of community managed libraries.

The Town Council does not disagree with the scoring mechanism employed to determine the Tier System and understands why Knutsford is placed in Tier 2. The Town Council supports the concept that Tier 2 libraries deliver core library services alongside a customer service offer.

With specific regard to Knutsford library and potential changes to opening hours, the Town Council considers it preferable to retain the half day provision rather than introduce a day where the library is closed. However, the Town Council does not support further reductions to library opening hours beyond those introduced following the last consultation.

With regard to alternative delivery models, the Town Council would not support outsourcing to external providers nor public-private partnerships which introduces a profit motive into the delivery of core services and reduces local accountability. The Town Council is uncertain how a staff mutual, the establishment of a charity or transferring to a social enterprise would radically deliver the savings the borough council is required to make and, in particular for charities, would increase competition for funding amongst other local charities; however, a charity could be part of delivering a community managed library.

The Town Council supports the exploration of unstaffed extensions to library hours through the use of technology but this should not be used to warrant further reductions in staffed hours. It should instead expand opening hours, particularly at times when users who would not require support would be more likely to visit. It would need to have appropriate safeguarding measures in place to ensure the council's asset was not put at risk (i.e. through vandalism).

The Town Council is not presently minded to fund staffing of the library to prevent reductions in hours. However, it is open to exploring the development of a Town Council led scheme to introduce volunteer led sessions where this can safeguard and expand the service and ensure visitors have the support they need when visiting the library.

Moston Parish Council – Email response

At last night's meeting of Moston Parish Council, Members resolved that the following comments be submitted in relation to the Consultation on Library Services:-

Moston Parish Council opposes the proposed reduction in library services, particularly as it affects the two libraries closest to Moston, namely Sandbach and Middlewich.

Many of the homes in Moston do not have access to high speed broadband, making these local libraries key for reliably accessing online services including those provided by Cheshire East council such as waste management (e.g. subscription to the garden waste collection service).

Furthermore, with the recently announced reduction in winter fuel payments, libraries will become more important in their role as heated indoor public spaces which are free to access. Having to travel long distances to access these warm spaces (particularly if travelling by public transport, which is infrequent and unreliable in Moston) would incur significant time and travel costs, negating the benefits. For residents of rural areas such as Moston, libraries also provide a social space and a feeling of community which is key to combatting loneliness.

I trust these comments will be taken into consideration during your decision making process.

Nether Alderley Parish Council – Email response

Nether Alderley Parish Council is extremely unhappy at the prospect of Alderley Edge and other libraries in Cheshire East being faced with closure.

These establishments particularly in small towns provide a vital service to their communities and the schools within them, and as such are worthy of investing in and preserving. They provide our children with a space and a resource to explore their new world on their own terms, developing and following their own interests as they grow and are helped to grow. School projects, would have been impossible without reference libraries when a lot of us were children and magical avenues of interest would have been closed without free access to books.

Libraries give children a space where they can learn to read for fun – not reading from school lists or making do with what's in the home, but hunting out books, stories, pictures, facts and ideas that feed their own unique imaginations, making their own connections and developing their own interests.

In this internet age, libraries are becoming local hubs for communities. Not just places where books can be borrowed, but safe communal places, where people can gather for community groups, internet access, adult learning. A town without a library is stealing something from its own community.

We fully understand the argument that the internet can provide some of this, but it is a tool not a replacement. The library is a space, designated for learning, where

everyone has access to the same resources. Staff on hand to help and guide and make suggestions. It is not sufficient to claim that the internet can do some of this and that therefore the Council has the right to withdraw funding. Not everyone has access to the internet.

It is extremely sad that libraries are usually seen by local authority finance officers as low hanging fruit which can be removed to help balance the books. There has to be another way for smaller libraries where perhaps Cheshire East could fund the premises and provide administrative services, training and manage and provide the book supply to willing community library volunteers.

We would of course like to keep our librarians at our current libraries because of their knowledge and helpfulness and losing them would be equally sad.

I hope you can find a way to keep Alderley Edge Library open.

Poynton Town Council – Email response

Response to library consultation

Strategy objectives

The Town Council broadly supports the strategic objectives to maintain the service offer for all and working in partnership with local councils. The co-location of the library and Town Council in the Civic Centre offers excellent opportunities to allow the Town Council and library to work together to not only maintain the current service but to provide complimentary services. As a Connected Community, the Civic Hall already offers services focussed on health and wellbeing which the library would not be able to offer because of a lack of space. The Town Council was surprised to learn that CEC are planning to undertake building works to add a new clinician's room to the library when there are potentially rooms available in the Civic Hall and an agreement could have potentially reached to adapt and make use of an available room.

The Town Council has a Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator who has a focus on health and wellbeing. We are also a key stakeholder of Bollington, Disley and Poynton's Care Community so would welcome early discussions on working together with a view to looking at how we can best support local health and wellbeing priorities and offering enhanced services to the community.

The Tier System

The Town Council is extremely concerned as to how the site assessment matrix has been used to score sites, the same flawed methodology was used during the draft proposals for the Leisure Centre and which was criticised by some members of the

Environment and Communities Committee. The site assessment matrix favours large sites. Visitors, issues and active memberships are not weighted based on the size of the community they serve, the sites are merely ranked as to size.

Looking at active numbers based on the 2021 census figures approximately 25% of Poynton residents are active members of the library this compares with 9.3% in Crewe, 15% in Congleton, 14% in Macclesfield, 30% in Nantwich and 18% in Wilmslow. Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield and Wilmslow all score a 10 but Poynton despite high usage figures only scores an 8 because the figures are not weighted for large and small populations. We would ask that the site assessment matrix is reviewed and that it is weighted more appropriately.

No information has been provided in relation to source date for digital inclusion or the majority of the health data so the figures set out in the matrix cannot be verified.

In relation to public health factors, no additional information as to how the scores have been calculated or evidence from source material referenced. It is unclear how these figures have been arrived at. Taking Older People as an example, Poynton has been allocated a score of 2, however, we are aware that Poynton has one of the oldest populations in Cheshire East. Looking at the 2021 tartan rug data for age and comparing it to the scores given in the matrix there appears to be significant discrepancies between population age and how sites have been scored. Please provide detailed explanations.

In order of oldest population - Population aged 65 and over (Tartan Rug)

Town	Tartan Rug Score (average for all wards)	Site Assessment Score
Poynton	30.1	2
Knutsford	26.8	2
Congleton	26.5	2
Nantwich	24.7	4
Sandbach	22.3	2
Macclesfield	21.7	3
Wilmslow	21.32	3
Handforth	20	3
Middlewich	19.1	2
Crewe	16.9	3

The Town Council is concerned that the site assessment matrix is flawed as it uses outdated data without reference so cannot be verified. We believe that the site assessment data does not use the correct metrics, that the weightings only favour larger libraries and that it does not assess the libraries fairly.

Assessment of Poynton Library as Tier 2

As a co-located library with the Town Council, in the Civic Hall the individual services in the building already provide additional services and support including CAB, counselling, health and wellbeing sessions, support groups, exercise and special interest classes. The site could with collaboration and joint working become a tier 1 location.

Tier 2 Opening Hours

Poynton library is currently closed on a Wednesday afternoon, from usage figures and anecdotal evidence closure for half day on a Wednesday was preferable to extending hours earlier in the mornings which were traditionally a quieter time. The Town Council would not support any additional reduction in hours. Thursday morning (Rhyme Time) and Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings which allow working residents to visit the library should be maintained.

Tier 2 – Ask of Town and Parish Council

The Town Council is aware that we are likely to be asked to contribute financially to support the library in the coming year. We are disappointed that despite the current consultation we have not been told what will be the “ask” of the Town Council and what this will support. We have had to respond to the consultation despite this lack of information. The Town Council believes that whist discussions and negotiations should form part of any strategy, it is concerning that the final library strategy will be based on a consultation where much of the information that Towns and Parishes need is not available before the consultation ends meaning that the decision made will not be informed or meaningful.

Towns and parishes will shortly begin budget setting, if financial commitments are required to support libraries it is essential that these are communicated as swiftly as possible so they can be factored into the financial decisions that councils will shortly have to make.

Sandbach Town Council – Email response

Please see below the resolution from Council ref libraries

1. CEC LIBRARY CONSULTATION RESPONSE (agenda item 10)

Lead: Chair

[Redacted] explained that Sandbach library had been designated as a Tier 2 library and therefore was not considered to be a ‘community hub’ by CEC. All members who spoke expressed complete opposition to the proposed reduction in opening hours, but differing views existed on whether the consultation response should

express a willingness to explore the role of volunteers at the library. A motion proposed in favour of this consideration being included in the consultation response was defeated with 7 votes in favour and 8 against.

Resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Chief Officer to submit the Council's consultation response on the basis that it should not include an expression of willingness to explore the use of volunteers at Sandbach Library.

The main position was to NOT support any further reduction of service and that volunteers should not form part of any revised model on the grounds this may diminish the quality / professional quality of the service.

Councillor Liz Braithwaite – Email response

The report to the Environment and Communities Committee on 18 July 2024 titled "MTFS EC24-28/73 Libraries Strategy – Initial Proposals Report of: Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director Environment and Neighbourhoods".

Para 63. states that

"If a public consultation exercise is to be commenced, the Council should ensure that it follows the Gunning Principles and to ensure that the following are met;

- The proposals are still at a formative stage and no formal decision has been made or predetermined by the decision makers;
- That sufficient information is provided to the consultees this needs to be available accessible and easily interpretable by the consultees to provide an informed response;
- Sufficient opportunity should be given to consultees to participate in the consultation, the length of time given for the consultee to respond should depend upon the subject and the extent of the impact on the consultation and;
- Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made."

The proposal to introduce a Tier system appears to be predetermined as other detailed options are not presented. I feel that the Tier System is fundamentally and should be revisited. By putting all borough libraries into one of 4 tiers it appears that the commitment to deliver 'value for money' and to 'maintain this valued offer where it is most needed across the borough' is not being met. For example, Alderley Edge Library delivered just over 100 visitors, 1167 book issues and 16 computer visits per month (annual figures provided / 12). The other libraries placed in Tier 3 (Bollington, Disley, Handforth) deliver between 2 and 2.5 times the number of visitors; 1.9 to 4.5 times the number of book issues; and 2.4 to 5 times the number of computer visits.

Consideration should be given on what constitutes 'value for money' in a more focussed way, with cost/benefit analyses including modelling scenarios for each library. The weightings used in the proposal have no explanation that I could see, and are inconsistent – some are '2, 4, 6, 8, 10'; others '1, 2, 3, 4, 5'; '0, 2, 3, 6'; '0, 2, 3, 5'.

The Libraries Strategy 2024-2028 contains includes reference to Key Performance Indicators but no detail of what they are; and to incorporating delivery of the Library Strategy into the annual Neighbourhood Services Plan, which I'm unable to find on the CEC website. This does not meet the Gunning principle of providing sufficient information.

Library usage by postcode also needs assessment to clarify the areas that libraries actually serve e.g. Macclesfield Library has users with postcodes from a much wider area including (but not restricted to) Bollington, Nether Alderley, Alderley Edge, Poynton, Congleton etc. Are these duplicates? Can someone be registered at more than one library?

With regard to connecting communities, improving wellbeing and promoting equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity, there does not appear to be a plan for engaging with those who do not currently use Library Services. As a council we must make the effort to ensure that no one is left behind. It seems that analysis of evidence around local needs does not identify gaps in provision.

Finally, it should be noted that asking Town Councils that comprise of some of the most deprived wards in the Borough to provide 'top-up' funding via their precept means that the least well-off would be subsidising surrounding affluent areas. This is not promoting equality.

Communities Department, Cheshire West and Chester Council – Email response

As key partners please find below a summary of feedback/ reflections from [redacted] in response to the current Library Strategy Consultation 2024, I trust its helpful and as ever happy to discuss if appropriate.

Do you have any comments to make about these proposed strategy objectives?

Would be helpful to understand approach to the consistency and sustainability of services supported by other organisations. Risk that different levels of service across the authority result in a 'postcode lottery' effect. Could services be led by other organisations agendas and therefore impact on other priorities and involvement with Libraries Shared Services and current significant shared stock and system

arrangements. Also need to consider data access risks as CWC library customers are included on same systems.

Do you have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 1 "Library Hubs"?

Some clarity on language may be helpful. Community implies not delivered by the Council, Hub is a very generic word that may benefit from further definition. Might be helpful to explain that these are Council run services, invested in, co-located in modern fit for purpose buildings, to show their value.

Do you have any comments to make about the proposed Tier 2 "Local Libraries"?

Again clarity of language may be helpful, perhaps Neighbourhood libraries?

Do you have any comments to make about proposed Tier 3 "Community Managed Libraries"?

Interesting to use the word community in relation to the largest sites and to these. Some clarity of the concept may be helpful. If outlined as staffed by CE staff sometimes but managed by the community should it be managed by CE and some funding is added by the community? Or volunteer time added by the community? Risk of inconsistency and communities where the offer is more needed not having the capacity to support the offer whereas more affluent communities will have the resource to support. Some clarity over decision making and responsibilities may also be helpful.

Do you have any final comments to make about the proposed "Tier System"?

Tier could intimate higher and lower offers and levels of service. Could it reference different and area appropriate levels of service? Concept of community managed could have more clarity. If leads to inconsistency, reduced sustainability and significantly different service levels to customers could feed decline in use.

Do you have any final comments to make about the draft Library Strategy for 2024 to 2028 (PDF, 4.9MB)?

Not fully clear how the 615k saving being made, all from reduced staffing, rates reductions or other?

Do you have any comments to make about extending library opening times, unstaffed, through the use of technology?

As with others who have taken this route considerations of; safety of users and resources, no staff support for those who need, access discrimination for young people and vulnerable users.

Queries/concerns

Whether any proposed changes will affect the level of support required from Libraries Shared Services.

The liability for CWC shared book stock if other organisations are managing? staffing? libraries.

The liability of CWC data if other organisations are managing? staffing? libraries.

The impact of savings on the book fund and therefore the shared stock approach across CE and CWC.

Examples are given of authorities who deliver in different ways, it would be helpful to understand what difference this has made to the performance of these authorities or whether these alternative approaches are successful.

Member of the public #1 – Email response

To whom it may concern

I write again in response to your request for comment about Cheshire East Library Service consultation.

You state, Cheshire East Council has been experiencing unprecedented financial pressures and is required to put forward proposals showing how it can balance its budget.

The MTFS for 2024 to 2028 includes the proposal 73: "Libraries Strategy". This proposal set out the intention to develop a Libraries Strategy to consider the medium and long term future of this service. I write in particular about the delivery and operation of library services in Cheshire East.

I think the current proposals are rather limited in scope and ambition.

Cheshire East Council is, as you state, "experiencing unprecedented financial pressures". Sadly, I do not believe the current proposals will deliver the financial savings necessary.

I again write to suggest that Cheshire East Council look closely and in detail, at the ways in which other authorities deliver library services, such as Derbyshire County Council & Staffordshire County Council, when also faced with challenging financial pressures. There are many links on the internet about how innovative and creative thinking has helped both Staffordshire County Council and Derbyshire Country council save money without reducing the quality of service (see links below). Some links are listed below.

[Community managed libraries - Staffordshire County Council](#)

[Unique community managed libraries partnership to expand :: Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust \(mpft.nhs.uk\)](#)

There is also an online toolkit produced by the U.K. Government to help local authorities such as Cheshire East Council change.

[Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit](#)

I would also strongly encourage Cheshire East Council to give serious consideration to the following:

(1) a significant reduction in 'management hours' of the CEC Library Service

Reduce the work hours attributed to the running and operation of what is, a relatively small library service as has happened in neighbouring councils, such as Cheshire West & Chester.

(2) initiate a review of the pay scale of CEC library management.

Managing a library is not a professional role. A professional role requires a professional qualification essential. At CEC the post of library manager considers a librarian qualification as only desirable.

The salary scale paid to library managers at CEC is scale 9.

This is higher than the pay scale offered by Cheshire East Council to experienced social workers. Experienced social workers at CEC are usually paid at scale 7 or in some cases, with a higher degree of responsibility, scale 8.

A Social Worker is a professional role. To be employed as a social worker requires a professional qualification as essential. There appears to be a disparity in CEC pay scales.

I would also like to add that at Cheshire East Council, library managers are paid more (per hour) than junior doctors, working for the NHS. Considering the amount of responsibility held by a junior doctor, surely this is wrong?

(3) Review Management restructure

[Redacted].

This provides a perfect opportunity to reorganise CEC library management in line with current finances & budgets. [Redacted]. CEC need to do what many, many organisations, both private and public, are required to in times of severe financial pressures, which is innovate. This requires a close look at the existing skills pool, and reorganise and distribute responsibilities accordingly. Not employ more staff.

To summarise my comments, I suggest:

(a) Cheshire East Council give serious thoughts & consideration to the ways in which other local authorities have adapted, changed to work within current budgets & better prepared for the future.

(b) Initiate a review of salaries paid to the management team and the number of hours spent on 'management' by the service as a whole

(c) Review and reduce staff hours within the CEC library management structure

One definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results. The CEC library service desperately needs to change and innovate. A head to toe review of the CEC is long overdue. Employing more managers is not!

As a Sandbach resident & Cheshire East council taxpayer, I would be pleased to receive an acknowledgement of my email.

Appendix 3 – Town and Parish Council surveys

During the consultation, two Town and Parish Councils conducted their own surveys to support the consultation – the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they agreed with a series of statements about their local library or not.

Surveys were distributed by the Town and Parish Councils in paper format, collected and analysed by the Town and Parish Councils, with the final results being passed onto Cheshire East Council for inclusion in this report.

A summary of the results from these surveys is provided below.

Alderley Edge Parish Council

133 respondents in total. Large proportions of respondents:

- Agree with the Parish Council providing top-up funding
- Disagree with the CE proposals to reduce open hours at Alderley Edge library
- Believe the CE proposals must include a commitment to open Alderley Edge library between 10am and 1pm on Saturdays

Survey statement - Tick all that apply:	Count
I agree with the Alderley Edge Parish Council proposal to fund a top-up to the opening hours at Alderley Edge library	131
I disagree with the Alderley Edge Parish Council proposal to fund a top-up to the opening hours at Alderley Edge library	1
I agree with the CE proposals to reduce opening hours at Alderley Edge library	3
I disagree with the CE proposals to reduce open hours at Alderley Edge library	127
I believe the CE proposals must include a commitment to open Alderley Edge library between 10am and 1pm on Saturdays	127
Total responses	133

Handforth Town Council

758 respondents in total. Large proportions of respondents:

- Agree with the Town Council providing top-up funding
- Disagree with the CE proposal to reduce opening hours at Handforth Library
- Disagree with the proposed consultation opening hours for Handforth library

Survey statement - Tick all that apply:	Count
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I agree with the town council providing top up funding	146
I disagree with the town council providing top up funding	26
I agree with the CE proposal to reduce Handforth library opening hours	4
I am not sure about the CE proposals to reduce Handforth library opening hours	7
I disagree with the CE proposal to reduce Handforth Library opening hours	706
I agree with the proposed opening hours for Handforth library as above	20
I disagree with the proposed opening hours for Handforth library as above	140
Total responses	758

Appendix 4 – Newspaper Articles

6 newspaper articles were published throughout the duration of the consultation – these are listed below.

Date	Source	Article link
19/07/2024	Northwich Guardian	Cheshire East to consult on plan which could see library hours slashed
05/08/2024	Cheshire East Council	Consultation launches on Cheshire East's libraries
05/08/2024	Silk 1069	Consultation launches on Cheshire East's libraries
06/08/2024	Wilmslow.co.uk	Have your say on future running of Cheshire East's libraries
06/08/2024	BBC	Cheshire East: Town councils set to top up library opening hours
07/08/2024	BBC	Cheshire East: Ex-deputy leader criticises library cuts plan

Appendix 5 – Respondent demographics

Gender

67% of survey respondents were female, 29% male.

What is your gender identity?	Count	Percent
Female	1,745	67%
Male	760	29%
Prefer not to say	92	4%
Prefer to self-describe	13	0%
Valid responses	2,610	100%

Those that answered “prefer to self-describe” gave the following answers:

- Bixexual
- Female is my sex, not my gender identity.
- Female sex
- I don't have a 'gender identity'; I have a biological sex
- I don't have a gender identity. I'm an adult human female i.e. a woman.
- I don't have a 'gender identity'. This is an entirely made up concept, I was born female and will die female.
- I'm a woman.
- Library lover.
- Male and female couple!
- My sex is female.
- None of your business
- What has this to do with the survey?

Age group

Survey respondent numbers by age group were as follows:

Age Group	Count	Percent
16-24	14	1%
25-34	127	5%
35-44	332	13%
45-54	326	12%
55-64	510	19%
65-74	680	26%
75-84	447	17%
85 and over	65	2%

Prefer not to say	120	5%
Total valid responses	2,621	100%

Health or disability status

Survey respondent numbers by health or disability status were as follows:

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age.	Count	Percent
Yes	390	15%
No	2,056	79%
Prefer not to say	159	6%
Total valid responses	2,605	100%

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Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Engagement and our equality duty

Whilst [the Gunning Principles](#) set out the rules for consulting ‘everyone’, additional requirements are in place to avoid discrimination and inequality.

Cheshire East Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 simplified previous anti-discrimination laws with a single piece of legislation. Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, by consciously thinking about equality when making decisions (such as in developing policy, delivering services and commissioning from others)
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, by removing disadvantages, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in public life
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

The Equality Duty helps public bodies to deliver their overall objectives for public services, and as such should be approached as a positive opportunity to support good decision-making.

It encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people’s opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve providing a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic, such as providing computer training to all people to help them access information and services.

The Equality Act identifies nine ‘protected characteristics’ and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying the equality duty to engagement

If you are developing a new policy, strategy or programme you may need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. You may be able to ascertain the impact of your proposal on different characteristics through desk-based research and learning from similar programmes, but you also need to carry out some primary research and engagement. People with protected characteristics are often described as ‘hard to reach’ but you will find everyone can be reached – you just need to tailor your approach, so it is accessible for them.

Contacting the [Equality and Diversity mailbox](#) will help you to understand how you can gain insight as to the impacts of your proposals and will ensure that you help the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure

Proposal Title	Draft Library Service Strategy
Date of Assessment	20.06.2024 reviewed 08.10.2024
Assessment Lead Officer Name	Joanne Shannon
Directorate/Service	Place
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	<p>The Council has a statutory duty under The Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who wish to make use of it but can determine where and how this service is delivered to ensure the needs of residents are effectively met whilst ensuring best value.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council provides public libraries in 16 towns across the borough and operates a mobile library service to 92 communities more than 2 miles from a static service point. The service is held in high esteem by residents with the most recent survey recording a 96% satisfaction rate.</p> <p>Our public libraries are welcoming, safe and trusted community spaces open to all and free at the point of access, providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of good quality book stock and digital resources including e-books, e-magazines and online subscriptions • Trusted information • Cheshire East Council Customer Service Points • Free internet access • Free Wi-Fi • Signposting to accredited advice and guidance • Learning and wellbeing opportunities • A range of activities and events for adults and children • Warm spaces <p>The Council is not proposing any library closures, but to ensure ongoing affordability of services across the borough, this proposal would brand, manage and promote libraries according to a tier system. Tier 1</p>

	<p>sites would consist of the 5 largest libraries located in the largest towns and offering the broadest range of services as part of a community hub, with the greatest number of open hours. Tier 2 libraries located in the smaller towns would offer the core library and customer services, some complementary services would be offered at these sites in line with local need and priorities. Customer service functions would be by appointment only at the Tier 2 sites and opening hours would be reduced by one half day each week unless supplemented by town and parish council funding. Tier 3 sites would offer the core library service functions and provide a venue for community managed events and activities. Tier 3 sites would offer the least number of Cheshire East staffed hours although “top up” funding agreed with the town and parish councils will supplement the staffing beyond what was originally proposed for this tier. In addition and to ensure its sustainability the library service will continue to seek opportunities for additional income generation.</p>
Who is Affected?	<p>Local residents – Whilst retaining access in their local community to a range of library services, access will be restricted as a number of libraries will reduce their opening hours. This could restrict access to books, information and other resources, free ICT access and support getting online, warm spaces, places to study and to meet people and face to face council customer service functions</p> <p>Residents who are elderly or disabled – Whilst current access will be retained at the five libraries in Tier 1, there will be a reduction in access at the 6 libraries in Tier 2 as opening hours may be reduced by one half day each week if “top up” funding isn’t acquired. This could disproportionately impact the elderly and disabled who may struggle to travel to larger sites with longer opening hours as they may not drive and may experience issues with mobility etc.</p> <p>Face to face customer service point enquiries e.g. Blue Badge applications and renewals and concessionary travel code requests will now require a pre-booked appointment at Tiers 2 and 3 sites. As part of the final proposal’s library usage has been compared at different times of the day to ensure that opening hours are retained at periods of greatest need</p> <p>The Home Library Service delivered by volunteers to those who can no longer access the service due to age or disability will continue but the days/timings of deliveries may change.</p>

	<p>Children - whilst some access to library services will be retained in local communities, access will be reduced at libraries in Tiers 2 and 3, “top up” funding from town and parish councils may mitigate this in some communities. Opening hours will be reviewed to ensure these are aligned with times of greatest use. This could disproportionately impact children, particularly those who use their local library independently to access PCs, borrow books, do their homework or attend events & activities as they may not be able to travel to larger sites with longer opening hours. This will restrict their access to books, information free ICT access, study spaces and some events & activities.</p> <p>Residents who are pregnant or on maternity leave – may benefit positively as several libraries will be collocated with Family Hubs or become Family Hub Connect sites offering additional support in local communities to families. It is intended to retain the pre-school/early years activities at all libraries.</p> <p>Library staff- reduction in opening hours may impact some staff members contracted hours.</p> <p>Volunteers – whilst reduction in opening hours at some sites may reduce opportunities for volunteering and work experience placements at libraries where the Council is working in partnership with other organisations there may be increased opportunity for volunteering.</p> <p>Elected members, town and parish councillors and MPs – reduction in opening hours at some sites may reduce opportunities for surgeries and meetings with constituents, however partnership working and community managed arrangements could mitigate this by enabling the library to be open outside of the staffed opening hours.</p> <p>Citizens advice – library staff have been trained as preferred referrers to assist customers the time available for this will be reduced at sites where opening hours are reduced, however the development of the Library Hub model at Tier 1 sites should mitigate some of the need for this as other partners should be on hand to assist.</p>
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	<p>Work Club partners- reduction in opening hours could reduce opportunities to meet with or support those looking for work/training, however the development of a partnership offer at some libraries could mitigate this.</p> <p>Health colleagues – reduction in library opening hours could reduce opportunities to run clinics, meet with clients and offer classes in the community, however closer working with other services and partners e.g Everybody Health & Leisure in this field may provide additional opportunities to extend access to services in local communities.</p> <p>Room hirers – reduction in opening hours may reduce availability of accessible inexpensive meeting rooms at Tier 2 sites if “top up” funding isn’t received from town and parish councils.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</p>	<p>Libraries deliver the Council’s face to face customer service functions e.g concessionary travel applications, Blue Badge applications, council payments, DBS checks, etc. Whilst the draft Libraries Strategy 2024-28 retains access to these in the current 16 locations, there will be reduced opportunity for residents to access these important services at Tier 3 sites and a pre-booked appointment will be required at all libraries with the exception of the five Tier 1 sites where a “drop in” service will be maintained. This will particularly impact the digitally excluded who are unable to access services online.</p> <p>The Council has an overarching Digital and Customer Service strategy that details the way people can interact with the council and how this will be developed over time to address changing technologies.</p>

<p>How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p>	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty is a legal requirement contained within the Equality Act 2010 which requires public authorities and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not to assist those facing discrimination, harassment and discrimination. <p>Cheshire East public libraries are, safe, and trusted community spaces, open to all and free to access providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of good quality book stock and digital resources including e-books, e-zines and online subscriptions • Trusted information from accredited sources • Cheshire East Council Customer Service Points • Free internet access • Free Wi-Fi • Support getting online • Signposting to accredited advice and guidance • Learning and wellbeing opportunities • A range of activities and events for adults and children <p>Through its comprehensive book stock, displays and activities/events e.g mental health reading groups, Dementia café, refugee coffee mornings, the service seeks to provide opportunities to demystify stigma and breakdown barriers.</p>
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	<p>This proposal will continue to see these services provided across all libraries in Cheshire East however there will be some reduction in the service delivered by Cheshire East Council employees at the Tier 3 library sites as the proposed reduction in opening may limit the number of events/activities held in future, however Tier 3 libraries will provide a venue for events facilitated by the community and for Council pop up helpdesks when the need arises which should mitigate this.</p>
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Section 2- Information – What do you know?

What do you know?	What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?
Information you used	<p>Library membership data and performance data from the previous 12 months including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visitor figures total number of visitors to each library p.a • circulation statistics including total number of items issued, returned, renewed or downloaded • number of registered members • number of active members who have used their library card in the previous 12 months • PC usage – number of computer sessions at each library p.a • number of events and activities • number of attendees at adult events p.a • number of attendees at childrens events p.a • enquiries – number of requests for council services e.g Blue Badges at each site p.a • level of Family Hub provision planned for each site <p>has been used to inform the strategy.</p> <p>in addition a site matrix was compiled to inform the service design with data derived from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Outcomes Framework • Poverty & Income JSNA 2022 • Office for Health Improvement & Disparities Public Health Profiles relating to the health and wellbeing of children and young people by ward, highlighting where wards are significantly worse than England average and also where there is a higher proportion of children aged 0-15.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Health Improvement & Disparities Public Health Profiles relating to the health and wellbeing of older people by ward, highlighting where wards are significantly worse than England average and also where there is a higher proportion of people aged 65 years+ • digital inclusion – score assigned to local areas based on risk of digital exclusion identified by NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Digital Inclusion Tool <p>Information from the last library survey conducted by Cheshire East Council in December 2019 was used to gauge opinion of the service, identify what it was used for and by whom.</p> <p>The 2019 survey showed that people with some protected characteristics are more likely to use some of these services e.g families with children were more likely to borrow books and attend library events whilst those with long term health issues and disabilities were more likely to use the PCs, printing facilities and Wi-Fi. People who described themselves as not White British were more likely to use libraries for browsing, reading and relaxing.</p> <p>Getting help and information rose from 26% to 40% in those who were aged 75 plus and from 26% to 34% for those who had a disability. Similarly using the library to access council services increased from 10% to 25% for those over the age of 75 and from 10% to 24% for those with a disability.</p> <p>It informed us that females were more likely to attend events than males and non-White British respondents were generally more interested in participating in events than others.</p> <p>The survey also identified barriers to use, these included: limited range of books, car parking availability and cost and opening hours not being suitable. When asked about the possibility of extending opening hours using an unstaffed self-service model the majority of respondents were against this and this was more likely amongst older people and females.</p> <p>The Council's budget consultation in Jan 2023 received 2300+ responses much of this feedback related to the library service and as a result proposals were amended, and the Council reversed its proposal to close all libraries on a Saturday and in an evening and to stop the mobile library service. A full public consultation on the amended proposals for the library service took place from 9th June- 9th July 2023. This resulted in 3,200 responses detailing what residents valued most about the service, suggestions included keeping the larger libraries open for longer, opening libraries for parts of the day, so that full day closures are avoided, and the service generating as much revenue as possible. Residents felt that any future service improvements should be set out within a long-term library strategy, coproduced with key stakeholders. A commitment</p>
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	was made to develop a long-term Libraries Strategy from April 2024, which would be aligned with the new Corporate Plan which was due to be refreshed by that date.
Gaps in your Information	<p>It is acknowledged that the last detailed library survey was undertaken over 4 years ago and that the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis may well have affected usage, although the public consultation undertaken in June 2023 suggested the service remained vitally important to many residents with many now reporting they valued libraries as warm spaces and also the free/low costs activities and events for all ages.</p> <p>A full library user survey will be conducted in 2025 to assess the impact of the changes to the service including the changes to opening hours which came into effect on 1st December 2023 along with any changes as the result of the current proposals.</p>

3. What did people tell you?

What did people tell you	What consultation and engagement activities have you already undertaken and what did people tell you? Is there any feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations that could be included in your assessment?
Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>During the week commencing 15th April 2024 Individual meetings were held with the Heads of Service from Public Health, Adult Social Care, Customer Services, Childrens & Families to ensure proposals were aligned with their own services strategies and future plans. A workshop was held on 25th April 2024 consisting of Environment & Communities committee members and officers from other Cheshire East services including Public Health, Childrens & Families, Adult Services, Customer Services and the Council's leisure provider Everybody Health and Leisure to discuss the proposed strategy objectives and initial proposals for a sustainable service.</p> <p>A meeting was held on 7th May 2024 with officers from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) – regulatory body for public libraries acting as a “critical friend” for the public consultation on the draft libraries strategy and the proposal that libraries be organised using a tiering system with the potential for some community managed sites was discussed, no particular concerns were</p>

raised and contacts were provided to assist the development of proposals particularly relating to community libraries and alternative models of delivery. DCMS colleagues also provided feedback on the questionnaire used for the formal public consultation. A follow up meeting is scheduled with DCMS colleagues for 17th October.

During the week commencing 17th June 2024 a series of pre-consultation engagement sessions took place enabling key stakeholders to influence the proposals that would be formally consulted on, during this period meetings were held with 11 town and parish councils.

Further engagement has since taken place with town and parish councils to allow for the co-design of proposals for specific sites e.g agreement was reached with 3 of these councils prior to the launch of the public consultation which enabled an enhanced offer of an additional 23.5 open hours across 3 of the 4 Tier 3 sites to be included in the consultation.

Meetings were held with colleagues from Cheshire West and Chester Libraries and Cheshire Libraries Shared Services on 1st August ahead of the launch of the public consultation.

A formal public consultation on the draft Libraries Strategy took place between 5th Aug-15th Sept 2024 this was widely publicised across the borough both within and outside of the library service, representatives from those groups with protected characteristics who use the library on a regular basis were contacted to ensure they were aware of the consultation and were able to feedback e.g Good Vibrations - a music group for those living with Dementia; Bring Me Sunshine – reminiscence group for those living with Dementia and their carers at Sandbach library; Crafternoon groups at Crewe, Congleton & Macclesfield.

The consultation received 3,596 responses including:

- 3,424 online survey responses
- 110 paper survey responses
- 32 emails
- 23 event attendees
- 3 letters
- 2 complaints
- 2 Customer Services feedback

Information was also received from Alderley Edge Parish Council and Handforth Town Council who conducted their own surveys to support the consultation, which received 891 responses in total.

In addition 6 newspaper articles were published on the draft strategy.

The responses illustrated how important the library service continues to be to local communities and demonstrated that the most popular activities when visiting libraries were now:

- Borrowing a book, downloading an e-book, e-audio or e-magazine - 90%
- Renewing, returning or reserving an item, paying a fine, buying an ex-library book - 77%
- Seeking help from library staff - 49%
- Browsing and relaxing - 45%
- Finding out information – 38%
- Attending an event – 32%
- Meeting people or chatting – 29%
- Using a computer or Wi-Fi – 18%
- Reading a newspaper or magazine – 17%
- Working or studying – 15%
- Applying for a Blue Badge, rail card etc – 10%

The demographics of those responding to the consultation were as follows:

Gender

Female	67%
Male	29%
Prefer not to say	4%

Age

16-24	1%
25-34	5%
35-44	13%
45-55	12%
55-64	19%
65-74	26%
75-84	17%

	<p>85+ 2%</p> <p>Prefer not to say 5%</p> <p>Heath or disability</p> <p>Are your day to day activities limited because of health problems or disabilities.</p> <p>Yes 15%</p> <p>No 79%</p> <p>Prefer not to say 6%</p> <p>More information on the feedback from the consultation can be found at Consultation Results (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p>
Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback	<p>There was minimal feedback from non-library users as 94% of survey respondents use a Cheshire East library.</p> <p>There was more representation from some areas of the borough than others. 83% respondents were residents of Cheshire East with 60% of those completing the survey providing a postcode which matched an address inside Cheshire East. Analysis of this postcode data showed that more responses than expected were received from some places, when compared to the total number of households in each area.</p>

4. Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of information used to inform the proposal	What did people tell you? Summary of customer and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
Age – Elderly	Library membership data, local demographic data	A significant number of older people use the library to borrow books, access help, information and council services	<p>Older people may choose to visit libraries more frequently, perhaps because they prefer not to carry too many books at one time; they may lack digital provision or need additional support with digital access; they may need to access face to face customer services e.g for concessionary travel, blue badge applications etc. They may feel isolated and benefit from attending a social inclusion activity or speaking with library staff.</p> <p>Residents with this protected characteristic may have their access to library services reduced if they currently use a library proposed to be in Tier 3 as they may have difficulty travelling to other libraries due to mobility issues, reduction in travel options, lack of confidence.</p> <p>As a result they may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in digital exclusion • An increase in social isolation

<p>Age - Young</p>		<p>Many children and families use the library service to borrow books and attend events/participate in activities. A number of young people are tutored each day in libraries.</p> <p>A number of families that choose to home educate their children use the library to access resources and as a place to foster collaboration and encourage social interaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in sources of recreation & entertainment <p>Children who visit the library independently will still be able to do so as the proposal retains all the existing libraries however the reduction in opening hours may restrict their use particularly if they are unable to travel to other sites. Those using Tier 3 sites may be particularly impacted as the reduction in opening hours may result in the loss of Saturday morning opening in their community resulting in them only being able to borrow/return books; access events & activities in their local community after school or in school holidays unless they travel to a larger site</p> <p>Excluded pupils tutored in the library and the home educated may be disproportionately affected in the libraries proposed to be in tier 3 as they may have nowhere to study locally outside of the 1.5 days per week opening proposed.</p>
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			<p>There is a risk that children who currently use libraries proposed to be in Tier 3 could experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in social isolation • Reduction in access to materials for recreation & entertainment • Increase in digital exclusion <p>However with increased collaboration with Family Hubs children and families may find it easier to access support services.</p>
Disability	<p>The library service doesn't hold comprehensive data on the disability needs of its members or wider users. Census 2021 will provide % of people disabled under the Equality Act</p>	<p>People with long term health conditions and disabilities use the library to access council services e.g. apply for concessionary travel, Blue Badges, access information e.g. Books on Prescription, attend events e.g. Crafternoon, Adult Colouring, Dementia Café.</p>	<p>As the proposal retains all the existing libraries residents should still be able to access these services within their local community however the reduction in opening hours particularly in the proposed tier 3 libraries may impact when and if they can access them. People with this protected characteristic may find it difficult to travel to other libraries, particularly as accessible travel may be limited. People with learning difficulties and people who are neuro diverse or people with dementia may be impacted if they rely on their visit to the library being a familiar place they may prefer not to travel to other libraries. As a result they may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in social isolation • Reduction in access to materials for recreation & entertainment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in digital exclusion <p>Where possible engagement with groups and organisation that support this protected characteristic will be undertaken.</p> <p>Carers may be impacted if the library is closed on a day they are available or if it takes longer to travel to another library which is open</p>
Gender reassignment	The library service doesn't hold gender re-assignment membership data. Census 2021 data could be used for population gender identity data		There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people with this protected characteristic. However, the public consultation will be available for anyone from the protected characteristic to complete.
Pregnancy and maternity	The library service doesn't collect pregnancy membership data	Post-natal clinics held at some libraries, Baby Bounce, Rhymetimes and Stories and Songs attended by many mothers on maternity leave, offering support on parenting and benefitting their mental health by meeting with others with the shared characteristic	As the proposal retains all existing libraries residents with this characteristic should still be able to access these activities within their local community however the reduction in opening hours at the proposed tier 3 sites may impact when they can access them. If libraries in close proximity to each other close on different days, there will be an option for people to travel between libraries to access activities on the days they would have done previously.
			Co-location of some family hub services and may improve the service offer locally for residents with this characteristic

Race/ethnicity	The library service doesn't hold full and comprehensive data on race of its members or wider users. The membership form requests it but there is no obligation to provide this. Census 2021 will provide ethnicity data	The library survey and data collected for the Good Things Foundation as part of UK Online Centres and for the Homes for Ukraine project shows that people of many different ethnicities use libraries to find information and advice, use PCs, access Wi-Fi and socialise	As the proposal retains all the existing libraries residents with this characteristic will still be able to access these services within their local community however the reduction in opening hours may impact when they can access them
Religion or belief	The library service doesn't collect religion membership data. Census 2021 will provide ward data		There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people with this protected characteristic. However, the public consultation will be available for anyone from the protected characteristic to complete.
Sex	Membership data and Census 2021	More women than men currently use the library service to borrow books and groups are predominantly attended by children, and women	Women will be impacted more than men as more women use library services
Sexual orientation	The library service does not collect sexual orientation data. Census 2021 will provide population sexual orientation data		There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people with this protected characteristic. However, as the library is an inclusive and welcoming place some individuals with this protected characteristic may be using it as somewhere in the community they feel safe. The public consultation will be available for anyone from the protected characteristic to complete.
Marriage and civil partnership	The library service does not collect marriage and civil partnership data		There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people with this protected characteristic. However, the

			public consultation will be available for anyone from the protected characteristic to complete.
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5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Mitigation	What can you do? Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts
<p>Please provide justification for the proposal if negative impacts have been identified?</p> <p>Are there any actions that could be undertaken to mitigate, reduce or remove negative impacts?</p> <p>Have all available options been explored? Please include details of alternative options and why they couldn't be considered?</p> <p>Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?</p>	<p>Identified mitigations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-designed proposals agreed in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to minimise disruption as far as possible to library users • alternative timings for social inclusion groups suggested at Tier 3 sites • signposting to alternative library provision e.g other libraries open with in the borough on a particular day • reviewing mobile library routes and stops to see if these align with proposals for opening at proposed tier 3 sites. • providing travel information to assist in getting to other sites e.g bus timetables, car parking information. • promoting library and wider council digital services • offering customer service point appointments at libraries in Tiers 2 & 3 • promoting access to Home Library Service if appropriate • investigate expanding outreach provision in partnership. • extend Home Library Service to include children and adults with long term health issues/disabilities. • working across teams and services the council will look to try and mitigate any negative impacts due to adoption of any of the proposals.


6. Monitoring and Review -

Monitoring and review	How will the impact of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure be monitored? How will actions to mitigate negative impacts be monitored? Date for review of the EIA
Details of monitoring activities	A full library user survey will be conducted in 2025 post implementation of the proposed service changes to assess their impact.
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	08.10.2024 Joanne Shannon – Library Services Manager.

7. Sign Off

When you have completed your EIA, it should be sent to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mailbox](#) for review. If your EIA is approved, it must then be signed off by a senior manager within your Department (Head of Service or above).

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to be published on the website. For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Name	Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director of Planning & Environment
Signature	
Date	11.11.2024

8. Help and Support

For support and advice please contact EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Libraries Strategy

2024-28



Introduction

Located within the heart of communities, Cheshire East libraries provide a rich selection of free resources and support in welcoming accessible and social spaces, that facilitate events and collaborative working. Funded by local government, library services are determined at a local level by the priorities of the council and reflective of the needs of residents. There is also a wider national network of libraries. Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for libraries in England and in this capacity, it offers support to the development of public libraries through funding, advocacy, and collaboration.

In 2018 Libraries Connected was created as the national sector support organisation for public libraries in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, partly funded by ACE. The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) published the 2014 Independent Library Report for England, set up the Libraries Taskforce and published the strategy Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 – 2021. That strategy describes libraries as 'vital community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better.

DCMS has a statutory duty to superintend and promote the improvement of public library services provided by local authorities

in England'. However, as part of a national network, the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport provides leadership and advocates on behalf of the sector.

Cheshire East Council has a legal duty under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work or study in the borough. The council also has a 'public sector equality duty' under Section 149 of the Equality Act, therefore this strategy is based on evidence of need.

This strategy has been developed following the library service review in 2023 when feedback from the public consultation demonstrated that libraries are vitally important to Cheshire East residents. However, unprecedented financial challenges have meant that reductions in the budget for libraries will require the service to be run in a different way to maintain this valued offer where it is most needed across the borough.

A further consultation was run in mid-2024 informed by a draft strategy document and the feedback from this has helped to shape the final version. The results of this consultation can be found in the **Library Strategy Consultation 2024 - Full report** (cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations)



What we do

"Libraries not only provide access to books and other literature but also help people to help themselves and improve their opportunities, bring people together, and provide practical support and guidance."

Libraries Deliver:
Ambition for Public Libraries in England, DCMS



**Libraries
Connected**



Vision

Cheshire East libraries will become the venue of choice for enabling and connecting residents to enrich their lives. Our library spaces and services will continue to develop to meet the needs of our communities.

Cheshire East libraries core offer:

Providing safe accessible spaces for everyone with access to:

- A wide range of books and digital resources for all ages available to borrow or download at no cost
- Reputable sources of information and help to navigate these from trained staff able to signpost to other sources of help and advice if required
- A request service for items not available locally
- Free Wi-Fi
- Access to PCs and printing facilities
- A range of activities and events promoting reading, culture and creativity and supporting health and wellbeing

Our core offer is underpinned by the universal offers established by Libraries Connected in partnership with Arts Council England and the Reading Agency and demonstrating the power of public libraries to enable individuals and communities.

Universal Library offers:



Health and Wellbeing **Healthier, Happier, Connected**

To support through the offer of early intervention and prevention the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect.



Reading **Engage, Imagine, Discover**

To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.



Information and Digital **Inform, Inspire, Innovate**

To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.







Culture and Creativity **Explore, Create, Participate**

To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.



Cheshire East libraries offer by user group

Libraries have an offer for a range of different user groups from early years, parents, workers through to the retired and those more vulnerable people in our communities. The table below sets out the 'core offer' to some of these groups.

	Users need	Libraries deliver
 Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Digital literacy • Family activities • Life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories & Songs • Rhymetime • Summer reading challenge • Code clubs • Volunteering
 Active Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study space • Connectivity • Careers • Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Wi-Fi & Computers • Free study space • Books & E-resources • Homework clubs • Social spaces • Reading ahead & quick reads
 Active Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Business support • Family activities • Learning • Health & Wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Wi-Fi & Computers • Local information • Customer Service Points • Books & E-resources • Job clubs • Health advice
 Active Ageing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Digital literacy • Family activities • Health & Wellbeing • Social activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Wi-Fi & computers • Health information • Books & E-resources • Events & activities • Social and warm spaces • Home library service



Strategy development - guiding principles

In developing the strategy, we have considered best practice guidance as published by Libraries Connected and have used the following design principles so that it:

- Meets statutory requirements
- Is shaped by local need, supported by consultation and engagement
- Has a clear focus on public benefit and delivers a high-quality experience for residents that will help the service maintain provision where it is most needed
- Makes decisions on service provision informed by evidence
- Supports the delivery of the universal offers for public libraries in England
- Promotes partnership working and enterprise and innovation and;
- Delivers the service in the most cost-effective way whilst being well positioned to secure future investment funding

Strategy objectives

To align the library service's future potential with the Corporate Plan objectives, and other strategies in place across the council, which libraries already play a role in delivering against, the service has worked collaboratively with colleagues from the council's customer services, public health, adults and children's and families teams and the council's leisure provider to devise a set of objectives. These objectives were shared as part of the public consultation and 81% of respondents supported them.

The objectives of the strategy are as follows;

- To maintain the service, offer for all and enhance it through the introduction of other complementary council services focused on enabling customers and public health and wellbeing - in locations where it is needed the most;
- To offer a library service delivered in partnership with local councils, communities and organisations with similar aims;
- To actively promote the service, increasing visitors and becoming more accessible to residents through the use of new technologies and;
- To ensure that the service continues to be affordable for the residents of Cheshire East in the context of the council's financial position.

Our new strategy will ensure Cheshire East can deliver a high-quality library service sustainable into the future while remaining relevant to the changing needs of residents.

We will work in partnership with communities to ensure our libraries remain closely aligned to local needs. As proposals progress, appropriate consultation will be undertaken, and any identified equalities issues addressed.



Alignment to council's Transformation Plan

The council is embarking on a significant transformation journey which will be delivered over the same period as this strategy and beyond.

It is envisaged that libraries either in terms of the services offered now or in the future or by virtue of their central locations within the borough's towns will be a core part of the delivery of several aspects of the associated transformation plan. This plan has now been approved for implementation.

There will be a keen focus on how libraries play a role in the provision of targeted and needs based services, specifically both the promotion and delivery of early intervention and prevention activity, working jointly with the council's adult and children's social care and Public Health teams, alongside other partner organisations such as the NHS.

Through the objectives and guiding principles, adopting the strategy will establish the further development and implementation of the service offers at each library site and will therefore be a core part of this transformation process as it continues to evolve in its own right.

Alternative delivery model

The preferred alternative service delivery model is to move wherever possible to a community managed basis across all sites.

This is defined as a joint working arrangement between Cheshire East Council and the respective local councils where both parties provide funding towards maintaining staffed service provision and hence having a formal say in relation to the services provided and how their local site is further supported and promoted. This is whilst also enabling, developing and maintaining an appropriate level of community or volunteer led involvement for each site.

This model has been successfully promoted across all those sites assigned to Tier 3 with several having been established in Tier 1 in 2023.

The community managed approach was the most supported alternative service delivery model option presented through the public consultation.

In addition to this the strategy provides the framework for the promotion of a structured commercial approach with the next steps to develop a clear plan for driving income generation to support service delivery.



Use of technology

There are opportunities to utilise technology to extend the opening times of libraries which has been deployed in other local authorities. This currently comes with a range of constraints.

There will be a need to develop a clear business case for any such investment, including a clear understanding of upfront and ongoing costs.

The use of technology to maintain unstaffed opening hours was not supported through the public consultation, with several issues raised around security.

As such from a strategy perspective the use of technology will be explored further and where appropriate considered initially on a trial basis prior to any wider commitment being considered.

Tier System

Cheshire East Libraries Service will be delivered through a tiered system, branded and promoted in four distinct tiers. This approach aligns to the Corporate Plan priority of ***“enabling a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation”*** while also considering the increasing service demands and local needs, in the context of different delivery approaches.

The introduction of a tier system and assigning individual libraries to the first three tiers takes into consideration:

- Current site usage levels
- Customer service demands
- Digital inclusion
- Public health metrics
- Overall, the introduction of a tiered approach to the provision of library services was supported through the public consultation



Tier 1 Library Hubs

Centrally located in the largest towns in Cheshire East. These libraries will offer the broadest range of both enhanced library and wider council customer and health and wellbeing services, retaining the current longest opening hours. They will be modelled on 'community hubs' focused on supporting people to help themselves and each other, working with them to solve their problems and build knowledge, understanding and resilience. These libraries will be the initial focus of investment to maximise their potential to provide spaces for the benefit of complementary community usage as well as income generation.

They will provide the existing core library service as listed on page 3 offer plus offer free support around:

- **Employment, Skills and Education** - basic literacy and numeracy, digital inclusion
- **Personal finances** - debt advice, fuel poverty, food aid
- **Community services (third party)** - banking hubs, Post Office services
- **Health** - social prescriber, blood pressure checks, NHS support

They will provide opportunities for co-location delivering the likes of Family Hub Connect services. With investment, it is intended to expand the commercial offer at these libraries.

The Tier 1 sites will include – Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Wilmslow.

Tier 1 Usage stats October 2023 – September 2024

Site	Visitors	Issues	Customer Experience	Registered Members	Computer Use	Adult Event Attendees	Children's Event Attendees
Tier Total	640,628	832,492	17,775	68,452	35,960	13,238	51,669
% of borough's use delivered within Tier 1 sites	58%	53%	53%	57%	64%	45%	44%



Tier 2 Local Libraries

Located in smaller towns, with opening hours aligned to the periods of highest demand. The libraries will deliver the current core library and council's customer service offer plus some of the complementary services at specific sites defined by the need for that area.

The Tier 2 sites will include – Alsager, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford Middlewich, Poynton and Sandbach.

Tier 2 Usage stats October 2023 – September 2024

Site	Visitors	Issues	Customer Experience	Registered Members	Computer Use	Adult Event Attendees	Children's Event Attendees
Tier Total	359,602	592,272	14,060	38,894	15,242	12,045	47,861
% of borough's use delivered within Tier 2 sites	33%	38%	42%	33%	27%	41%	41%



*Prestbury Library is considered as a tier 2 site but as it is independently funded is not considered within the data sets.



Tier 3 Community Libraries (Community managed libraries)

Located in smaller communities and villages these sites will be staffed by Cheshire East Council employees for a maximum of 1.5 days per week to offer core library and the council's customer service functions and a small range of activities. Communities will be encouraged to complement this offer through working with either individual or multiple town and parish councils and other community groups located in their area to facilitate self-service access to library services. This would include the issue and return of books, information and e-resources, access to IT, study spaces and community use space. They will provide a venue for events facilitated by the community and for council pop-up helpdesks as and when the need arises. .

The Tier 3 sites will include – Alderley Edge, Bollington, Disley and Handforth.

Tier 3 Usage stats October 2023 – September 2024

Site	Visitors	Issues	Customer Experience	Registered Members	Computer Use	Adult Event Attendees	Children's Event Attendees
Tier Total	100,415	152,335	1,663	11,808	4,660	4,093	16,913
% of borough's use delivered within Tier 3 sites	9%	10%	5%	10%	8%	14%	15%

Tier 4

Libraries Direct

Delivered by the existing mobile library, the most rural localities in the borough will have access to a timetabled library service stopping in their community on a 3-weekly basis. This service will provide access to books and information and some customer service point functions.

The Home Library Service – co-ordinated by library staff and delivered by volunteers – will continue to deliver books and information to those who can no longer leave their own homes.

Online services

Our online library service will continue to be always available providing easy access to information, online reference resources, the downloading of e-books, e-audio books and e-magazines and for ordering hard copy resources via the library catalogue.

Volunteers

Cheshire East Libraries currently use volunteers to support several parts of our service. The home library service is delivered entirely by volunteers, the Summer Reading Challenge for children relies heavily on volunteer support, and we have recruited volunteer 'IT Buddies' in many of our libraries to support customers in using our PCs and their own devices. We will continue to recruit and train volunteers, either directly or by working in partnership with local councils and community organisations to support the delivery of library services and activities.



Supporting the wider objectives of the Corporate Plan 2021-25

This strategy will direct the evolution and adaptation of the library service in Cheshire East to better support a much broader range of the council's priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan 2021-25.

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

Many of our libraries are Cheshire East Council customer service points offering 'face to face' support and signposting for those who require it, while promoting council services.



Work together with our residents and our partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.

Libraries help keep residents informed by providing them with access to a wide range of information both in hard copy and digitally, ranging from online sources such as Which; Access to Research and Ancestry through to consultation documents.

They provide spaces for people to meet, access to free Wi-Fi and computers and offer Basic ICT support, if required. They host a range of 'pop-up' helpdesks enabling partner organisations and those commissioned by Cheshire East to offer 'face to face' advice and guidance in an easily accessible place. Library staff are trained to signpost residents to further help when required.



Reduce health inequalities across the borough.

Libraries provide a wide range of resources that residents can use as “self-help” to manage medical conditions. These include the nationally recognised Books on Prescription collections selected by GPs as additional support for a variety of medical conditions.

Library staff facilitate an extensive programme of events that aid wellbeing and can be accessed by all residents without the need for a referral. Examples of these include mindfulness, bibliotherapy and colouring for relaxation. Free access to ICT enables those who are digitally excluded to access digital channels of communication eg the NHS app to book appointments or order prescriptions.

Working in partnership with Springboard, several Cheshire East libraries offer work clubs supporting residents with job searching, new qualifications, CV writing and interview skills.



Support all children to have the best start in life.

Libraries help support children from birth onwards by providing high-quality book stock to encourage early language and literacy and foster a love of reading. Cheshire East libraries deliver an extensive programme of activities for all ages, examples include baby bounce; rhyme times; Lego clubs; school readiness activities and a range of STEAM skill activities.

We work with schools across the borough to offer a programme of class visits for pupils in reception through to high school. Our libraries provide a safe space for tutors to teach excluded pupils and provide volunteering opportunities for young people aged 12 years+ to gain valuable experience and develop life skills.

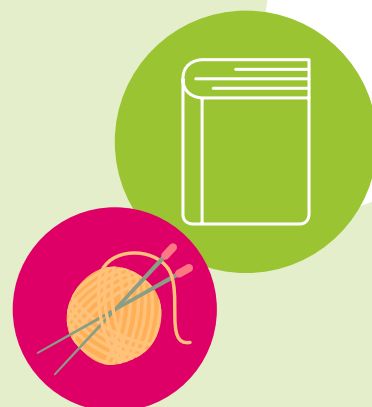
We are working in partnership with the Family Hub collaborative to ensure we complement both services' offers by maximising the support and facilities to children and families where it is needed most and are exploring options around co-location as part of the Family Hub Connect model. This has been considered in respect to establishing the tiers.



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

The service helps support older and vulnerable people to live safely and maintain their independence by providing a safe and accessible place for them to visit to socialise or to seek advice as frequently as they wish. Library staff are available to assist with enquiries, help access resources or to signpost to other sources of help if necessary.

Our programme of low-cost activities, including knit and natter, IT and tea, community coffee mornings and crafternoon, are open to all and help mitigate loneliness while providing an opportunity to learn new skills. The Home Library Service delivered by library volunteers to residents across the borough helps combat isolation, while ensuring those who are unable to leave their own homes don't miss out on access to a regular supply of reading material.



Implementation, promotion and continuous review

As part of the council's commitment to ***“providing a high-quality accessible library service, that remains relevant to the changing needs of Cheshire East residents and delivers value for money”*** we will continue to ensure we are aware of the changing needs of residents and provide opportunities for them to be actively engaged in future service design by:

- Building on the work undertaken to date continue to engage with local councils and communities to seek further opportunities for joint working to enhance the overall service offer
- Encouraging feedback on our service
- Evaluating events and activities
- Monitoring our mobile library stops every 6 months to check continued viability
- Conducting a library survey every two years to see what library users and non-users think about our libraries, the results of which inform future library strategies



Promotional activities

The library service already undertakes a significant amount of promotional activity through the likes of different social media channels alongside a regular online newsletter. It is recognised however that this can be improved upon to further increase usage, particularly as the service offer increases.

Work is already underway to develop and refresh webpages. This work considers how the library events, activities and online resources are promoted. New webpages will go live aligned to the branding contained within the strategy in late 2024, implementation of operational changes to begin from January 2025.

The webpages will also be adapted to reflect the ongoing development of a joint service offer with the likes of Family Hubs, promotion of activities to be delivered under the One You contract banner and where appropriate the presence of community and private sector businesses.

Measuring our performance

We will measure our performance using a range of key performance indicators as well as qualitative feedback through regular user surveys. We will continue to benchmark our service within the national sector using data provided by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Libraries Connected and will report on progress annually to the council's environment and neighbourhoods committee.

Delivery of the library strategy will be incorporated into the annual neighbourhood services plan, which runs from April to March each year and the associated annual revenue budget for the library service. Improvements to the service will be introduced as opportunities and resources allow.

The assignment of library sites to each of the first three tiers will be reviewed when preparing the next iteration of the strategy, against the same broad criteria used to define the current tiers and with an updated data set.

We will develop a proactive communications plan to make residents aware of how they can benefit from the library offer. This will be developed in support of and alongside the implementation of the strategy and will include marketing via traditional methods, social media and through partner organisations.



Appendix D1 - Libraries Strategy - Site Assessment Matrix (FINAL)

Site	Libraries Core Metrics						Customer Strategy	Family Hub Priority**	Digital Inclusion	Libraries Usage Criteria								Sub Total Usage Score	Public Health Factors						Sub-Total Public Health Score	Total Score	Site Rank
	Visitors		Issues		Active Members*					Registered Members		Computer Use		Adult Event Attendees		Childrens Event			Tartan Rug	Joint Outcomes Framework	Poverty & Income	Children & Young People	Older People				
	Value	Score	Value	Score	Value	Score	Value	Score	Score	Value	Score	Value	Score	Value	Score	Value	Score										
Alderley Edge	11,703	2	13,369	2	810	2	287	2	0	2	1,734	1	465	1	308	1	2,243	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	15
Alsager	63,855	6	110,818	6	3,332	6	2,355	6	3	4	6,507	3	1,884	2	2,827	4	7,263	3	43	0	2	2	2	0	6	49	8
Bollington	26,461	4	65,866	4	1,940	4	322	2	0	1	3,678	2	1,272	2	1,402	2	6,657	3	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	13
Congleton	93,454	8	125,530	8	4,536	10	3,170	8	0	3	9,964	4	4,979	4	1,894	3	7,055	3	51	2	2	2	3	2	11	62	4
Crewe	159,177	10	163,675	10	6,997	10	3,804	8	5	4	17,217	5	12,043	5	2,283	3	15,650	5	65	6	6	6	6	3	27	92	1
Disley	31,665	4	27,046	2	954	2	331	2	0	2	1,933	1	702	1	1,402	2	3,880	2	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	14
Handforth	30,586	4	46,054	4	1,964	4	723	4	0	2	4,463	2	2,221	3	981	2	4,133	2	27	2	0	3	0	3	8	35	12
Holmes Chapel	64,780	6	91,419	6	2,713	6	1,470	4	0	3	4,885	3	1,760	2	1,584	3	5,114	3	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	11
Knutsford	69,853	6	97,745	6	3,464	6	4,696	10	2	4	7,051	3	3,158	3	4,429	5	7,974	4	49	2	0	0	0	2	4	53	7
Macclesfield	163,880	10	240,374	10	8,908	10	2,415	6	5	4	19,715	5	9,174	5	4,656	5	11,898	5	65	6	3	6	2	3	20	85	2
Middlewich	38,572	4	50,618	4	1,928	4	2,018	6	3	2	4,389	2	2,770	3	846	2	8,973	4	34	2	2	0	2	2	8	42	10
Nantwich	128,578	10	162,063	10	5,661	10	5,532	10	3	5	11,694	5	5,665	10	3,254	4	7,299	3	70	2	2	2	2	4	12	82	3
Poynton	53,113	6	129,905	8	4,034	8	1,580	6	3	1	7,467	3	2,466	3	1,223	2	8,819	4	44	0	0	0	0	2	2	46	9
Sandbach	69,429	6	111,767	6	4,215	8	1,941	6	2	2	8,595	4	3204	3	1,136	2	9718	4	43	3	2	2	2	2	11	54	6
Wilmslow	95,539	8	140,850	8	4,677	10	2,854	8	3	1	9,862	4	4099	4	1,151	2	9,767	4	52	2	2	3	0	3	10	62	4

*Active Members - those using their membership to borrow books or access PCs in last 12 months
**Sites to be considered for Family Hub within the Library, Family Hub Connect Sites where there is a local identified need.

Tier 1 sites scoring 60 or above
Tier 2 sites scoring between 35 to 59
Tier 3 sites scoring 35 or less

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Appendix D2 - Libraries Strategy Site Assessment Matrix - Score Weightings

site specific values recorded over 12 month period October 23 - September 24

Library Core Metrics				Library Usage Criteria				
Score	Visitors	Issues	Active Members	Score	Registered Members	Computer Use (Hours)	Adults Events	Childrens Events
2	<25,000	<37,500	<1,000	1	<2,499	<999	<500	<3,000
4	25,000 - 49,999	37,500 - 74,999	1,000 - 1,999	2	2,500 - 4,499	1,000 - 1,999	500 - 1,499	3,000 - 4,999
6	50,000 - 74,999	75,000 - 112,499	2,000 - 3,499	3	4,500 - 7,499	2,000 - 3,499	1,500 - 2,499	5,000 - 7,499
8	75,000 - 99,999	112,500 - 149,999	3,500 - 4,499	4	7,500 - 9,999	3,500 - 4,999	2,500 - 3,999	7,500 - 9,999
10	100,000+	150,000+	4,500+	5	10,000+	5,000+	4,000+	10,000+
Customer Strategy		Digital Inclusion				Children & Family Hub Priority		
Score	Customer Requests	Score	Description			Score	Description	
2	<500	1	Average score by associated ward(s) of 9.0 +			0	No planned provision	
4	500 - 1,499	2	Average score by associated ward(s) of 8.0 - 8.9			2	Some potential local provision	
6	1,500 - 2,499	3	Average score by associated ward(s) of 7.0 - 7.9			3	Family Hub Connect site	
8	2,500 - 3,999	4	Average score by associated ward(s) of 6.0 - 6.9			5	Joint Family Hub site	
10	4,000+	5	Average score by associated ward(s) of 5.0 - 5.9					
Public Health Factors - by associated Wards								
Score	Tartan Rug		Joint Outcomes Framework		Poverty & Income	Children & Young People	Older People	
0	None		None		None	None	None	
2	Worst for one / 2nd worst multiple		Significantly worse - one		One	One	One	
3	Worst for multiple		Significantly worse - multiple		Multiple	Multiple	Multiple	
6	Worst for all		Significantly worse - all		All Indicators	All Indicators	All Indicators	

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Appendix D3 - Comparison of Population v's usage metrics for all Libraries (by Care Community)

Care Community	Wards within Care Community	Fixed Library Sites	Population (2021 census)	Library sites per 10k population	Final CEC staffed hours*	Staffed hours per 10k population	Total Members (Sept 23 - Sept 24)	Members (as CE residents)	% Total Members as CE residents	CE Members v's total CC population	Total Active Members (Sept 23 - Sept 24)	Active Members v's total CC population
Averages				0.444	NA	13.755	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15.49%
Bollington, Disley and Poynton	Bollington, Disley, Poynton East and Pott Shrigley and Poynton West and Adlington wards.	Bollington**	29,500	1.017	32.5	28.136	13,078	11,231	85.88%	38.07%	6,928	23.48%
		Disley**			14.5							
		Poynton			36							
Congleton and Holmes Chapel	Congleton East, Congleton West, Dane Valley wards.	Congleton	38,900	0.514	37	17.866	14,849	13,530	91.12%	34.78%	7,249	18.63%
		Holmes Chapel			32.5							
Crewe	Crewe Central, Crewe East, Crewe North, Crewe South, Crewe St Barnabas, Crewe West, Leighton, Shavington, Willaston & Rope, Wistaston, Wybunbury wards	Crewe**	88,000	0.114	46.5	5.284	17,217	16,387	95.18%	18.62%	6,997	7.95%
Chelford, Handforth, Alderley Edge and Wilmslow (CHAW)–	Alderley Edge, Chelford, Handforth, Wilmslow Dean Row, Wilmslow East, Wilmslow Lacey Green and Wilmslow West and Chorley wards	Alderley Edge**	48200	0.622	14.5	13.693	16,059	14,431	89.86%	29.94%	7,451	15.46%
		Handforth**			14.5							
		Wilmslow			37							
Knutsford	High Legh, Knutsford, Mobberley wards	Knutsford	22900	0.437	33	14.410	7,051	6,293	89.25%	27.48%	3,464	15.13%
Macclesfield	Broken Cross and Upton, Gawsworth, Macclesfield Central, Macclesfield East, Macclesfield Hurdsfield, Macclesfield South, Macclesfield Tytherington, Macclesfield West, Prestbury and Sutton wards	Macclesfield (Prestbury not considered)	61700	0.162	39	6.321	19,715	18,656	94.63%	30.24%	8,908	14.44%
Nantwich and Rural	Audlem, Bunbury, Nantwich North and West, Nantwich South and Stapeley and Wrenbury wards	Nantwich**	35300	0.283	41	11.615	11,694	11,044	94.44%	31.29%	5,661	16.04%
SMASH	Alsager, Brereton Rural, Haslington, Middlewich, Odd Rode, Sandbach Elworth, Sandbach Ettiley Heath and Wheelock,	Sandbach	74300	0.404	33	12.719	19,491	18,089	92.81%	24.35%	9,475	12.75%
		Middlewich			28.5							
		Alsager			33							

* Final CEC staffed hours includes any existing/proposed top up funded time via local councils (denoted by SITE NAME**)

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Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2	Alsager	Current	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 18:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 13:00	10:00 - 17:00	9.00 – 13:00
		Final	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 18:00	10:00 - 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 - 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		<p>Notes: Alsager Town Council were approached for funding to retain Thursday morning opening however at an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 8 October it was resolved TC24/108 that Alsager Town Council will not be supporting the extra funding to stop reducing the library opening hours.</p> <p>Final recommendation: Reduction of opening hours by 3 hours each week by removing current half day opening on Thursday morning opening 10:00 – 13:00. This complements pattern of hours at Congleton, Crewe and Holmes Chapel libraries. Community group impacts are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baby Bounce, Friday each week, 2:00-2:30pm – no impact 2. Children's Book Club, Tuesday each week, 4:00-4:30pm – no impact 3. Children's Games Club, Friday each week 3:30-4:30pm – no impact 4. Coffee Morning, Wednesday each week, 10:00-12:00 Noon – no impact 5. Colour & Chat Circle, Monday each week, 2:00-4:00pm – no impact 6. Family Stories & Songs, Saturday each week, 11:00-11:30am – no impact 7. Lego Club, Monday each week, 3:30-4:30pm – no impact 8. Memory Cafe, Friday monthly, 11:00am-12:45pm – no impact 9. Monday Chess Club, Monday each week, 2:00-4:00pm – no impact 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2		10. Rhymetime, Monday each week, 11:00-11:30am – no impact 11. Pop-up Work Club, Wednesday twice monthly, 10:00-12:00 Noon – no impact 12. Stories & Songs, Friday each week, 11:00-11:30 – no impact 13. 2 nd Tuesday Murder Book Club, Tuesday each week, 2:30-3:30pm – no impact 14. IT Buddy, Thursday each week, 10:15-12:15pm – potential to change to another weekday						
	Holmes Chapel	Current	10:00 - 17.00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 - 17.00	09:30 – 13:00
		Final	10:00 - 17.00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 - 17.00	09:30 – 13:00
		No proposed changes as already closed for one full day during the week						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2	Knutsford	Current	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 13:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		Final	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		<p>Knutsford Town Council are exploring the option of delivering a volunteer led service on Wednesday mornings. This dialogue is ongoing.</p> <p>The community group impacts would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baby Bounce - Monday each week, 11:00-11:30am – no impact 2. Current Affairs Discussion Group – Monday each week, 2:00-3:00pm – no impact 3. IT Buddy & Learn My Way, by appointment – minimal impact, no appointments available on Wednesday 4. Rhyme-time - Thursdays each week 2:15-2:45pm – no impact 5. Knit & Natter – Wednesday each week, 10:15am-12:15pm – this would be impacted however potential to re-schedule or may be able to run during volunteer run session 6. Lego Club – Tuesday each week, 3:30-4:30pm – no impact 7. Rhyme-time – Tuesday each week, 11:00-11:30am – no impact 8. Stories & Songs – Friday each week, 11:00-11:30am – no impact 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2	Middlewich	Current	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:30 – 13:00
		Final	10:00 – 13:00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:30 – 13:00
		<p>Final recommendation – That library opening hours are reduced by one half day each week and that the library closes at 1:00pm each Monday. This opening aligns to the opening hours at Sandbach, Holmes Chapel and Crewe libraries.</p> <p>Community group impact would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check It Out – children’s book group – Friday, monthly, 3:30-4:15pm – no impact 2. Crafter Days for Adults – Saturday, monthly, 10:30-12:30pm – no impact 3. Knit & Natter – Thursday each week, 1:30-3:30pm – Thursdays each week, 10:15 – 10:45am – no impact 4. Learn My Way – computer course, Monday and Thursday each week, 2:00-4:00pm – this would be reduced to Thursday only. 5. Lego Club – Saturdays each week – 11:00 –12:00 Noon – no impact 6. Mini Builders – Monday each week, 10:30-11:00am – no impact 7. Morsbags craft sessions – Fridays monthly, 10:30-12:00 Noon – no impact 8. Rhyme-time – Tuesday each week, 10:30-11:00am – no impact 9. Stories & Songs – Thursday each week, 10:30-1:00pm – no impact 10. Teenage Knitting & Crochet Group – Thursday each week, 3:00-5:00pm – no impact 11. Toddler Time – Friday each week, 10:30-1:00pm – no impact 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2	Poynton	Current	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 13:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		Town Council funded hours			10:00 - 13:00			
		Final (ALL)	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 13:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		<p>Notes – Poynton Town Council at a meeting on 30.10.2024 agreed to provide top up funding to retain Wednesday morning opening on a reduced staffing contingent (4 staff members) which will impact the number of customer service appointments available on this morning and potentially impact the delivery of events when staff are absent.</p> <p>Final recommendation - hours to be revised due to top up funding from Poynton Town Council.</p> <p>Therefore, the impact on the community groups would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Book Chat – Tuesday monthly, 2:00-3:00pm – no impact 2. Lego Club – Tuesday monthly, 3:30-5:00pm – no impact 3. Rhyme-time – Thursday each week 10:30-11:00am – no impact 4. Stories & Songs – Wednesday each week 10:30-11:00am – no impact 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 2 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
2	Sandbach	Current	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 13:00	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		Final	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 17:00	9:00 – 13:00
		Final recommendation – Thursday morning closing to align to opening hours at Middlewich, Holmes Chapel and Crewe libraries. If the library closes on Thursday, the impact on the community groups would be as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lego Club, Tuesday each week, 3:45-4:30pm – no impact 2. Sandbach Library Art Club, Tuesday fortnightly, 11.00-12:00 Noon – no impact 3. Baby Bounce, Tuesday each week, 2:00-2:30pm – no impact 4. BSL Conversation Class, Monday monthly, 2:00-3:00pm – no impact 5. Chess Club, Saturday each week, 10:30-12:30pm – no impact 6. Family History Help, Wednesday each week, 2:00-4:15pm – no impact 7. Knit & Natter, Friday each week, 10:30-11:30am – no impact 8. Rhyme-time, Wednesday each week, 10:30-11:00am – no impact 9. Shared Reading, Friday monthly, 10:00-11:00am – no impact 10. Signed Storytime, Friday monthly, 10:30-11:00am – no impact 11. Stories & Songs, Monday each week, 10:30-11:00am – no impact 12. Story & Craft, Thursday each week, 10:30-11:00am – this group would cease 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 3 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
3	Alderley Edge	Current	CLOSED	09.30 - 13.00**	09.30 – 13:00 14:00 - 17.00	CLOSED	09.30 – 13:00 14:00 - 17.00	09.30 - 13.00
		Parish Council funded hours	/	/	/	/	/	09.30 - 13.00
		Final (ALL)	CLOSED	10:00-13:30	10:00-13:30	CLOSED	13:00 – 17:00	09.30 - 13.00
		Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - current volunteer operation Tuesday 13:00 – 17:00 each week to be retained, allowing 30 minutes cross over - Saturday morning opening funded by Alderley Edge Parish Council via top up funding agreement Final recommendation: hours adjusted in dialogue with Parish Council to ensure better spread of opening and continuing to complement pattern of hours at Wilmslow. Community group impacts are as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friday Lego Club – Friday each week, 3:30-4:45pm – no impact 2. Saturday Lego Club – Saturday each week, 9:30-12:00 Noon – no impact 3. Rhyme-time – Wednesday each week, 10:00-10:30am – this group would start 15 minutes later 4. Stories & Songs – Friday each week, 2:30-3:00pm – no impact 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 3 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
3	Handforth	Current	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 18:00	CLOSED	10.00 - 17.00	10.00 - 17.00	09:30 – 13:00
		Town Council funded hours	14:30-18:00	\	\	\	\	\
		Final (ALL)	14:30-18:00	14:00-18:00	CLOSED	10:00-13:30	10:00-13:30	CLOSED
		<p>Notes – Handforth Town Council to provide top up funding for Monday afternoon/early evening opening.</p> <p>Final recommendation – hours to be revised due to top up funding from Handforth Town Council. Community group impacts are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lego Club - Tuesday each week, 4:00 – 5:00pm – no impact 2. Lego Club - Saturday each month, 10:00 – 11:00am – alternative session already operating on Tuesday 4:00-5:00pm 3. Coffee Morning – Fridays each week, 10:30 – 11:30am – no impact 4. Crochet Knit & Natter – Saturdays each week 10:00 -12:30pm –offer alternative on Tuesday 2:30-3:30pm 5. IT Buddy Sessions – Fridays each week 1:30 – 2:30pm – offer alternative slot on Friday 10:15-11:15am 6. Baby Bounce - Thursday morning each week 11:00 – 11:30am – no impact 7. Rhyme-time - Tuesdays each week 11:00 – 11:30am – offer alternative slot on Thursday morning 10:00-10:30am 8. Stories and Songs - Mondays each week 11:00 – 11:30am – offer alternative slot on Tuesday afternoons 2:00 – 2.30pm 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 3 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
3	Disley	Current	CLOSED	09:00 – 13:00	09:00 – 13:00	14:00 – 18:00	14:00 – 18:00	09:00 – 13:00
		Parish Council funded hours	/	/	/	/	/	9:30-13:00
		Final (ALL)	CLOSED	CLOSED	9:30-13:00	14:00-17:30	14:00-18:00	9:30-13:00
		<p>Notes – Disley Parish Council to provide top up funding for 1 member of library staff to work alongside parish council volunteers on Saturday mornings. Reduced level of service.</p> <p>Final recommendation – hours to be revised due to top up funding from Disley Parish Council combined with Disley Parish Council volunteers working alongside a member of library staff on Saturday mornings. Community group impacts are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lego Club - Friday each week, 3:30 – 5:00pm – no impact 2. Coffee Morning – Saturdays each week, 10:00 – 12 Noon – no impact if facilitated by volunteers 3. Baby Bounce - Wednesday morning each week 10:30 – 11:00am – no impact 4. Rhyme-time - Thursdays each week 2:15 – 2:45pm – no impact 5. Keen Cooks book group – first Friday of the month, 2:00 – 3:00pm – no impact 6. Kids Craft Club, Saturday monthly, 10:00-12:00 Noon – would reduce to an activity on a weekday during school holidays 						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 3 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
3	Bollington	Current	CLOSED	10.00 - 18.00	10.00 - 17.00	10.00 - 17.00	10.00 - 17.00	09:30 - 13.00
		Consultation	CLOSED	14:00 – 18:00	CLOSED	10:00 – 13:00	13:00 - 17.00	CLOSED
		Final proposal – CE reduced staffing	CLOSED	14:00-18:00	13:00-17:00	13:00-17:00	13:00-17:00	
		Final proposal – Bollington Town Council funded	CLOSED	10:00-14:00	10:00-13:00	10:00-13:00	10:00-1:00	9:30-13:00
		<p>Notes – Bollington Town Council to provide top up funding to retain existing opening hours. Staffing levels will be reduced after 13:00 hours as Cheshire East funded staffing has been “stretched” over more days than originally consulted on, therefore there will be no Cheshire East Council customer service functions in the afternoon.</p> <p>Final recommendation - hours to be maintained through partnership working with Bollington Town Council supported by The Friends of Bollington Library group.</p>						

Appendix E - Proposed Library Opening Hours – Tier 3 Sites

Cheshire East libraries- the impact on regular activities and events of proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations.

Other activities are undertaken across school holiday periods and the like which will be organised to suit the new opening hours as is practical.

****Opening hours proposals have been aligned to peak periods of demand and existing community group usage wherever practicable****

Tier	Library	Opening Hours	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Saturday
		<p>No impact to existing community groups as shown below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult Reading Groups – First and Third Tuesday evenings of each month, 4:30pm to 5:30pm – no impact 2. Adult Reading Group – First and Third Tuesday mornings of each month, 11:30am to 12:30pm – no impact 3. Baby Bounce – Thursdays each week, 10:15am to 10:45am – no impact 4. Childrens Book Group, Tuesdays each week, 4:15pm to 4:45pm – no impact 5. Lego Club – Saturdays each week, 10:00am to 12 Noon – no impact 6. Rhymetime – Wednesdays and Fridays 10:15am to 10:45am – no impact 7. Stories and Songs - Tuesdays each week, 10:15am to 10:45am – no impact 8. Story and Tea – one Thursday each month, 2:00pm to 3:00pm – no impact 9. Young Adult Book Group – Tuesdays 5:00pm to 5:45pm – no impact 						

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OPEN

Environment and Communities Committee

27 November 2024

Waste Collection – 3 Weekly Residual Waste Collections

Report of: Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director Planning and Environment

Report Reference No: EC/32/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to implement three weekly residual waste collections. At the meeting on 18 July 2024, Environment and Communities Committee delegated authority to officers to undertake a public consultation exercise relating to a move to three weekly kerbside collections.

Executive Summary

- 2 The report details the outcome of the public consultation and recommends moving to a 3 weekly residual waste kerbside collection system, aligned to the roll out and delivery of weekly food waste collections proposals, which were approved Committee at the July committee.
- 3 Changes to how the Council delivers its waste collection services has been identified as a core part of the Councils Transformation Plan (pg37), with a targeted £1M cashable saving, as approved by Corporate Policy Committee on 21 August 2024 in advance of submission to Government.
- 4 A consultation was held during September and October 2024 on proposal to change black bin collections to every three weeks. The consultation received 6,257 responses. Whilst a proportion of

respondents (13%) supported the preferred option, the majority of respondents (84%) opposed its implementation.

- 5 In response to the consultation feedback the proposals now include;
 - (a) Amendments to the policy setting out performance standards for returning to missed bins and specifics around medical needs qualifications for a larger household refuse bin,
 - (b) Introduction of boroughwide enforcement powers to issue fixed penalty notices and;
 - (c) Increased staff resource to provide targeted waste education and ensure enforcement activity can be proactively undertaken against a newly introduced three step approach.
- 6 The proposal will promote the objectives of the council's municipal waste strategy 2030 through an estimated 20.5% reduction in residual waste and 4.3% increase in recycling. In addition, it is estimated to achieve a net £1 million annual saving, already identified under the council's transformation plan for this service area.
- 7 The target date for the full roll out of changes in kerbside waste collections is the 1st of April 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment and Communities Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcomes of the recent public consultation exercise.
2. Approve the move to a three weekly frequency for the kerbside collection of residual waste, for all properties within Cheshire East.
3. Delegate authority to the Head of Environmental Services to:
 - a. Take all necessary actions to deliver 3 weekly residual waste collections
 - b. introduce service improvements to the 'Waste Management and Fly-tipping Policy' to require a specific service level improvement by introducing a return for a missed bin within 3 days, amend criteria to permit a larger residual bin in specific circumstances and introduction of missed bins performance measures.

4. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Planning and Environment to amend the enforcement policy on the basis of having a defined staged education through enforcement process including the issuing a borough wide Section 46 notice with the introduction of a performance measure and reporting on the number of live cases and their status with a monthly officer case management meeting.

Background

- 8 In October 2023 central government's 'Simpler Recycling' proposals entered legislation. This required all local authorities in England to provide a free, separate weekly food waste collection for all households by 31 March 2026.
- 9 In response to this, the July 2024 Environment and Communities Committee approved the introduction of weekly food waste collections. The committee also Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to take all necessary steps to undertake a public consultation exercise relating to a move to three-weekly kerbside collections, with the results brought back to Committee in support of a future decision around implementation.
- 10 The feasibility of three weekly residual collections was modelled as part of the report on food waste collection presented at the July committee. Cheshire East Council (CEC) was matched with similar authorities using the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) nearest neighbours' model from a socio-economic and demographic criteria.

- 11 Figure 1 below from the feasibility report shows the 2022/23 recycling rate of CEC's top 50 CIPFA NN listed above. CEC has the 22nd highest recycling rate of 52%. Also, shown is the projected recycling rate for CEC following implementation of the charged garden waste service.

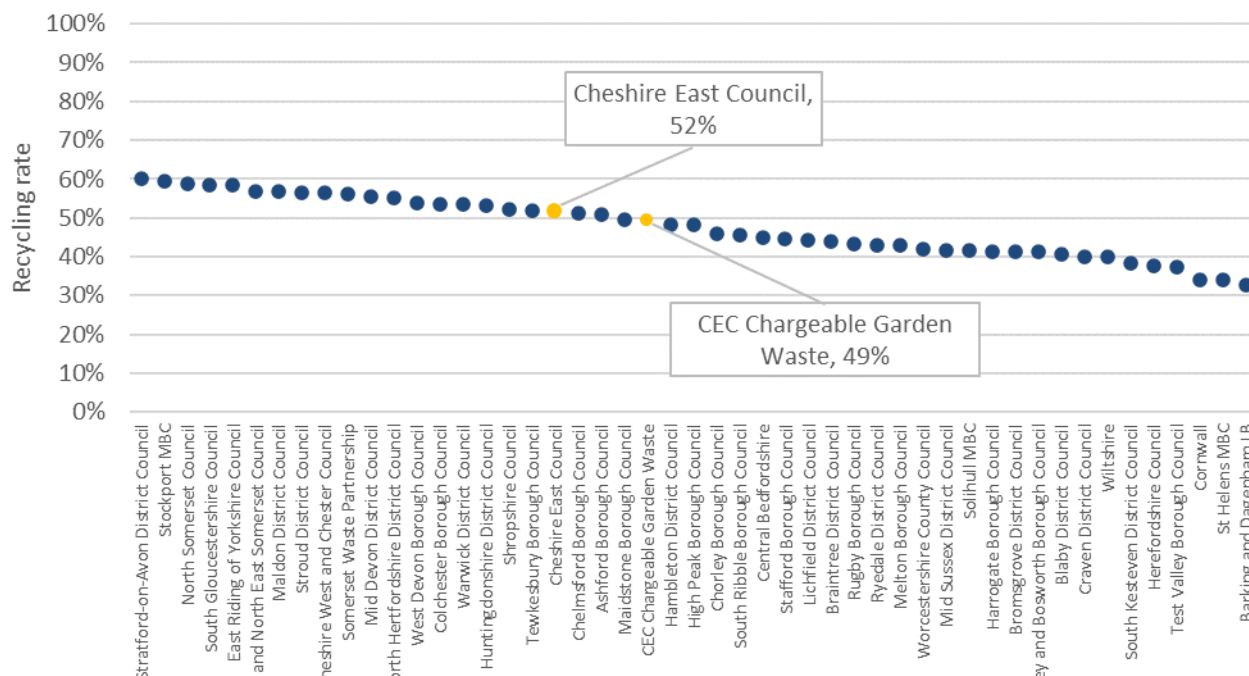


Figure 1 Resource Futures, Cheshire East Food Waste Options Modelling Report, (may 2024) p9

- Based on the assumptions, CEC will fall by 3 places to 25th highest recycling rate of their top 50 NN.
- 12 The report also goes on to indicate compared to Cheshire East's direct geographical neighbours of Cheshire West, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Warrington and Manchester. We currently have the third lowest recycling rate and the highest residual waste yield of all six neighbouring authorities. They state 'Cheshire East ranks 29 places lower than their direct neighbour Cheshire West and Chester in the Let's Recycle 2022/2023 league table, who are the highest performing of their geographic nearest neighbours.'¹
- 13 Examining the quantity of residual waste in the CIPFA matched similar authorities, (before and after the change to three weekly collections. Table one shows the percentage change in kerbside tonnages for authorities implementing 3 weekly residual collections.

Authority	Dry recycling	Food	Residual
Bury	1.9%	*	-16.3%
Daventry	15.5%	57.3%	-15.6%

¹ Resource Futures, Cheshire East Food Waste Options Report, (May 2024) P 10)

Authority	Dry recycling	Food	Residual
East Devon	23.0%	7.7%	-22.5%
Gwynedd	4.1%	24.8%	-15.7%
Isle of Anglesey	28.2%	31.7%	-26.2%
Oldham	-8.1%	*	-17.2%
Powys	-3.0%	25.0%	-28.5%
Rochdale	8.2%	*	-29.2%
Mid Devon	0.4%	2.9%	-13.5%
New average change	7.8%**	21.1%	-20.5%

Table 1 Percentage change in kerbside tonnage for authorities implementing 3 weekly residual collections (Resource Futures, Cheshire East Food Waste Options Report, (May 2024) P 14)

* Unknown as mixed organics service

** excludes outliers of Powys and Isle of Anglesey (as in three weekly feasibility study)

- 14 The report's analysis indicates almost all authorities moving to three weekly residual collections experience an overall reduction in kerbside waste. They also found no clear evidence of an increase, as Household Waste Recycling Centres and fly-tipping tonnages before and after the service change concluding 'that there may be a genuine waste prevention effect of moving to three weekly residual collections'².
- 15 The evidence suggests that a move to three weekly collections would therefore considerably assist the authority in achieving its waste strategy aims of reducing residual waste and increasing recycling. This would improve performance to be more compatible with our neighbouring authorities who have in recent years overtaken Cheshire East on these measures.
- 16 Based on this match data from similar authorities the report models a 20.5% reduction in residual waste in changing to three weekly residual waste collections with a assumed 4.3% increase in recycling. This reduction in residual waste is driven by a variety of factors, the main ones being residents increasing recycling rates, reducing waste at source and also with the introduction of weekly food waste collections this waste stream being accommodated separately.
- 17 The move would also have a considerable financial benefit to the authority. Based on these figures and reductions in collection costs the report indicates after investment in waste education and enforcement a saving of the order of £1 million revenue per year.

² Resource Futures, Cheshire East Food Waste Options Modelling (May 2024) p15.

- 18 The limited number of properties still on a black bag collection due to property or access limitations would remain on a 2 weekly collection cycle.
- 19 In order to accommodate the forecast increased level of recycling and hence need to have more space in household bins for this purpose it is proposed to offer all residents a 50% reduced purchase rate for an additional grey/silver bin for their property. This reduced price will be available for a period of 6 months prior and 6 months post the implementation of the changes to black bin collection frequencies.
- 20 As part of the project the Council's Communications team will be developing a comprehensive communications and engagement plan which will cover each stage of the implementation process. The changes to collection systems will be publicised well in advance of go live date. Part of the role of the communications team which is currently sat within ANSA but due to be insourced back into the Council in early 2025 will be to support residents with understanding the changes.
- 21 This change would be implemented concurrently with the move to weekly food waste collections agreed at the July 2024 meeting of the committee. The target date for implementation of both service changes is 1st of April 2026 in line with the new statutory duties on the Council for weekly food waste collections.
- 22 As part of the wider food waste project the Council will need additional parking and staff welfare capacity, to accommodate knew additional food waste collection vehicles to be located at the current central operations depot at the Middlewich Environmental Hub site. A planning application will therefore be brought forward early next year with construction works following subject to planning consent to extend the existing operational depot into the remaining footprint of the environmental hub site making a use of an area not previously developed.

Waste Education and Enforcement

- 23 A key part of the transition to three weekly collections will be communication, education and enforcement. A full communications campaign will be delivered as part of the wider changes to waste collections to ensure a high take up all food waste recycling and communication of new bin collection dates to properties.
- 24 Ongoing waste education will also be required to focus on where issues arise and to continually reinforce collection dates and promote food and dry recycling to maximise the potential to increase recycling and reduce residual waste per household.

- 25 Although the feasibility analysis undertaken by Resource Futures indicates no direct connection between 3 weekly collections and fly tipping we recognise that a three weekly collection of residual waste is likely to exacerbate areas that already struggle with a two weekly collection system.
- 26 It is proposed to amend the enforcement policy on the basis of having a defined staged education through enforcement process with reports as part of the directorate performance reporting on the number of live cases and their status with a monthly officer case management meeting.
- 27 To enable increased enforcement activity it is proposed to implement a borough wide section 46 notice in accordance with the rules of 46A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to allow the authority greater powers to issue fixed penalties following appropriate waste education to households causing a nuisance or detrimental effect on local amenities through misuse of household waste. The notice will allow the authority to issue fixed penalties to a maximum of £80.00 for instances such as leaving waste receptacles (bins or bags) out for several days prior to or after a waste collection and or causing an obstruction to a public footpath.
- 28 These proposals for 3 weekly residual and weekly food waste include provision of an additional 4 waste educationalists and 4 Community enforcement officers in addition to the existing provision of 4 officers (2 waste education & 2 Community totalling 12 in total). This will provide further capacity to manage all cases raised through the waste education and fixed penalty process.
- 29 This will be supported by the introduction of a fixed and timed three stage process of written warning, notice of intent and final notice. This staged process will be subject to performance reporting to understand how many cases are at which stage and to consider in specific instances where repeat issues occur we move immediately to enforcement action.
- 30 The Council also recognises the achievements of the Cleaner Crewe scheme and is grateful to our partners Crewe Town Council and local resident groups who have contributed to the initial project. We are seeking to continue and expand the scheme with the Town Council dedicating part of this new education and enforcement officer resource to a widened Cleaner Crewe areas with matched provision requested for the Town Council for overall project management and an additional waste education officer. The project would facilitate community groups, develop alley regeneration plans and be a central point of contact to

facilitate reporting on progress including supporting education and enforcement functions of the scheme.

- 31 The authority also recognises for some households a larger bin will be required and will clarify existing Waste Policy guidance on this with respect to larger households and households with particular documented medical needs likely to require a larger bin.
- 32 In addition, the authority recognises that some bespoke arrangements may be required for multiple occupancy premises and will assess this on request on a case-by-case basis.

Policy Amendments - Improved service levels for waste collections

- 33 The Authority has targets for waste collection missed bins and consistency achieves, though our contractor, collection rates of 99.9%. We recognise however that were we are unable to return to a missed bin and for residents that are repeatedly missed this needs to be improved on a three weekly residual collections system.
- 34 We propose therefore to provide capacity when we redesign the collection system and associated resources needed to deliver to return for missed bins within a standard 3 working days and to end the practice of what is currently a minority of residents having to wait until their next scheduled collection, if we are unable to return.
- 35 In order to do this the existing Waste Management and Fly-tipping Policy section 4.3.3 will be amended to require return to a missed bin within 3 working days in all cases. As part of this review of policy we will look at how missed bins are recorded and actioned, to avoid the need for residents to report missed bins in different ways. This increased service level will be the subject of new performance indicators which will be used to monitor and report to the relevant Committee on a frequent basis.

Policy Amendments – medical exemptions

- 36 It is proposed to amend current waste policies to accommodate concerns from some residents around their need to dispose of bulky medical waste. The detail of the policy amendments are being drafted to be flexible, but will be underpinned by a need to provide suitable documentary evidence of specific medical conditions.
- 37 One such mitigation will be to offer residents a larger capacity bin, however it is fully accepted that in situations such as this there isn't a "one size fits all" approach, so there will be a level of officer discretion allowed within the policy in relation to working with residents to assess specific needs.

Local Plan Housing Targets

- 38 The Authority recognises that we are at the end of a planning house building cycle and exiting collection rounds need rebalancing to adjust to housing growth and future increased housing targets though the updated local plan. By moving to three weekly residual collections, we will create capacity in the system to allow growth for future housing needs. This will be accounted for as new collection rounds are designed for all three waste streams involving the refuse and recycling collection fleet.

Draft Statutory Guidance

- 39 In late 2023 the former Government launched a consultation including draft statutory guidance requiring councils to collect residual waste on a minimum of a 2 week collection cycle. There has been no clarification to date from the new government if this will be implemented into legislation the council would need to consider its obligations under this guidance before continuing with these proposals.

Comparator Local Authorities

- 40 In terms of the position of other local authorities in the north west having made the same changes to the frequency of their own residual kerbside collection systems;
- Bury (Implemented 2015)
 - Wigan (implemented September 2017)
 - Rochdale (Implemented 2015)
 - Salford (Implemented 2016)
- 41 Further to the same the following local authorities have made very recent decisions in regards to a move to three weekly collection frequency. The two key reasons for this shift are to save money and to increase recycling rates.
- East Suffolk Council, September 2024
 - Flintshire Council, July 2024
 - North Herts Council, September 2024
 - North Somerset Council, July 2024
 - Test Valley Borough Council, June 2022

Consultation and Engagement

- 42 During September and October 2024, Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to gather opinions on its proposal to move black bin collections to every three weeks. This proposal was made in response to the 'Simpler Recycling Scheme' legislation announced by the Government in October 2023, which mandates that all local authorities must collect food waste from residents on a weekly basis by no later than 1 April 2026¹. A total of 6,257 responses were received.
- 43 Whilst a proportion of respondents (13%) supported the preferred option, feeling that it would be a positive move in increasing recycling rates / makes sense as the most cost-effective option, the majority of respondents (84%) opposed its implementation. Of those opposed, respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts, such as an increase in vermin, pests, and smells due to overflowing bins and certain waste products being left within the bins for a longer period. There were also worries about an increase in fly-tipping and contamination of other bins, especially since the recent closure of some local HWRC sites and the introduction of a booking system at the weekend.
- 44 Certain households and areas were identified as being more negatively impacted by the proposed changes. These included larger families, those with younger children, medical needs, disabilities, and pets due to the extra waste produced by such households. Elderly residents and those with disabilities might struggle with a more complicated waste schedule and heavier bins, leading to missed collections. Residents in rural areas, terraced housing, and communal properties such as flats and apartments were also highlighted as potentially facing greater challenges.
- 45 Respondents suggested several ways the Council could support those negatively impacted by the changes. These included continuing with fortnightly collections, providing larger or additional black bins, offering more local opportunities to recycle and dispose of waste, and providing clear guidance on managing and reducing waste effectively. Ensuring timely bin collections and having a plan to manage potential increases in vermin, litter, and fly-tipping were also recommended.
- 46 The Council indicated that it would invest in additional waste educational specialists and enforcement officers to counter any potential negative impacts brought about by the changes. However, this approach was met with mixed reactions, with 69% of respondents disagreeing with it. Many felt that the impact of such specialists would be limited and that the funds would be better spent on waste collection.

There were also concerns about the approach being overbearing and not equally distributed across the borough.

- 47 In response to the Consultation the Council has amended its proposals in the following ways:
- (a) Improved levels of service for waste collection:- to return for missed bins within 3 working days and to end the current practice which impacts on a minority of residents having to wait until their next scheduled collection, if we are unable to return
 - (b) Enforcement :- To assist with enforcement it is proposed to implement a borough wide section 46 notice in accordance with the rules of 46A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to allow the authority greater powers to issue fixed penalties following appropriate waste education
 - (c) Medical Needs : For some households a larger bin will be required and we will seek to clarify Waste Policy guidance on this with respect to households with particular documented medical needs likely to require a larger bin.
 - (d) Larger Waste Education and Enforcement teams : The proposals for 3 weekly residual and weekly food waste include provision of an additional 4 waste educationalists and 4 Community enforcement officers.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 48 Comparison of Cheshire East with matched authorities indicates Cheshire East is falling behind in its recycling levels and has increased levels of residual waste than it's neighbouring authorities.
- 49 The authority is also experiencing increased waste collection and disposal costs and there is a need to contribute to the authority's transformation saving proposals.
- 50 This recommendation would therefore further the objectives of the Councils Municipal Waste Strategy 2030 and deliverer the required £1,000,000 savings target outlined within the transformation plan for the authority.

Other Options Considered

- 51 A number of options as set out in the feasibility study (Appendix A) have been considered to ensure that the option which minimises the operational and financial risks to the council is taken forward.
- 52 The dry recycling collection frequency remains fortnightly in each option to ensure that the Council's recycling rate is not otherwise affected.
- 53 Similarly, as the garden waste collections are now delivered via a paid subscription service the bi-weekly collections have not been considered for change.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 54 Following the completion of the public consultation process a Public Consultation report (Appendix C) has been produced. The full findings of the consultation have been made available.
- 55 Members should consider the findings of the consultation but in doing so need to bear in mind that the consultation outcome is one of a number of considerations that they need to take into account and that other factors, such as the Council's financial position, the duty to achieve a balanced budget, and the affordability of any alternative options or doing nothing.
- 56 The recommendation made in this report is the officer recommendation based on overall service provision and affordability. Whilst Members are not bound to follow the officer recommendation, if an alternative decision is made then this needs to be based on sound principles of reasonableness which take into account the need to achieve a balanced Budget.
- 57 In addition to considering the findings of the public consultation, the Committee should also have regard to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In this regard, Members should consider the Equality Impact Assessment provided at Appendix B

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 58 The financial benefits of moving to a 3 weekly collection frequency were set out within the financial implications section of the July 2024 report. The figures quoted were derived via a robust review undertaken by a specialist and independent consultant and have not changed.

- 59 The costs of implementing the change from two to three weekly collection is anticipated to be a one off £270k.

Policy

- 60 The proposal supports the following Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 as follows;

An open and enabling organisation Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation	A thriving and sustainable place Reduce impact on the environment and also; Be a carbon neutral council by 2027
---	--

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 61 An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been produced in respect of the proposals for a move to 3 weekly residual waste collections, which is contained at Appendix B.
- 62 In summary the impacts relating Age and Disability were highlighted though the constitution. The EIA acknowledges this impacts but concludes that existing mitigation measures in the Councils waste policy relating to assisted collections to residents who are infirm or who cannot put their waste out on the collection day due to illness or disability are sufficient.

Human Resources

- 63 A shift to three weekly residual waste collections will be undertaken at the same time as the introduction of weekly food waste collections meaning there will be a need for increased waste collection staff and drivers overall.
- 64 Any reprofiling of staffing resource will be undertaken through the next stages of implementation in consultation with the staff themselves and the trade unions as this .

Risk Management

- 65 Table 2 sets out an overview of key relevant project risks associated with the combined project to deliver weekly food waste collections alongside 3 weekly food waste collections and their mitigating actions where appropriate.

Risk	Mitigating Actions
Timescale – limited time allowed to implement major operational change.	Commence change process early to alleviate risk. Initial Feasibility is complete informing direction of travel. Permission is sought from the November committee to proceed with the three weekly collection element of the overall proposed changes to kerbside waste collections.
Financial – decision to implement three weekly collections is made and then legislation introduced to mandate bi-weekly collections	Continue with regular dialogue with DEFRA seeking earliest possible alert of any legislative changes. Limit costs of change spend relating to 3 weekly collections to minimum level, undertaking work in house within existing resources. Develop delivery strategy in stages and commit funding in a staged manner to limit liability. Explore alternative methods of funding including use of flexible capital receipts to fund costs of change. Maximum cost liability to the Council in implementing this change is £270k.
Financial – ongoing “new burdens” revenue grant is insufficient to cover actual costs of operating a weekly food waste collection – impact to Council’s already difficult financial position	We have modelled a proposal to move to three weekly residual collections and likely saving it would deliver to ensure that this revenue risk is mitigated as far as reasonably practicable.
Resources - recruitment of new staff to deliver existing and new weekly food waste collection service, fall in service performance due to lack of staff	This will be partially mitigated by reductions of staff though 3 weekly collections that could be reallocated, Recruitment and retention remains an ongoing risk across on the Council’s waste collection operations.

Table 2: Summary of key risks and proposed mitigations

Rural Communities

- 66 There are no implications for rural communities arising from this report, the changes to waste collection services will be delivered consistently across all areas of the borough.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

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

Public Health

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

Climate Change

- 69 The carbon impact has been measured as part of the feasibility study which can be seen in Appendix A table 7 p25 showing the preferred option has the lowest carbon emissions. Existing vehicles carbon is accounted for under the council's carbon action plan 2027.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services
Appendices:	<p>Appendix A – Waste Collections - Feasibility Study (May 2024)</p> <p>Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (post consultation)</p> <p>Appendix C - Consultation Report</p>
Background Papers:	<p>Municipal Waste Management Strategy Review 2020 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p> <p>Environment and Communities Committee report, Implementation of weekly food waste collections, July 2024 - CEC Report Template</p> <p>Corporate Policy Committee report, Cheshire East Transformation Plan, 21 August 2024 - Transformation Plan V1 Final CPC 003.pdf</p>

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Cheshire East Weekly Food Waste Collections Options Appraisal

Cheshire East Council
May 2024

Open

Fair

Green


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Commercial confidentiality

We regard the ideas we are submitting to be commercially confidential, and we ask you to respect this and not to share this document with any individuals or agencies who would have an interest in tendering for any of these work packages or to use the information and ideas in the drawing up of tender specifications.

Limitations

This report has been produced by Resource Futures on behalf of CEC Council. Whilst Resource Futures has taken all due care to interpret and collate the information presented within the report, any third party relying on the results of the analysis shall do so at their own risk and neither Resource Futures nor CEC Council shall be liable for any loss or damages arising there from.

Executive summary

This report presents the results of the weekly food waste and two and three weekly residual collections modelling undertaken for Cheshire East Council (CEC). The purpose of this study is to:

- Understand the most cost-effective method of delivering a food waste service, in order to be compliant with 'Simpler Recycling' regulations, and to determine to what extent the 'New Burden' funding from Defra in capital, transitional and ongoing revenue costs will fund the service; and
- Assess the savings possible from moving to three weekly residual collections.

The options modelled are shown in Table 1. Due to the recent introduction of a charge for the garden waste service, two baseline scenarios were modelled. The 22/23 baseline models the 22/23 service, with a free mixed organics service and 22/23 tonnages (22/23 Baseline); and an amendment to this baseline models the current service, with charged garden waste and assumptions on final subscriber numbers and tonnages (£GW Baseline). The dry recycling collection remains fortnightly in each option. It is assumed that any new vehicles would be electric, in line with CEC's decarbonisation plan.

- **Option 1:** Weekly food waste collection, collected together with the garden waste round one week and separately as a food waste round on the alternate weeks, **fortnightly** residual waste collection.
- **Option 2:** Weekly food waste collection, collected together with the garden waste round on one week and separately as a food waste round on the alternate weeks, **three-weekly** residual waste collection.
- **Option 3:** Weekly separate food waste collection on a dedicated 7.5 tonne vehicle every week. Fortnightly chargeable garden waste service (with no food waste) and **fortnightly** residual waste collection.
- **Option 4:** Weekly separate food waste collection on a dedicated 7.5 tonne vehicle. Fortnightly chargeable garden waste service (with no food waste) and **three-weekly** residual waste collection.

Table 1: Options modelled

Option number	Option description	Residual	Organics (Food)	Organics (Garden)	Dry recycling
0	22/23 Baseline	Fortnightly	Fortnightly mixed organics, 240 L WB, RCV		Fortnightly co-mingled
0+	£GW Baseline		Fortnightly charged garden waste with food accepted, 240 L WB, RCV		
1	Option 1: W FW, F Res, Mix organics		Weekly food waste, 23 L caddy, one week collected on garden waste round, other week collected on 7.5 T separate food vehicle	Fortnightly charged garden waste with food, 240 L WB, RCV	
2	Option 2: W FW, 3W Res, Mix organics	Three weekly			

Option number	Option description	Residual	Organics (Food)	Organics (Garden)	Dry recycling
3	Option 3: W FW, F Res, Sep organics	Fortnightly	Weekly food waste, 23 L caddy, 7.5 T separate food vehicle	Fortnightly charged garden waste without food, 240 L WB, RCV	
4	Option 4: W FW, 3W Res, Sep organics	Three weekly			

The results, in Table 2, show an increase in costs for every option relative to the £GW Baseline. The cost modelling shows:

- With the current IVC gate fee, it is more cost effective to collect food waste with garden waste one week, rather than using dedicated vehicles for every week. (Option 1 compared to Option 3)
- Moving to three weekly residual collections offers savings of over £1M compared to the same option with fortnightly residual collections (Option 1 compared to Option 2, and Option 3 compared with Option 4).

The performance modelling shows:

- Although data on how the introduction of charged garden waste will affect collected tonnages is not yet available, the modelled assumptions predict a fall in recycling rate of over 2 percentage points.
- Introducing a weekly food waste collection increases the recycling rate by over 5 percentage points. Although, it is just shy of the 55% target for 2025.
- Moving to three weekly residual collections is modelled to increase the recycling rate by a further 5 percentage points (10 percentage point increase relative to the £GW Baseline) and comfortably meets the 2025 recycling target.

Table 2: Recycling and financial performance results

Options	Difference in cost to £GW Baseline	Households recycling rate
Baseline	-	51.7%
£GW Baseline	-	49.4%
Option 1	£1,546,289	54.9%
Option 2	£116,660	59.8%
Option 3	£2,616,543	54.9%
Option 4	£1,526,609	59.78%

Table 3 shows the capital, transitional and ongoing revenue costs of the food waste service modelled for the options. Ongoing revenue costs does not include vehicle capital costs (which are included in

Table 2), so as to be equivalent to the 'New Burdens' funding categories. The results show that capital costs are higher than the funding for all options. The funding for transitional and ongoing revenue costs has not yet been confirmed. Since the costs in Table 3 relate only to the food waste service, they do not include the savings from the reduction in resources modelled for three weekly collections in Options 2 and 4. Food waste service costs are higher for the three weekly residual options (2 and 4) relative to the equivalent fortnightly options (1 and 3), because more vehicles are required to collect food waste due to increased participation under three weekly residual collections.

Table 3: Capital, transitional and ongoing revenue costs of the weekly food waste service and 'New Burdens' funding

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	'New Burdens' funding
Capital	£3.3M	£3.6 M	£4.0 M	£4.5 M	£2.7M
Transitional	£0.5M	£0.8 M	£0.5 M	£0.8 M	Not yet confirmed
Ongoing revenue (annual cost)	£1.3M	£1.4 M	£2.4 M	£2.8 M	Not yet confirmed

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1 Introduction

Resource Futures has been commissioned by Cheshire East Council (CEC) to undertake modelling of a range of food waste and residual waste collection options. This work follows on from recent feasibility studies undertaken for CEC, which identified efficiencies and savings in CEC's kerbside collection service and in light of the upcoming Government's 'Simpler Recycling' regulations, which will require all local authorities to provide a weekly food waste collection by 31 March 2026. As part of this, CEC will receive 'New Burden' funding from Defra:

- Capital transition costs – £2.7M capital grant offer;
- Revenue resource transition costs – to be confirmed; and,
- Revenue ongoing resource costs – to be confirmed.

The purpose of this project is to review the comparative costs, anticipated performance and resource implications of the selected collection profiles to understand whether the funding available is sufficient for CEC to deliver the food waste service and to inform the future development of CEC's household waste collection service.

1.1 Baseline collections

CEC's household waste collection service includes a fortnightly collection of residual waste via 240 litre wheeled bins and a fortnightly collection of dry recycling via 240 litre wheeled bins. Until the end of 2023, CEC operated a free to all fortnightly mixed organics service. From 2024, CEC introduced a chargeable fortnightly collection of garden waste via 240 litre wheeled bins. Households subscribing to the scheme are able to place food waste in their garden waste bin.

Due to the recent introduction of the charged garden waste service, it was decided to model a 22/23 Baseline, assuming the 22/23 tonnages and a mixed organics service, and also a charged garden waste (£GW) Baseline, with assumptions on how the current service will be operated once it reaches peak subscriber numbers. For this, assumptions were made on subscriber numbers, how tonnages would be affected, and the number of vehicles required. These assumptions were agreed with CEC and are included in the Power Point presentation 'Baseline and Assumptions Presentation'.

The Government has clarified that if a local authority chooses to co-collect food and garden waste from households, they must ensure that food waste is collected for free on a weekly basis by 31 March 2026. Co-collection, with garden waste, can continue as long as it meets this requirement.

1.2 Options modelled

The options modelled are shown in Table 4. This includes the 22/23 baseline, modelling the 22/23 service with a mixed organics service and 22/23 tonnages (22/23 Baseline); and an amendment to this baseline, modelling the current service with charged garden waste and assumptions on final subscriber numbers and tonnages (£GW Baseline). The dry recycling collection remains fortnightly in each option. It is assumed that any new vehicles would be electric, in line with CEC's decarbonisation plan.

- **Option 1:** Weekly food waste collection, collected together with the garden waste round one week and separately as a food waste round on the alternate weeks, **fortnightly** residual waste collection.

- **Option 2:** Weekly food waste collection, collected together with the garden waste round on one week and separately as a food waste round on the alternate weeks, **three-weekly** residual waste collection.
- **Option 3:** Weekly separate food waste collection on a dedicated 7.5 tonne vehicle every week. Fortnightly chargeable garden waste service (with no food waste) and **fortnightly** residual waste collection.
- **Option 4:** Weekly separate food waste collection on a dedicated 7.5 tonne vehicle. Fortnightly chargeable garden waste service (with no food waste) and **three-weekly** residual waste collection.

Table 4: Options modelled

Option number	Option description	Residual	Organics (Food)	Organics (Garden)	Dry recycling
0	22/23 Baseline	Fortnightly	Fortnightly mixed organics, 240 L WB, RCV		Fortnightly co-mingled
0+	£GW Baseline		Fortnightly charged garden waste with food accepted, 240 L WB, RCV		
1	Option 1: W FW, F Res, Mix organics	Three weekly	Weekly food waste, 23 L caddy, one week collected on garden waste round, other week collected on 7.5 T separate food vehicle	Fortnightly charged garden waste with food, 240 L WB, RCV	
2	Option 2: W FW, 3W Res, Mix organics				
3	Option 3: W FW, F Res, Sep organics	Fortnightly	Weekly food waste, 23 L caddy, 7.5 T separate food vehicle	Fortnightly charged garden waste without food, 240 L WB, RCV	
4	Option 4: W FW, 3W Res, Sep organics	Three weekly			

2 Benchmarking

This section presents the waste collection schemes and collected yields of comparator authorities to CEC to show possible outcomes from the proposed options. Comparator authorities were selected based on their socio-economic similarity to CEC using the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Nearest Neighbours (NN) tool or their geographical closeness.

2.1 CIPFA Nearest Neighbours

The relevance to CEC of results from another authority depends on their socio-demographic similarity, measured using a nearest-neighbour rank. This figure is achieved using the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model, which broadly compares authorities using socio-economic and demographic criteria. This method ensures a systematic and clear approach to measuring the similarity between authorities,

considering a range of variables that have an impact on demographic profile and the likely demand on different services.

The model allows for different variables to be switched on or off independently, thus allowing the inclusion of only variables that are likely to be relevant to the compositions and capture of recyclables. The variables selected include those related to deprivation, age profile, rurality, household size and ethnic profile.

The CIPFA Model provides a list of nearest neighbour authorities based on their socio-economic profiles. The nearest neighbours are ranked based on their statistical distance (represented by a numerical score) from CEC. The nearest neighbour authority with the lowest score, therefore closest in terms of statistical distance, is considered to have the most similar characteristics to CEC. The CIPFA model is based on 2018 data, and CEC's top 50 Nearest Neighbour (NN) local authorities are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: CEC's CIPFA top 50 Nearest Neighbours

CIPFA Rank	Nearest Neighbour	Score	Rank	Nearest Neighbour	Score
1.	Shropshire	0.015	26.	Central Bedfordshire	0.037
2.	Wiltshire	0.017	27.	Mid Devon	0.038
3.	North Somerset	0.018	28.	Bath & North East Somerset	0.038
4.	Lichfield	0.021	29.	Hambleton	0.039
5.	Cheshire West & Chester	0.021	30.	Babergh	0.040
6.	Harrogate	0.023	31.	Blaby	0.040
7.	Stafford	0.023	32.	Hinckley & Bosworth	0.041
8.	Chelmsford	0.024	33.	Rugby	0.041
9.	Herefordshire	0.024	34.	St Edmundsbury	0.041
10.	Mendip*	0.027	35.	Tewkesbury	0.042
11.	Maidstone	0.028	36.	High Peak	0.042
12.	South Gloucestershire	0.030	37.	Ryedale	0.042
13.	Solihull	0.030	38.	Warwick	0.042
14.	Bromsgrove	0.030	39.	Stratford-on-Avon	0.043
15.	Craven	0.032	40.	Warwickshire	0.043
16.	South Kesteven	0.033	41.	East Northamptonshire	0.043
17.	Test Valley	0.033	42.	Maldon	0.043
18.	Stockport	0.033	43.	North Hertfordshire	0.044
19.	Stroud	0.033	44.	Mid Sussex	0.044
20.	Taunton Deane*	0.034	45.	Chorley	0.045
21.	South Somerset*	0.035	46.	Colchester	0.045
22.	Braintree	0.035	47.	Melton	0.046

CIPFA Rank	Nearest Neighbour	Score	Rank	Nearest Neighbour	Score
23.	South Ribble	0.036	48.	Worcestershire	0.046
24.	Huntingdonshire	0.036	49.	West Devon	0.046
25.	Ashford	0.037	50.	Cornwall	0.046

* report as the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

CEC's first and fifth most socio-economically similar local authorities, Shropshire and Cheshire West and Chester are also selected as Geographic neighbours. The results from the CIPFA NN model were used to make meaningful comparisons to authorities with similar collections schemes and with the collection schemes we are modelling in the following sections.

Figure 1 below shows the 2022/23 recycling rate of CEC's top 50 CIPFA NN listed above. CEC has the 22nd highest recycling rate of 52%. Also, shown is the projected recycling rate for CEC following implementation of the charged garden waste service. Based on the assumptions, CEC will fall by 3 places to 25th highest recycling rate of their top 50 NN.

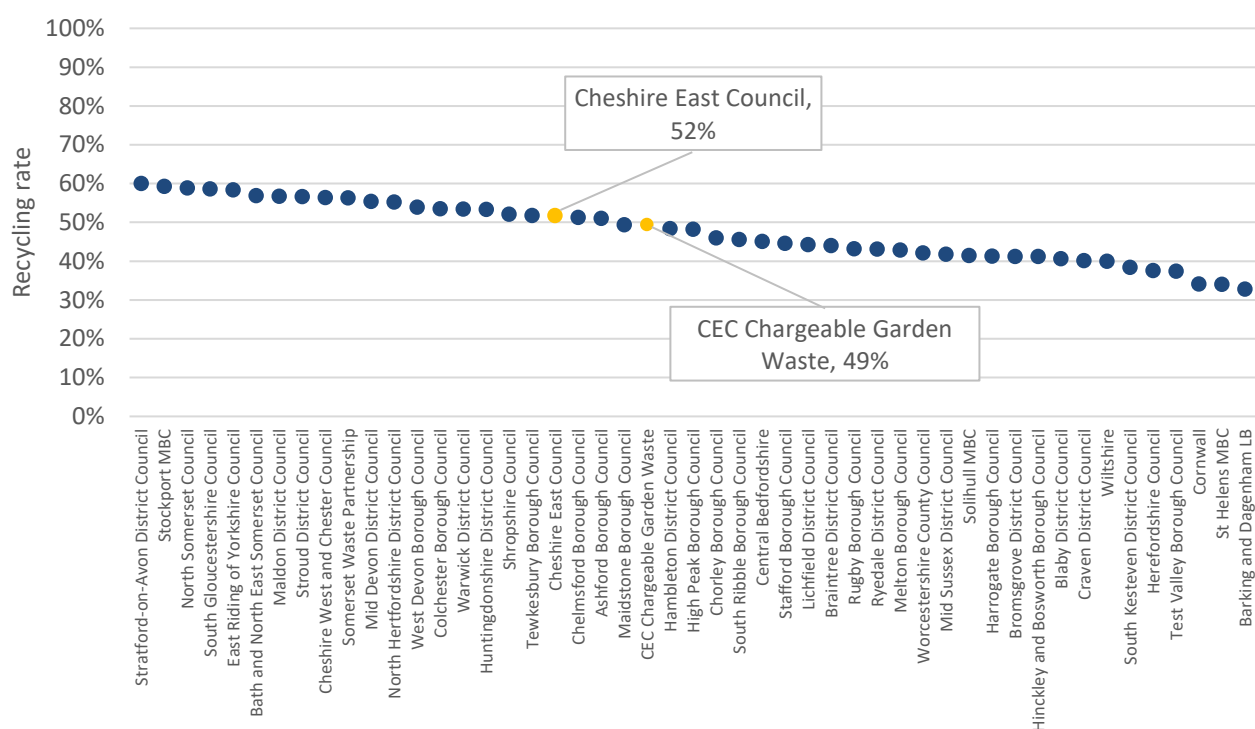


Figure 1: CEC's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours' recycling rate comparison

2.2 Geographic Nearest Neighbours current schemes

CEC's direct geographical neighbours are Cheshire West, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Warrington and Manchester. CEC currently have the third lowest recycling rate and the highest residual waste yield of all six neighbouring authorities. CEC rank 29 places lower than their direct neighbour

Cheshire West and Chester in the Let's Recycle 2022/2023 league table¹, who are the highest performing of their geographic nearest neighbours.

Table 6: Geographic nearest neighbours current scheme comparison to CEC

Local Authority	Residual frequency	Residual Wheeled Bin Size (litres)	League Table Rank 22/23	Recycling Rate 22/23	Residual waste KG/HH/YR
Cheshire West and Chester Council	Fortnightly	180	23	56%	435
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	Fortnightly	180	42	53%	383
Derbyshire Dales District Council	Fortnightly	240	45	53%	347
Shropshire Council	Fortnightly	240	49	52%	483
CEC Council	Fortnightly	240	52	52%	449
Warrington Borough Council	Fortnightly	240	126	44%	412
Manchester City Council	Fortnightly	140	206	39%	294

2.3 Similar authorities with separate food waste

Local authorities were selected from the CIPFA NN that currently have a weekly separate food waste collection service and fortnightly residual waste collection, as frequency of residual collection is known to be a main driver of food waste participation. As there was a sufficient sample size, we were able to restrict the benchmarking to the top 30 NN, which are the most similar to CEC. There are twelve authorities within CEC's top 30 CIPFA NN that currently have a separate food waste collection service, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Waste data of CEC's Nearest Neighbours that have a weekly separate food waste collection and fortnightly residual collections

Rank	Authority	Recycling rate	Residual wheeled bin size (litres)	Food waste yield (kg/hh/yr)	Residual waste yield (kg/hh/yr)
3.	North Somerset	59%	180	75	418

¹ Let's Recycle 2022/2023 League table: [Link](#)

Rank	Authority	Recycling rate	Residual wheeled bin size (litres)	Food waste yield (kg/hh/yr)	Residual waste yield (kg/hh/yr)
5.	Cheshire West & Chester	56%	180	60	435
8.	Chelmsford	51%	180	77	362
10.	Mendip (SWP)	56%	180	90	434
11.	Maidstone	49%	240	63	329
12.	South Gloucestershire	59%	140	83	394
19.	Stroud	57%	140	101	307
20.	Taunton Deane (SWP)	56%	180	90	434
21.	South Somerset (SWP)	56%	180	90	434
22.	Braintree	44%	240	69	388
26.	Central Bedfordshire	45%	240	74	426
28.	Bath & North East Somerset	57%	140	80	366

Figure 2 shows the 2022/23 food waste yields of CEC's nearest neighbours. As multiple authorities report collectively under SWP, this yield has only been included once. The median value is 76 kg per household per year. This is the value we have used in the options modelling.

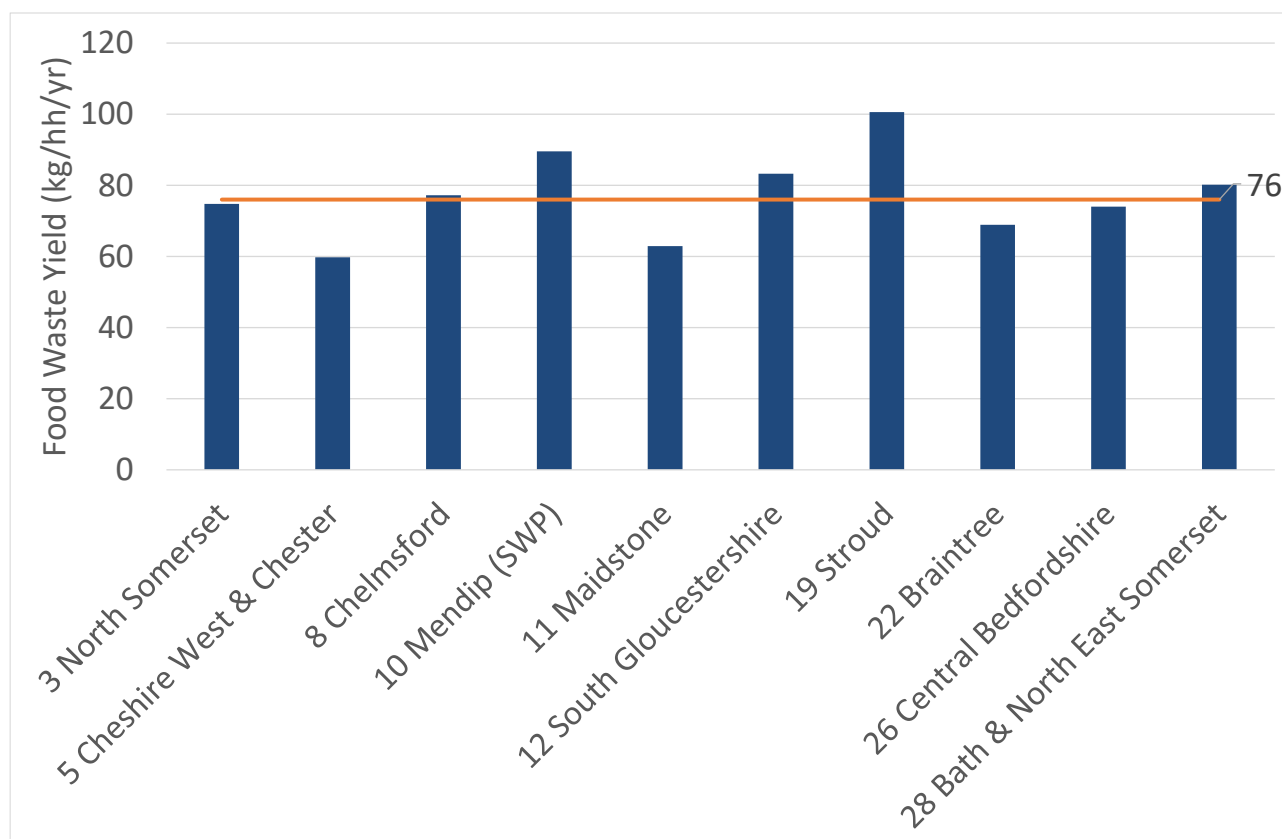


Figure 2: 2022/23 food waste yields of CEC's top 30 CIPFA NN

2.3.1 Food waste case study

Two authorities were selected based on their similarities to CEC to present their food waste collection scheme in further detail. Cheshire West and Chester was chosen due to the geographical proximity to CEC and because it is also CIPFA NN no. 5. Due to Cheshire West and Chester's similarity to CEC the LA's recycling performance is likely to be a good indicator of the food waste recycling and overall recycling performance potential of CEC. North Somerset Council was selected as it is the highest ranking CIPFA NN to CEC that has a food waste collection service.

Table 8 Cheshire West and North Somerset waste performance summary 2020-2023

Local Authority	Cheshire West	North Somerset
Food waste service introduced	2012	2010
Recycling rate 2022-2023	56.4%	58.9%
LR League rank 2022-2023	23	10

Local Authority	Cheshire West	North Somerset
Recycling rate 2021-2022	57.6%	59.5%
LR League table ranking 2021-2022	24	12
Recycling rate 2020-2021	54.5%	60.4%
LR League ranking 2020-2021	42	7
Food waste yield 2022-2023	59.8	74.8
Food waste yield 2021-2022	66.4	81.3
Food waste yield 2020-2021	70.6	82.0
Residual yield 2022-2023	406.7	370.3
Residual yield 2021-2022	428.3	389.5
Residual yield 2020-2021	446.1	404.0

North Somerset introduced food waste collections in 2010. Cheshire West introduced a separate food waste collection in 2012. Both schemes use 23 litre kerbside caddies and 7 litre kitchen caddies. North Somerset has performed consistently high in overall recycling percentage since the introduction of the weekly food waste collections. The year that the separate weekly food waste collection was introduced in North Somerset, it ranked 46th on the LR League table with an overall recycling rate of 51%, the following year after the food waste service was piloted North Somerset climbed up 35 rankings to 11th highest overall recycling rate, with an increase of 8 percentage points to 59.7% overall recycling rate. North Somerset's recycling rate has stayed consistently around 58-60%.

Prior to Cheshire West and Chester introducing separate food waste collections in 2012, the LA ranked 81st in 2010/2011 and 76th 2011/2012. At this time CEC was a better performing local authority in overall recycling percentage and was ranked 10 places above Cheshire West and Chester in 2010/2011 at 71st place and 35 places above Cheshire West and Chester in 2011/2012 at 41st place. Cheshire West and Chester overtook CEC and moved up the recycling league table to 24th place in 2012/2013 after the food waste service collection was introduced. Although there has been a few years of fluctuation, Cheshire West and Chester has performed at around 55% or higher since the food waste service introduction.

2.4 Similar authorities with 3-weekly residual collection

In 2021, a feasibility study of three weekly residual waste collections was undertaken on behalf of CEC. In order to determine the likely changes in tonnages of moving to three weekly residual collections, the feasibility study examined the yields of authorities before and after the change and calculated the percentage change. We build on this information here, by including Mid Devon District Council, who has since made the change to three weekly residual waste collections (October 2022) and is NN rank 27, so very comparable to CEC. As Mid Devon made the change part way through the most recent year of data, for this we compare the six months after the change with the same six months a year earlier. Table

9 shows the results of comparing the available data after the change with the same time period a year previously. As with almost all authorities moving to three weekly residual collections, there is an overall reduction in kerbside waste. Analysis as part of the three weekly residual feasibility study examined HWRC and fly-tipping tonnages before and after the service change and found no clear evidence of an increase in either. This suggests that there may be a genuine waste prevention effect of moving to three weekly residual collections, but caution must be used when considering the savings possible.

Table 9: Mid Devon pre and post 3-weekly residual service introduction yields (kg/hh/yr equivalent)

Mid Devon	Dry recycling	Food waste	Residual waste	Total
October 2021 - March 2022 (annualised)	180	93	355	626
October 2022- March 2023 (annualised)	181	95	307	582
% Change	0.4%	2.9%	-13.5%	-7.1%

Table 10 shows the percentage changes of authorities included in the three weekly feasibility study and the new data available from Mid Devon.

Table 10: Percentage change in kerbside tonnages for authorities implementing three weekly residual collections (Mid Devon comparing 6 months after the change with the same 6 months the year before; other authorities' data from the three weekly feasibility study)

Authority	Dry recycling	Food	Residual
Bury	1.9%	*	-16.3%
Daventry	15.5%	57.3%	-15.6%
East Devon	23.0%	7.7%	-22.5%
Gwynedd	4.1%	24.8%	-15.7%
Isle of Anglesey	28.2%	31.7%	-26.2%
Oldham	-8.1%	*	-17.2%
Powys	-3.0%	25.0%	-28.5%
Rochdale	8.2%	*	-29.2%
Mid Devon	0.4%	2.9%	-13.5%
New average change	7.8%**	21.1%	-20.5%

* unknown as mixed organics service

** excludes outliers of Powys and Isle of Anglesey (as in three weekly feasibility study)

We have modelled a 21.1% increase in food waste (compared to the value found from benchmarking authorities with fortnightly residual waste collections) and a 20.5% reduction in residual waste.

The previous analysis noted that CEC already diverts significant amounts of material for recycling and so a lower increase was modelled equivalent to 4.3%. This is also the percentage increase we have used for this study.

3 Methodology

The following section provides an overview of the methodology adopted by Resource Futures to complete the options modelling. This includes our approach to modelling resource requirements and financial modelling.

3.1 Operational modelling

All operational modelling was completed using WRAP's Kerbside Assessment Tool (KAT) which allows current collections to be modelled and potential kerbside collection profile options to be forecast and evaluated. Costs were calculated for each option by identifying the performance and resources necessary to deliver each of the modelled options. The financial assessment considered operational costs including staff costs, vehicle maintenance and fuel, fleet replacement costs, and fees for treating, sorting and/or disposal of materials. Any potential income estimated from the sale of recyclable materials was included as part of the treatment and disposal costs. Capital costs were calculated to provide the initial investment required for each option for vehicles and containers. It assumed that future service design will be mirrored across all household types.

KAT projections are based on a large number of assumptions with specific local data entered, where available, to estimate resource requirement. KAT therefore models only generic systems. This is appropriate to allow comparison of options but, at the implementation stage, a more detailed specification and operational development process will be needed to define the specific details of the system. This will also need to consider additional cost elements to be included, for example, operational base requirements, and legal and communications support.

3.2 Financial modelling

The process of calculating costs for each option was undertaken following the identification of performance levels and the quantification of resources necessary to deliver each of the modelled options. Costs are presented as follows:

- Operational costs comprising the annual cost to operate the services: including staff costs, vehicle hire and running costs, container replacements (accounting for damaged and lost bins) and fees for the treatment, sorting or disposal of materials.
- Capital costs provide the initial investment required for each option for vehicles, containers and communications. Vehicle costs are based on typical unit costs for each vehicle type. The financial modelling does not include the costs associated with the removal of existing containers or distribution of new containers.
- Transitional costs include service mobilisation costs as requested.

3.3 Developing baseline

Before modelling alternative options and their sensitivities, the Baseline model, representative of current operations and performance, was modelled within KAT. CEC completed data sheets for both operational and financial information, at the start of the project, to inform the development of this model. All data and assumptions used in the modelling of the baseline model were presented to CEC, with the opportunity to review and comment on assumptions before modelling commenced. These are in the PowerPoint file of the 'Baseline and Assumptions Presentation' submitted to CEC. This section provides a summary of the characteristics of the Baseline model, as well as any updates made to the model based on feedback received from CEC.

The Baseline model was built to reflect waste arisings, recycling performance, set out and participation rates and resources (vehicles and collection crew) required. This model reflects CEC's core rounds that serve kerbside and flatted properties, where both recycling and residual waste are collected by:

- 14 x 26 tonne RCVs
- 1 x 18 tonne RCV
- 1 x 7.5 tonne RCV

When mixed organics was free, it was collected using:

- 15 x 26 tonne RCVs (of which two were hired for 6 months over the summer months)
- 1 x 18 tonne RCV
- 1 x 7.5 tonne RCV

Vehicle numbers required for the charged service are not yet known, with rounds currently being largely unchanged, but it is assumed that there will be a reduction of two vehicles. It was agreed with CEC to exclude the 7.5 tonne vehicles from the modelling, as these have vastly different payloads and round sizes compared to the larger vehicles and these smaller vehicles would be required in all options.

4 Results

The following provides the results of the modelling completed, including a summary of the recycling performance, resourcing requirements and cost implications of each option.

4.1 Kerbside recycling performance

This section presents the recycling performance calculated for each option.

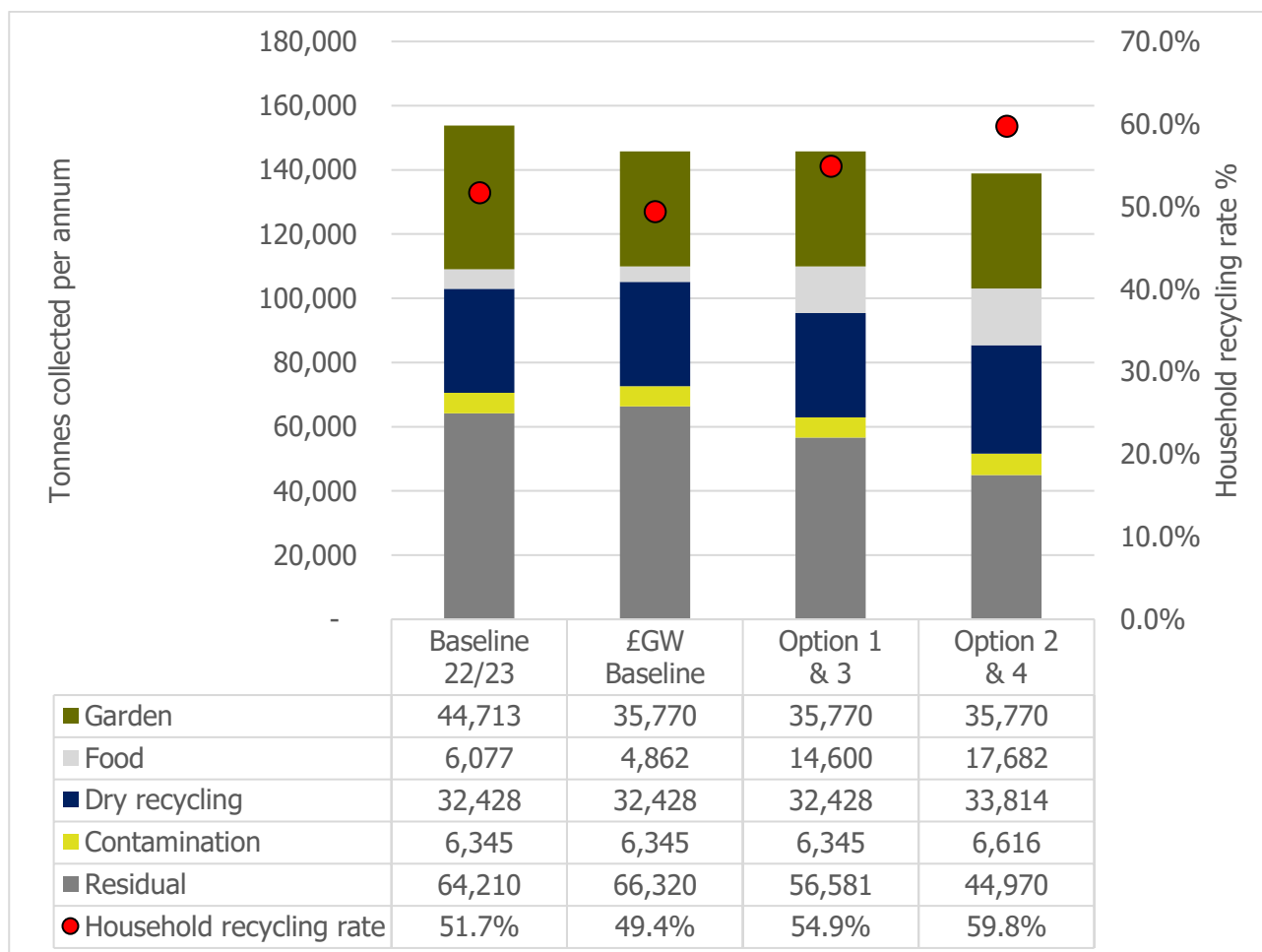


Figure 3: Tonnes collected at kerbside and the household recycling rate (including non-kerbside) for each option

Figure 3 above displays the total tonnage collected for each option. The chart presents residual (grey bars), dry recycling (blue bars), garden waste (light brown bars) and food (light green bars) tonnages for ease of comparison. Contamination within the recycling collections is shown as an orange bar, with the data table provided within the chart displaying the tonnage figures for reference. The chart also provides the recycling rate for each option, indicated by the red dots. The chart shows:

- A decrease in food and garden waste collected between the 22/23 baseline and the £GW baseline, and a slight increase in residual as some of this reduction in garden waste and all of the reduction in food waste are placed in the residual bin. This reduces the recycling rate by over 2 percentage points.
- When the food waste service is introduced in Options 1 and 3, there is a large increase in food waste collected compared to the £GW baseline and a corresponding decrease in residual waste. This increases the recycling rate by over 5 percentage points compared to the £GW baseline.
- Moving to three weekly residual waste collections, in Options 2 and 4 sees an increase in food and dry recycling and a large reduction in residual waste. Contamination is assumed to increase at the same rate as dry recycling. The recycling rate for this option is modelled to increase by

over 10 percentage points relative to the £GW baseline. This option models an overall decrease in kerbside waste, which is seen in almost all authorities when moving to three weekly residual collections.

4.2 Resource requirements

Output tables from the KAT modelling detailing the results for each option can be found in Appendix A. Figure 4 and Figure 5 below show the number of vehicles and staff required for each collection service for each option (excluding the D1 flats residual round and the 7.5 tonne vehicle for each service). The two extra vehicles required for garden waste in the summer are included here. Values are shown to 1 decimal place here but are rounded up for each service in the cost modelling.

- Between the 22/23 baseline and £GW baseline, there is a slight decrease in vehicles required for the mixed organics/garden waste service primarily due to the reduction in set out rate. There is no change in residual vehicles required despite the slight increase in tonnage.
- Option 1 assumes food waste is collected with garden waste one week and by dedicated separate vehicles the next week. This option requires 10 new food waste vehicles and a small increase in mixed organics vehicles, although not as high as the 22/23 baseline, as it is assumed that set out for the food waste and charged garden waste service combined would not be as high as when the garden waste service was free. There is no change in residual vehicles required despite the decrease in tonnage.
- Option 2 assumes a three weekly residual waste collection service (alongside food being collected with garden waste one week and dedicated separate vehicles the next). The theoretical maximum reduction in vehicles possible when moving between fortnightly and three weekly collections is one third. This is possible if the number of tips and set-out rate stay the same. The residual vehicle requirements output from KAT with three weekly residual collections are very close to this theoretical maximum, moving from 15 to 10.3, despite an increase in set out rate from 95% to 100%. (Set out rates in KAT can only be input in 5 percentage point increments. In reality, this increase would likely be slightly lower, say from 96% to 99%.) The number of vehicles is rounded up for the cost modelling, but caution should still be exercised with this value as the model showed that the vehicles were close to filling their second tip when collecting residual waste three weekly. If collected weights are regularly higher than the average weight, it is likely that a third tip would be required, which given the high driving times in CEC, would put drivers over time. Since crews work on a team completion principle, this risk is minimised.
- Option 3 and 4 model the same tonnages as Options 1 and 2 respectively but assume that food waste is collected exclusively by new vehicles and so require double the number of new food waste vehicles relative to Options 1 and 2 respectively, but the same number of garden waste vehicles as the £GW baseline. Overall, Option 3 requires around 8 more vehicles than Option 1 and Option 4 requires around 10 more vehicles than Option 2, showing that it is likely to be more efficient to collect food waste with garden waste on the fortnight where the vehicle is already passing households.

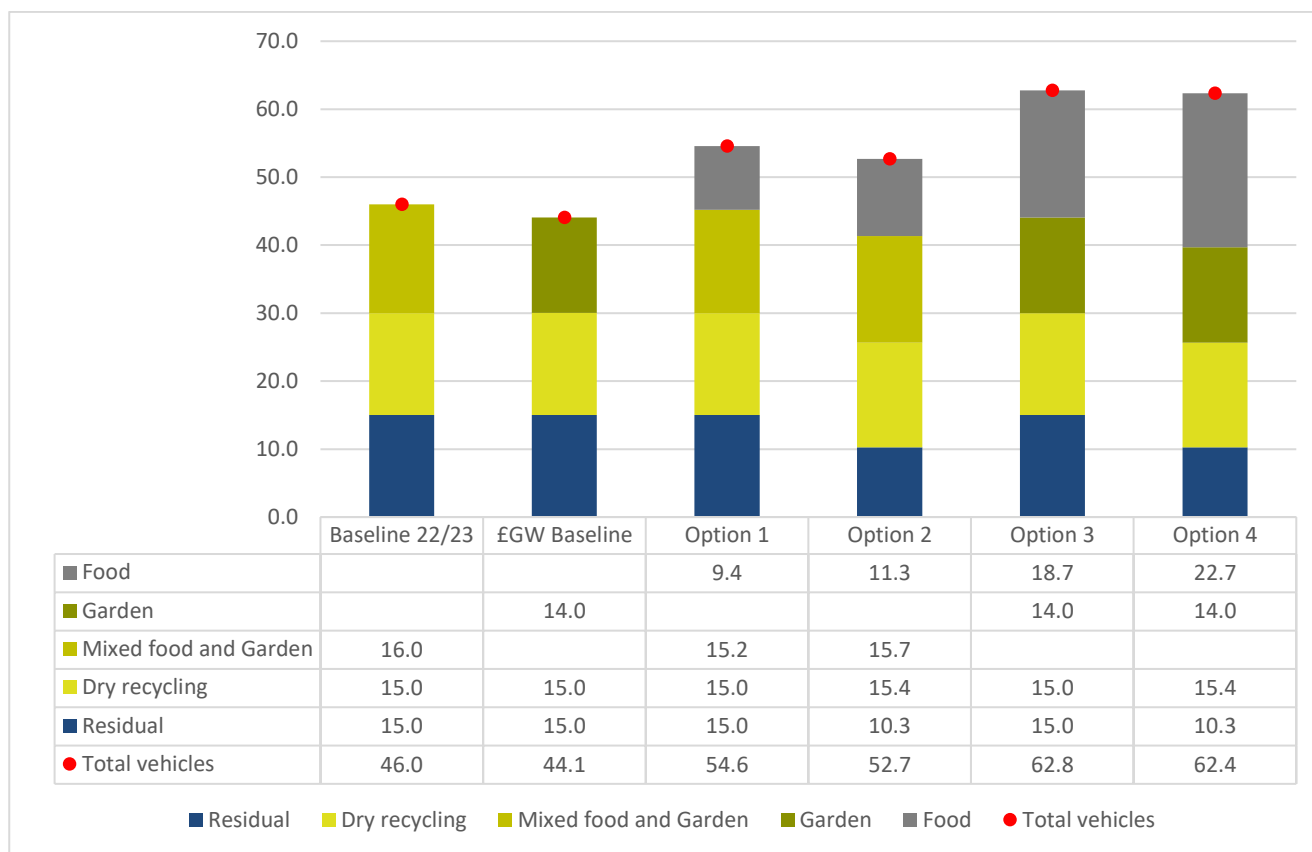


Figure 4: Vehicles required for each option

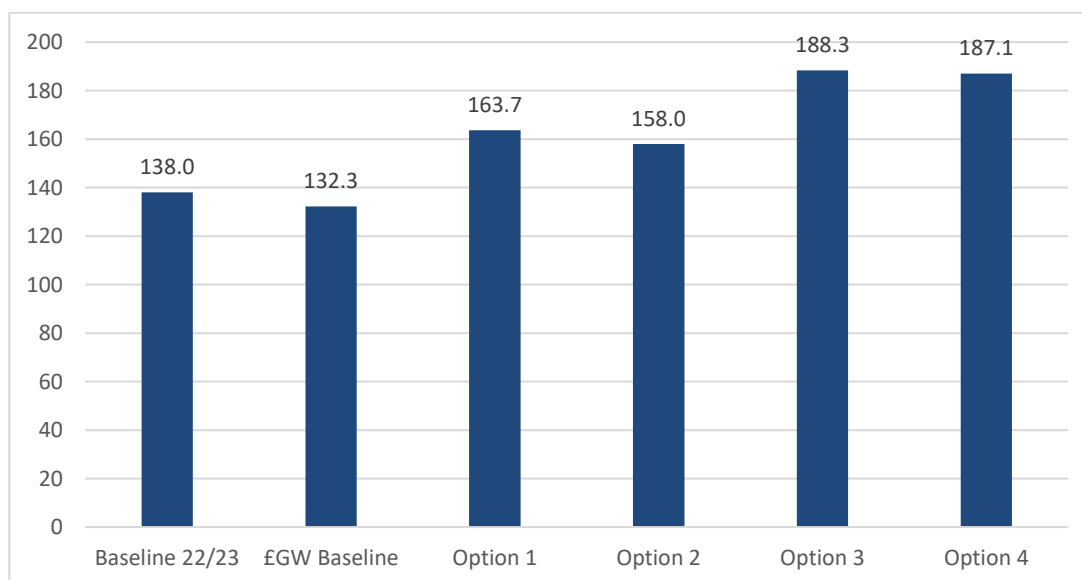


Figure 5: Number of staff required per option

4.3 Financial performance

The differences in cost of each option compared to the £GW Baseline are presented in this section, which include both the costs associated with the collection of waste, and the disposal or treatment costs of material collected.

4.3.1 Annual operational costs

Figure 6 shows the annual cost of the service relative to the £GW baseline. This excludes any costs that are only incurred in year one, such as new containers and transitional costs. The results show that:

- All options show a decrease in disposal/treatment costs due to the diversion of recyclables away from residual waste. Options 2 and 4 (with three weekly residual collections) show the greatest savings, due to greater diversion and also the modelled waste prevention effect. In the worst case scenario that there is no waste prevention effect and the entire difference (6,872 tonnes) ends up being taken to HWRCs as residual waste, the reduction in savings of these options would be around £800k. As mentioned in section 2.4, there was no clear evidence from previous analysis that tonnages at HWRCs or street cleansing would be significantly affected by moving to three weekly residual collections at the kerbside.
- Container replacement costs covers the additional food waste container replacement and are the same for all options.
- Staff costs are increased in all options as more vehicles and hence staff are required in each option. Options 1 and 2 co-collect food waste with garden waste every fortnight and so additional staff costs are lower for these options than Options 3 and 4.
- Vehicle costs also increase in each option due to the additional vehicles required to collect weekly food waste.
- Overall, Option 2 is the lowest cost option, where food is co-collected with garden waste every fortnight and residual waste collections are every three weeks.

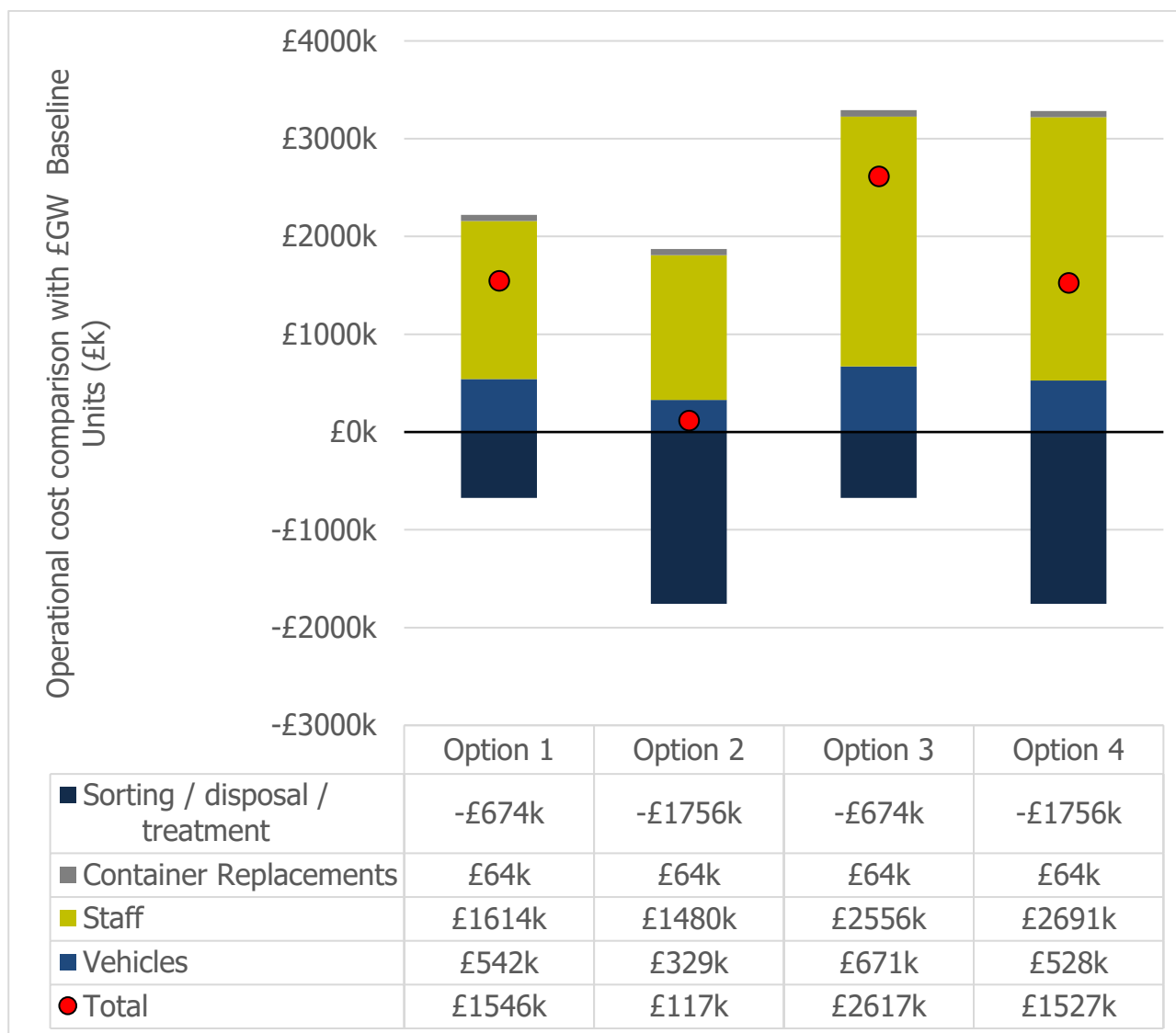


Figure 6: Costs in comparison with the charged garden waste baseline

4.3.2 Capital costs

Capital costs for each option have been calculated to provide CEC with an indication of the initial capital investment required. Costs are included for vehicle purchase and container purchase, as shown in Table 11. In Options 1 and 2 two additional vehicles are required relative to the £GW baseline, so we have included the capital cost to show the possible capital costs of introducing a food waste service. In reality (and in the cost modelling presented in section 4.3.1), we assume that CEC would hire these vehicles, as they have previously when all households were offered the mixed organics service. The container costs are based on all standard access households receiving an external caddy, flats requiring one 140 litre wheeled bin per 10 households and all households receiving an internal caddy. We understand that all households on the mixed organics service were provided with an internal caddy several years ago. It is not known how many households still have these and to encourage participation in the service we recommend delivering a new container to each household, since these can be delivered at the same time as the external caddies. For Options 2 and 4, there is a reduction in residual vehicles required and slight increase in dry recycling vehicles, it is assumed that the overall decrease would come from the

hired vehicles with CEC retaining the same number of leased vehicles, thus these savings are not included in the table. The total capital cost for all options is greater than the £2.7 M that is being provided as capital funding by Defra. It should be noted that the new food waste vehicles are assumed to be electric. Electric vehicles have higher capital costs but lower fuel costs, so whilst the capital costs are higher than the funding available, this may be compensated for with lower ongoing revenue costs. Typically, the annualised capital and running costs of electric vehicles are similar to diesel vehicles. Since CEC have higher mileage than a typical authority, using electric vehicles instead of diesel could have a higher benefit within CEC.

Table 11: Capital costs

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Food waste vehicles	£1,300,000	£1,560,000	£2,470,000	£2,990,000
Mixed organics vehicles	£490,000	£490,000	£0	£0
Containers	£1,503,916	£1,503,916	£1,503,916	£1,503,916
Total	£3,293,916	£3,553,916	£3,973,916	£4,493,916

4.3.3 Transitional costs

Additional costs are likely to be required to ensure a successful transition into a 3-weekly and separate food waste service. These transitional requirements have been identified as:

- Communication costs:
 - £1.50 per household for Options 1 and 3 and £2.50 per household for Options 2 and 4. It is higher for the options with three weekly residual waste collections, as it is assumed this option is more likely to require a change in collection day for households and will require more engagement and communication with residents/citizens. The higher spend on the options with three weekly residual collection would allow for more touch points with residents.
- Temporary engagement officers to assist with rollout and education (community wardens and waste educationalists, as requested by CEC) to see a successful transition:
 - Modelled at £25,000 (plus employer's pension and national insurance contributions) and £7,000 per employee for vehicle costs. We understand there is currently a range of pay grades that these roles could sit within, dependent on responsibilities, this salary is in the middle of these.
 - It is assumed that four staff would be required for Options 1 and 3 and six staff for Options 2 and 4.
 - These staff are assumed to be employed for one year (it is anticipated that they would be recruited prior to the service changes as well as during the mobilisation).
- Crews to deliver food waste caddies to all residents:
 - Assuming 2000 households could be delivered on a daily basis per vehicle with a driver and one loader and a vehicle cost of £76/day.

Table 12: Transitional costs

	Options 1 and 3	Options 2 and 4
Waste educationalists and community wardens	£148,970	£223,454
Communications campaign	£293,772	£489,620
Container delivery	£39,963	£39,963
Total	£482,704	£753,037

4.3.4 Ongoing revenue costs

Ongoing revenue costs are identified as vehicle running costs, staff costs, container replacements and treatment costs. Table 13 shows the ongoing revenue costs of the food waste service relative to the charged garden waste baseline. The focus here is purely on the additional costs of collecting food waste, so does not include any additional savings from changing residual frequency to three weekly for Options 2 and 4. Fuel costs are included in vehicle running costs. As the separate food waste vehicles are assumed to be electric, fuel costs are modelled at half the cost of diesel vehicles.

Table 13: Ongoing revenue costs of the food waste service

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Vehicle running costs	£304,433	£350,100	£433,833	£525,167
Staff	£1,614,494	£1,883,577	£2,556,283	£3,094,447
Container replacement	£63,732	£63,732	£63,732	£63,732
Disposal costs	-£674,285	-£887,689	-£674,285	-£887,689
Total	£1,263,375	£1,355,720	£2,294,063	£2,692,157

4.4 Carbon assessment

A carbon assessment has been completed for each option using the Carbon Waste and Resources Metric (Carbon WARM) produced by WRAP². The metric has been developed to allow monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of the Resources and Waste Strategy in England, in terms of its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions impact, measured as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). The metric does not provide a “footprint” (i.e., it is not a statement of the absolute emission that can be attributed to a material, product or activity) but rather a relative measure that quantifies the carbon saving (or additional emission) for a given material / treatment combination. The assessment uses the following approach:

² WRAP (2021) Carbon Waste and Resources Metric <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/carbon-waste-and-resources-metric>

- The model accounts for the different treatment routes of the key dry recycling materials (paper, card, glass, plastics and metals) and organic materials (food and garden waste).
- For the residual waste stream, composition data has been used to identify the estimated quantity of each recyclable material and calculate the net impact of incinerating that mix of materials through Energy from Waste (EfW) in the Baseline.
- For future options, the model diverts recyclable materials in the residual stream to either the kerbside dry recycling or organics collection based on the yields modelled in KAT. For organics, the model accounts for food and garden waste sent to IVC.
- It is assumed that any contamination within the dry recycling stream will be treated through EfW. Contamination is modelled on the yields projected for each option. However, it does not account for any material lost through the MRF sorting process.
- In addition to the carbon assessment for materials, the annual CO₂e emissions from collection vehicles are also included. These are modelled based on the distance driven by the waste collection fleet, as calculated in the KAT model. For diesel vehicles, the assessment utilises the relevant vehicle emission factor (from UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting) for each vehicle type to calculate CO₂e emissions for the Baseline and each option. Electric vehicles were assumed to use 1.08kWh per km based on an electric vehicle trial³, which resulted in emissions per km around half of those of a diesel vehicle.

The results of the assessment are shown in Figure 7 with the coloured bars identifying emissions by category, including residual waste sent to EfW (grey), dry recycling (dark blue), food (orange), garden (light green), dry recycling contamination sent to EfW (red) and collection vehicles (yellow). The light blue dot identifies overall annual tonnes of CO₂e.

The key results show:

- The effect on total emissions is primarily influenced by the tonnes of residual waste modelled in each option.
- Introducing a food waste collection (options 1 and 3) offers significant carbon savings due to the reduction in residual waste, despite small increases in emissions from treating the food waste at the IVC and the emissions of the additional vehicles required for collection.
- Moving to three weekly residual collections (options 2 and 4) offers further significant carbon savings again due to the reduction in residual waste. These options also have lower collection vehicle emissions than the same option with fortnightly collections due to fewer vehicles required.
- Collection vehicle emissions are slightly lower when food waste is collected with garden waste one week and a separate vehicle on the next week, despite the separate food waste vehicles being electric and having lower emissions than the mixed organics vehicles. This is because only two extra mixed organics vehicles would be required (Option 1 or 2) compared to 10 or 11 (Option 3 or 4) food waste vehicles. This results in Option 2 having the lowest emissions.

³ <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/features/four-key-takeaways-from-the-battery-electric-truck-trial>

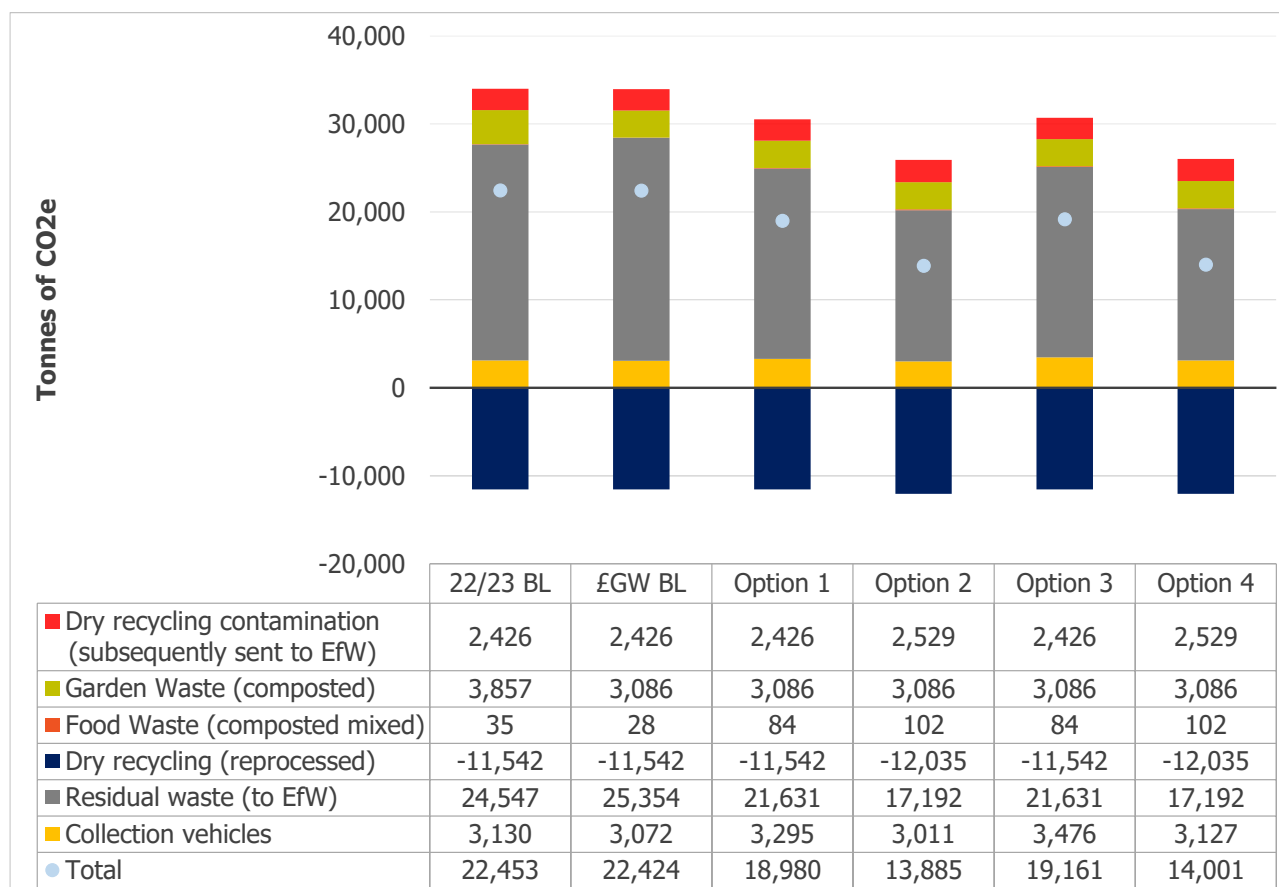


Figure 7: Carbon assessment results

5 Conclusions

We have modelled a range of options introducing a weekly free food waste service in CEC to ensure the service is compliant with 'Simpler Recycling' regulations. As CEC will be provided with various funding for this (capital, transition, and ongoing revenue), we have broken the costs down for this new service into these categories to assess whether this funding will meet the costs incurred of introducing weekly free food waste collections. The options consider collecting food waste on the garden waste round one week, with food waste on a separate dedicated vehicle the next week (Option 1); and collecting food waste completely on dedicated separate vehicles (Option 3). We have also modelled these options with three weekly residual collections (Options 2 and 4) to show the savings possible.

All options showed significant reductions in overall treatment and disposal costs, due to the reduction in residual waste tonnage by the diversion of food waste; and increases in staff and vehicle costs.

The modelling showed that collecting food waste on a dedicated vehicle (Option 3) was more expensive than utilising the existing garden waste vehicles for one week per fortnight and a dedicated vehicle on the other week (Option 1). The modelled cost of Option 1 was around £1M below Option 3. It should be noted that all options were modelled using the current IVC gate fee for food and garden waste, as CEC is in a long-term contract. If it were possible to arrange for the treatment of food and garden waste separately in the future, it would be possible to lower the gate fees for garden waste, then Option 3 could have a lower cost than Option 1.

The options modelling three weekly residual collections showed savings of over £1M compared to their corresponding options with fortnightly residual collections. There is an overall reduction in staff and vehicles required, but the main reduction in costs is due to large savings in residual disposal. These options model a waste prevention effect, as has been seen in nearly every authority moving to three weekly residual collections. However, there is uncertainty on the size of the waste prevention effect and whether waste streams at HWRCS or fly tipping could increase, so these disposal savings should be treated with caution.

Again, collecting food waste with garden waste one week so that dedicated separate vehicles are only required to collect food waste every other week (Option 2) is cheaper than using separate dedicated vehicles weekly (Option 4).

The capital funding required to introduce a food waste collection is higher than the capital funding being provided by Defra. This is in part due to CEC's commitment to purchase electric vehicles, as these are more expensive than diesel vehicles. Electric vehicles have lower fuel costs, so using these vehicles will reduce ongoing revenue costs relative to diesel vehicles.

It is not yet known what funding will be provided to cover transitional costs or ongoing revenue costs. These costs are estimated in the model to be around £500k to introduce the food waste service to the current service (maintaining fortnightly residual) and will increase if residual waste is changed to three weekly, it is therefore anticipated in the region of £750k.

Appendix A

Description of output	22/23 Baseline		
	Standard Access + Flats		
	Refuse	Dry recycling	Mixed Organics
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	189,927
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	15.0	15.0	16.0
Tonnes collected including contamination	64,210	38,773	50790
Number of full loads collected per day	1.6	2.0	1.8
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,298	1,280	1187
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	199	215
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,233	1,152	831

Description of output	£GW Baseline		
	Standard Access + Flats		
	Refuse	Dry recycling	£ GW + Food
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	189,927
Subscribed hh	-	-	90,000
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	15.0	15.0	14.0
Tonnes collected including contamination	66,320	38,773	40632
Number of full loads collected per day	1.7	2.0	1.6
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,295	1,280	1353
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	199	254
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,230	1,152	609

Description of output	Option 1			
	Standard Access + Flats			
	Refuse	Dry recycling	Food Waste	Mixed Organics
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	192,109	189,927
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	Dedicated food 7.5T GVW	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	15.0	15.0	9.4	15.2
Tonnes collected including contamination	56,581	38,773	7,300	43071
Number of full loads collected per day	1.4	2.0	1.0	1.6
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,298	1,280	2,053	1,264
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	199	365	230
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,233	1,152	1,026	759

Description of output	Option 2			
	Standard Access + Flats			
	Refuse	Dry recycling	Food Waste	Mixed Organics
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Weekly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	192,109	192,109
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	Dedicated food 7.5T GVW	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	10.0	15.4	11.3	15.7
Tonnes collected including contamination	44,970	40,430	8,841	44,612
Number of full loads collected per day	1.7	2.0	1.0	1.6
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,298	1,249	1,695	1,224
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	195	302	222
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,233	1,124	932	796

Description of output	Option 3			
	Standard Access + Flats			
	Refuse	Dry recycling	Food Waste	Mixed Organics
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	192,109	189,927
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	Dedicated food 7.5T GVW	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	15.0	15.0	18.7	14.0
Tonnes collected including contamination	56,581	38,773	14,600	35,770
Number of full loads collected per day	1.4	2.0	1.0	1.4
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,298	1,280	2,053	1,353
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	199	365	254
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,233	1,152	1,026	609

Description of output	Option 4			
	Standard Access + Flats			
	Refuse	Dry recycling	Food Waste	Mixed Organics
Type of collection	Residual	Co-mingled	Single stream	Single stream
Collection frequency	Fortnightly	Fortnightly	Weekly	Fortnightly
Number of hh served	194,683	192,109	192,109	189,927
Collection vehicle	RCV	RCV	Dedicated food 7.5T GVW	RCV
Crew size	D+2	D+2	D+2	D+2
Number of collection vehicles	10.0	15.4	22.7	14.0
Tonnes collected including contamination	44,970	40,430	17,682	35,770
Number of full loads collected per day	1.7	2.0	1.0	1.4
Number of hh passed by per vehicle per day	1,298	1,249	1,695	1,353
Pass rate per hour of productive time	194	249	228	254
Number of hh collected from per vehicle per day	1,233	1,124	932	609

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Engagement and our equality duty

Whilst [the Gunning Principles](#) set out the rules for consulting ‘everyone’, additional requirements are in place to avoid discrimination and inequality.

Cheshire East Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 simplified previous anti-discrimination laws with a single piece of legislation. Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, by consciously thinking about equality when making decisions (such as in developing policy, delivering services and commissioning from others)
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, by removing disadvantages, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in public life
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

The Equality Duty helps public bodies to deliver their overall objectives for public services, and as such should be approached as a positive opportunity to support good decision-making.

It encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people’s opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve providing a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic, such as providing computer training to all people to help them access information and services.

The Equality Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying the equality duty to engagement

If you are developing a new policy, strategy or programme you may need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. You may be able to ascertain the impact of your proposal on different characteristics through desk-based research and learning from similar programmes, but you also need to carry out some primary research and engagement. People with protected characteristics are often described as 'hard to reach' but you will find everyone can be reached – you just need to tailor your approach, so it is accessible for them.

Contacting the [Equality and Diversity mailbox](#) will help you to understand how you can gain insight as to the impacts of your proposals and will ensure that you help the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure

Proposal Title	Waste Collection – Weekly Food Waste
Date of Assessment	29/10/2024
Assessment Lead Officer Name	Ralph Kemp
Directorate/Service	Environment and Neighbourhoods / Environmental Services
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	<p>This assessment covers the committee decision to delegate authority to develop a new weekly food waste recycling scheme as part of Central Governments Simpler Recycling Scheme. The decision also request authority to undertake a consultation on residual waste collections to inform a future decision of the committee.</p> <p>The aim will be to provide a weekly food waste recycling collection to every household in Cheshire East by 1st April 2026. By providing this facility the authority seeks in accordance with the objectives of our municipal waste strategy to increase our recycling rate and reduce waste per household while providing the added benefit of reducing this organic element for our residual waste stream.</p> <p>This is a statutory requirement on the council from 1st April 2026. The requirement to collect food waste for recycling from all household is therefore mandatory on the Council. The Council has developed detailed feasibility study on a number of options on how to collect which will be further developed as the project commences following this decision.</p> <p>We have also considered Carbon impact of these proposals and will seek to reduce Carbon emissions as part of this project.</p> <p>The EIA will be updated as a live document as the project progresses to detailed design, implementation, and operational phases.</p>
Who is Affected?	All Cheshire East Household including flats will receive this recycling service

<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</p>	<p>The proposals will contribute to Cheshire East Cooperate plan Objectives 2021-25:</p> <p>An open and enabling organisation: Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation.</p> <p>A thriving and sustainable place: Reduce impact on the environment and also; be a carbon neutral council by 2027.</p> <p>The project will also deliver the objectives of the Councils Municipal Waste Strategy 2030 of waste prevention and reduction and increase recycling. It will also connect with the Councils Carbon Action plan 2027 in minimising and reducing carbon.</p>

How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?	As per our existing waste collections and the current garden waste service there are policies in place to assist the protected characteristics relevant to the service. These included assisted collections and increased waste capacity. The authority will take regard to protected characteristics in designing and choice of food waste container and the EIA will be further updated at project detailed design stage to reflect this.
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Section 2- Information – What do you know?

What do you know?	What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?
Information you used	The Council has undertaken an initial feasibility study which forms part of the committee report bench marking our proposals with matched similar authorities across the country.
Gaps in your Information	Once delegated authority for committee has been received the project will enter into detailed design stage which will consider protected characteristics in designing and choice of food waste container and the EIA will be further updated at project detailed design stage to reflect this.

3. What did people tell you?

What did people tell you	What consultation and engagement activities have you already undertaken and what did people tell you? Is there any feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations that could be included in your assessment?
---------------------------------	--

Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>A consultation was held during September and October 2024 on proposal to change black bin collections to every three weeks. The consultation was mainly hosted online however paper versions were made available at libraries throughout Cheshire East and were also available on request. It was promoted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of Cheshire East • The Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel • Members • Town and Parish Councils <p>In total, 6,257 responses were received during the consultation including 6,219 survey responses and 38 emails.</p>
Gaps in consultation and engagement feedback	None we are aware of.

4. Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of information used to inform the proposal	What did people tell you? Summary of customer and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
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Age	We already provide assisted collections for residents who are elderly, disabled or have other lifestyle needs that mean they struggle with bins.	The constitution suggested the change could impact Elderly residents due to a more complicated waste schedule and heavier bins which could lead to missed bin collections.	No change to usual impacts for waste collection which are already mitigated for though assisted collections. Consideration will be given to how we communicate changes to enable accessibility by the elderly.
Disability	We already provide assisted collections for residents who are elderly, disabled or have other lifestyle needs that mean they struggle with bins	The constitution suggested the change could impact those with certain disabilities due to a more complicated waste schedule and heavier bins which could lead to missed bin collections.	No change to usual impacts for waste collection which are already mitigated for though assisted collections. Consideration will be given to how we communicate changes to enable accessibility by the elderly.
Gender reassignment	No impact	No impact record	No impact
Pregnancy and maternity	We already provide assisted collections for residents who are elderly, disabled or have other lifestyle needs that mean they struggle with bins	No impact record	No impact
Race/ethnicity	It will be important, in the communication of this proposal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that all publicity and promotional information concerning the new service is accessible to all residents and ethnic groups • monitor and ensure there is no ethnicity literacy bias connected with understanding the Council's promotional literature. 	No impact record	No impact

Religion or belief	No impact	No impact record	No impact
Sex	No impact	No impact record	No impact
Sexual orientation	No impact	No impact record	No impact
Marriage and civil partnership	No impact	No impact record	No impact

5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Mitigation	What can you do? Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts
<p>Please provide justification for the proposal if negative impacts have been identified?</p> <p>Are there any actions that could be undertaken to mitigate, reduce or remove negative impacts?</p> <p>Have all available options been explored? Please include details of alternative options and why they couldn't be considered?</p> <p>Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?</p>	<p>We already have mitigations in place as part of the normal waste collection service we provide required under the adopted Cheshire East Council Waste Management and Fly-tipping Policy which states:</p> <p><i>The Council currently offers assisted collections to residents who are infirm or who cannot put their waste out on the collection day due to illness or disability. This means that the waste and recycling collection crews will retrieve bins from qualifying householders' properties so that they can be emptied, and then return them.</i></p> <p><i>Eligibility for this service is based on genuine need and subject to there being no other able-bodied person at the property or family member, neighbour or friend, who can place the</i></p>

	<i>bins out for collection. Residents will be required to make an application to the Council for this service</i>
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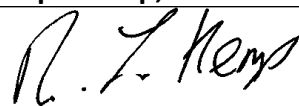
6. Monitoring and Review-

Monitoring and review	How will the impact of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure be monitored? How will actions to mitigate negative impacts be monitored? Date for review of the EIA
Details of monitoring activities	Performance of the scheme will be monitored in terms of service delivery, queries and complaints.
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	Ralph Kemp , Head of Environmental Services 29/10/2024

7. Sign Off

When you have completed your EIA, it should be sent to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mailbox](#) for review. If your EIA is approved, it must then be signed off by a senior manager within your Department (Head of Service or above).

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to be published on the website. For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Name	Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services
Signature	
Date	29/10/2024

8. Help and Support

For support and advice please contact EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Household Waste Collection Consultation 2024

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Final



Executive summary and conclusions

Introduction

During September / October 2024 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on its proposal to move collection of black bins to every three weeks. This preferred option was proposed in light of 'Simpler Recycling Scheme' legislation announced by the Government in October 2023 meaning that all local authorities must collect food waste from their residents on a weekly basis, and for this to be implemented by no later than 1 April 2026.

In total, 6,257 responses were received.

Respondents' views on the preferred option for implementation

Whilst a proportion of respondents (13%) supported the preferred option, feeling that it would be a positive move in increasing recycling rates / makes sense as the most cost-effective option, the majority of respondents (84%) opposed its implementation. Opposition to the preferred option increased in line with the number of people resident within each household.

Impacts of the preferred option

Many respondents stated that they already struggle with a two-weekly collection and were concerned that a move to three-weekly black bin collections would lead to an increase in vermin, pests & smells due to overflowing bins and certain waste products being left within the bins for a longer period. An increase in fly tipping and contamination of other bins were also raised as concerns, especially since the recent closure of some of the local HWRC sites and the introduction of the booking system at the weekend, respondents felt it was now more difficult to get rid of excess waste.

It was felt that certain households and those in certain areas / building types would be impacted more by the preferred option, this included:

- Larger families, those with younger children, those with medical needs / disabilities and those with pets due to the extra waste produced by such households and the nature of this waste.
- Elderly residents and those with certain disabilities due to a more complicated waste schedule and heavier bins which could lead to missed bin collections.
- Residents who had opted for a smaller bin, which was adequate for two-weekly collections, would have to pay for a standard / larger bin which is seen as unfair.
- Those in rural areas due to an increased possibility of vermin, fly tipping in these areas and difficulty for the waste trucks accessing properties which leads to missed bin collections.

- Those in terraced housing / housing with little outdoor space, some areas do not have wheelie bins and instead will have an increase in the amount of black bin bags cluttering up the area.
- Those in communal properties such as flats, apartments, retirement living, and houses of multiple occupancy will struggle with three-weekly black bin collections.

How the Council can support those who may be negatively impacted

When asked what the Council could do to support those households who may be negatively impacted, many respondents suggested continuing with the fortnightly collections / choose option 1 or option 3 instead, which included the collection of black waste every two weeks. Other key suggestions included:

- Providing extra support to those that need it, for example, the provision of larger or additional black bins and / or additional waste collections. Assess who are in greater need, should not be a one size fits all approach.
- Providing more local opportunities to recycle and dispose of waste, for example, easier access to HWRCs, increased frequency of the mobile tip, communal bins, facilities for recycling, community composts.
- Providing more education / clear guidance on how to manage / reduce waste effectively and clear information on when each bin is due out for collection.
- Ensure bins are collected in a timely manner and have a plan to manage potential increase in vermin, litter, and fly tipping.
- Learn from other councils and/or trial the approach before implementing.

Limiting the potential impact within local areas

As part of the preferred option, if implemented, the Council indicated that it would look to invest in additional waste educational specialists, enforcement officers and adopt wider enforcement powers to ensure it can counter any potential negative impacts brought about by the changes in local areas. These resources would be targeted at the areas of greatest need. When respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with this approach, 16% agreed and 69% disagreed. Comments made reflected on:

- Impact of such specialists and enforcement officers would be limited, would rather see the funds spent on waste collection.
- Disliked the approach, felt overbearing or “draconian” of the council to bring in such measures, too punishing on individuals.
- Would not be equally distributed across the borough with too much focus being given to Crewe and not enough on the issue of rural fly tipping.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is clear from the results, that many respondents are concerned about the potential move to three-weekly residual waste collections and the possible impact this would have on them, on some types of households and / or to the local area. A selection of respondents also had concerns about the implementation of the dedicated food waste collection. As this has been mandated by government the Council has limited scope to change its implementation however it is still worth reviewing the key concerns and questions raised.

The Research and Consultation Team recommend that the details within this report are thoroughly reviewed and considered before finalising the preferred option / recommendation. If implemented, it will be beneficial to continually engage with the community to ensure any negative impacts are limited.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

During September / October 2024 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on its proposal to move collection of black bins to every three weeks. This preferred option was proposed in light of 'Simpler Recycling Scheme' legislation announced by the Government in October 2023 meaning that all local authorities must collect food waste from their residents on a weekly basis by no later than 1 April 2026.

At the time of the consultation / this report we don't know how much funding we will receive from Government to compensate the Council for introducing these changes, which are forecast to be an additional circa £1.5M per annum, and there's a significant risk that the funding won't cover the costs in full.

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was mainly hosted online however paper versions were made available at libraries throughout Cheshire East and were also available on request. It was promoted to:

- Residents of Cheshire East
- The Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel
- Members
- Town and Parish Councils

In total, 6,257 responses were received during the consultation including 6,219 survey responses and 38 emails. A breakdown of survey demographics can be viewed in Appendix 1.

During the consultation period, an all-member engagement session was also held. Members had the opportunity to hear about the reasons behind the preferred option and ask any questions, 24 Members attended. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the key questions asked and the answers provided as part of this session.

Section 1: Respondents' views on the preferred option for implementation

The Council's Environmental Services Team produced an options appraisal for the introduction of weekly food waste collections in Cheshire East. The following option was considered to offer the greatest value for money and was therefore the council's preferred option:

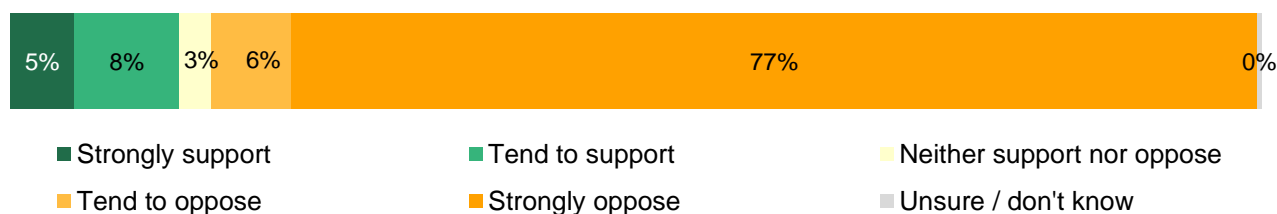
Option 2: Weekly food waste collection, collected in a kerbside caddy / container. Collected along with the garden waste in the same vehicle one week and separately by a dedicated small vehicle on the alternate weeks. Three-weekly black bin waste collection.

The other options looked at were:

- **Option 1:** Weekly food waste collection, collected in a kerbside caddy. Collected together with the garden waste in the same vehicle one week and separately by a dedicated small vehicle on the alternate weeks. Fortnightly black bin waste collection.
- **Option 3:** Weekly food waste collection, collected in a kerbside caddy. Collected each week by a dedicated small vehicle, separately from the fortnightly garden waste collection. Fortnightly black bin waste collection.
- **Option 4:** Weekly food waste collection, collected in a kerbside caddy. Collected each week by a dedicated small vehicle, separately from the fortnightly garden waste collection. Three-weekly black bin waste collection

Respondents were asked how strongly they support or oppose the Council's preferred option for implementation which includes a move to a three-weekly black bin waste collection. The majority of respondents, 84%, opposed the implementation of this option whilst 13% were in support, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: How strongly do you support or oppose the council's preferred option for implementation which includes a move to a three-weekly black bin waste collection?

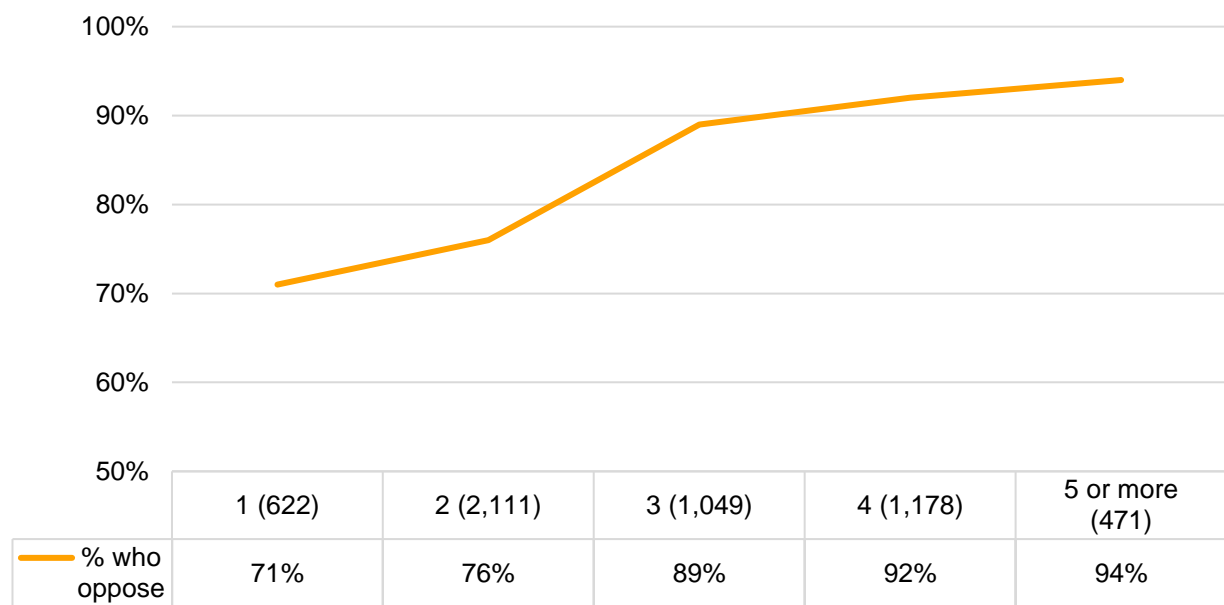


Base for % = 6,189

Opposition (either strongly oppose or tend to oppose) to the preferred option increased with the number of people within each household: 71% of 1 person households opposed the

implementation of the preferred option rising to 94% in households who had 5 or more persons as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who oppose the Council's preferred option by the number of persons within the household.



Base for % in brackets

Positive / negative impacts of the preferred option

Respondents had the opportunity to let us know if they believed the preferred option will have a negative or positive impact on households within Cheshire East and why. 4,967 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Negative impacts / comments:

- Would be a health hazard due to the increased risk of pests, vermin, and smells, 1,727 mentions.
- Black bins are already full after 2 weeks, will lead to overspill and litter, 1,306 mentions.
- Will lead to an increase in people fly-tipping or contamination of other bins, 1,158 mentions.
- General negative impact / comment, 850 mentions.
- Issue with the food waste collection, 629 mentions.
- Will particularly impact large families, those with small children in nappies and those with pets, 564 mentions.
- Impact on HWRC usage / lack of a local HWRC site, 538 mentions.
- Issue with missed bin collections, 174 mentions.

- Will particularly impact those with medical issues, 119 mentions.
- Schedule would be too complicated, 114 mentions.
- Impact on those in certain areas / buildings e.g. flats, apartments, terraced housing, and houses of multiple occupancy, 48 mentions.
- Impact of heavier / larger bins, 33 mentions.

Considerations:

- Would need a larger bin, 137 mentions.
- Prefer option 1, 112 mentions.
- Prefer option 3, 89 mentions.
- Request for more information / clarification, 40 mentions.
- How much is this really saving, 37 mentions.
- Other considerations, inc. larger or increased collection of the recycle bin, 36 mentions.

Positive impacts:

- No effect on us / general positive comment, 106 mentions.
- Would encourage greater recycling, 94 comments.
- Weekly food waste collection positive, 49 mentions.
- Most cost-effective option, 37 mentions.

Other:

- Other comment or statement, 6 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by question, theme and sub theme is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Please let us know if you believe the preferred option will have any positive or negative impacts on households in Cheshire East and why:

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Negative impacts / comments		
Would be a health hazard due to the increased risk of pests, vermin, and smells	It is a health & safety risk and will lead to disease. Black bins hold the dirtiest waste. The proposed 3-weekly collection would lead to a greater risk of smells, vermin, flies, and maggots especially during the summer months and within rural areas. It is unhygienic to leave pet waste, nappies, incontinence, and sanitary products for 3 weeks. Even if double bagged, they can smell. Some residents will continue to place their food waste in the black bins therefore this will be left to rot and smell also.	1,727
Black bins are already full after 2 weeks, will lead to overspill and litter	A 3-weekly collection is not sufficient for most households. Already recycle as much as we can yet the black bin is nearly full / full after 2 weeks. Black bin waste will overspill / pile up creating litter on the streets and other issues. Black bin bags will be left outside of the bins and are not strong enough to contain contents. There is a lot of food packaging which cannot be recycled. The extra food waste collection will have minimal impact to the amount that goes into the black bin, do not waste a lot of food. What are we meant to do with the excess waste? Do not have room for a larger bin or two black bins.	1,306
Will lead to an increase in people fly-tipping or contamination of other bins	This will only increase fly-tipping and other means of illegal dumping of waste. There is already an issue with fly-tipping in the area, which had been made worse by the closure of the tips / green waste charge. People will place their rubbish in public bins. It will cause people to put their rubbish into any bin to avoid having rubbish in the home hence negating the purpose of recycling. More contamination in the recycling will cost to dispose. Many busy families are still unable to split their waste.	1,158
General negative impact / comment	It will have a negative impact, awful idea. 3-weeks is simply too long, bin must be collected fortnightly. We pay enough council tax, have paid for this service. Keep as is, do not change something that is not broken. Save money elsewhere. Yet another reduction in our services already closed the tip and have to pay for green waste, pay more but receive less. What is the point of saying anything, resident views are not listened to.	850
Issue with the food waste collection	Will not be collecting food waste, most people have binned the food waste caddy. We do not waste any food. Should be encouraging people to reduce their food waste / to compost. Do not want, have the space for or need another container / bin. The council should seek to influence the current government for change. Do not waste money, they were a failure last time when they were introduced. Seems you are buying more trucks and employing more people for this. The caddies are easily knocked or blown over and are not secure, will lead to rats, flies, and other animals getting into them. As a wheelchair user it will be inconvenient to take a food caddy out weekly. Food waste caddies are too small, will fill up easily. Need to revert to putting food waste into the green / brown bin and collect using this system, make collection of this free.	629
Will particularly impact large families, those with small children in nappies and those with pets	Will have implications for larger families, families of 4 or more. As a large family bin is full after 2-weeks even after recycling everything we can. Already have a larger bin and struggle with the 2-week collection. Can imagine this will impact those with young children using disposable nappies. Having a baby, black bin is full of	564

Table 1: Please let us know if you believe the preferred option will have any positive or negative impacts on households in Cheshire East and why:

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	nappies there is no way we would be able to last 3-weeks. Have pets such as cats, birds, or dogs that all produce waste, so the black bin fills up fast.	
Impact on HWRC usage / lack of a local HWRC site	Would place an increased demand in residents needing to go to the tip increasing queues and carbon footprint. There is not enough HWRC's to accommodate this, local tip has been closed making it harder to dispose of excess rubbish. Since the closure of the tip people are using their black bins more, it is harder to recycle. Needing to book a slot for the weekend also makes it harder for anyone who works within the week. Not everyone is able to get to the HWRC to dispose of excess waste.	538
Issue with missed bin collections	There is already an issue with missed bins. Missed bin collections are supposed to be collected within five working days. However, this does not happen and missed bin collections are picked up at the next scheduled bin day. A move to collecting black bins every three weeks would mean that these residents have rubbish left in the bins for up to 21 days. In rural areas where I live, we have had many issues with bin collections being missed regularly. If on holiday at the time of collection / forget to put the bin out, then it will be 6 weeks by the time the bin is emptied.	174
Will particularly impact those with medical issues	There will be a problem with medical waste being left for 3 weeks, causing smells, and posing a health risk. Have a disabled adult / child in the household who are in nappies / use incontinence products/ pads. Use the bin to dispose of dressings and other medical disposables e.g. tube feed equipment, suction machine equipment, masks, syringes, catheter bags, colostomy bags, stoma bags. Rely on easy cook microwave meals / takeaways and order a lot online due to disability which unfortunately leads to increased waste. Already have a larger bin and it is full after 2 weeks / do not want a larger bin.	119
Schedule is too complicated	The inconsistency of the service will confuse residents especially the elderly and those with memory impairment. As a person with ADHD the whole thing is already very difficult to understand and plan for. It is too complicated, will make it harder for residents to comply with the schedule and will be easy to forget leading to missed bin collections.	114
Impact on those in certain areas / buildings e.g. flats, apartments, terraced housing, and HMOs.	Not suitable for all areas of Cheshire East, those with high density terraced housing and houses of multiple occupancy will not cope (e.g. Crewe South & Crewe Central). Negative impact on households that do not have a wheelie bin due to lack of space (e.g. some houses in Bollington & Macclesfield). Use black bin bags because live in a terraced house, three-weekly black bin collections would lead to an accumulation of black bags in small gardens/yards. Would not have the space for more or larger bins, bins will clutter up narrow pavements on collection day becoming hazardous for pedestrians, prams and the disabled. Live in retirement living do not have the option of separate food waste. Currently have issues with 2-weekly collections for developments housing older people with communal bins. Live in an apartment building with other flats, it is	48

Table 1: Please let us know if you believe the preferred option will have any positive or negative impacts on households in Cheshire East and why:

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	already difficult to ensure all waste will fit in the bins, have little room to store a caddy, has someone thought through their specific situation? Euro bins are collected weekly.	
Impact of heavier / larger bins	It will be negative to those who are elderly / disabled as the bins are too heavy for some as they currently are. Struggle to move the black bin as an elderly resident. Will waste vehicles cope with the larger waste capacity produced after 3 weeks.	33
Considerations		
Would need a larger black bin / go back to having a standard bin	Would need easy access to a larger bin to avoid overflow or an additional smaller bin. Criteria for a larger bin should be lowered. Yet another financial burden, financial support needed for those who cannot afford a larger bin, larger bin should be provided free of charge. Opted for a smaller bin when these were available which is adequate for fortnightly collections – would have to purchase a standard / bigger bin which is unfair if the frequency is reduced.	137
Prefer option 1	Option 1 is the best and most logical choice. Retains the established collection dates.	112
Prefer option 3	Option 3 maximises the revenue stream whilst averting issues with decreasing the frequency of waste.	89
Request for more information / clarification	How will the 20.5% reduction in waste be achieved. What happens to excess waste if the current black bin is full before collection? Please advise rationale of £1m saving, how is this saving money when the lorry is making more journeys? Sceptical of kerbside waste / fly tipping findings, what evidence are you quoting? What happens for those who do not pay for the brown bin? Can food waste still be placed into the green bin? Will we still have to pay for this? Will the food waste caddy be free? Will there be a discount or reduction to people that do their own composting at home/allotment? Can all food waste can go in the weekly food waste collection - i.e. bones, meat remains, fish? What happens to bin collection staff, will there be more unemployment? Please be clearer on the benefits to separating food waste. More education on recycling is needed.	40
How much is this really saving	How much will the new caddies, their delivery to households & new small collection vehicle cost? Buying dedicated small vehicles just for food waste will also have a cost, more vehicle maintenance, manpower, driver training and familiarisation, what are the running costs compared to current system? All options will not save any money, as you are collecting 3 times. Every 6th week each household would have all 3 bins out - that will need extra staff & lorries not less surely. Have you looked at this business case in detail? Service reduction due to budget constraints may well lead to increased costs elsewhere. Cost of disposal for compacting black waste will cost more. Will this mean further increases in our council tax?	37
Other considerations	Would need more or larger grey bins for recycling, ensure sufficient collection of recyclables. Collect recycling and green waste bin weekly as that will cover weekly food waste and encourage recycling. Green waste bin	36

Table 1: Please let us know if you believe the preferred option will have any positive or negative impacts on households in Cheshire East and why:

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	will be less full so could collect that every 3 weeks instead. The entire process needs looking at – could collect late at night to save on time and fuel.	
Positive impacts		
No effect on us / general positive comment	No effect on me black bin very seldom full. Do lots of recycling, manageable if households use their recycle and food waste bins efficiently.	106
Encourages greater recycling	Should encourage greater recycling, better for the environment. Lowest carbon footprint option. Positive with education on recycling - more support for recycling should be offered to help.	94
Weekly food waste collection positive	Weekly food waste collection is positive / support this. Better for hygiene. Will stop food waste going to landfill.	49
Most cost-effective option	Savings are positive, most cost-effective option.	37
Other comments		
General comment or statement	More pressure on manufacturing to produce more recyclable material. Retailers are doing nothing to minimise packaging, collaboration with businesses to provide more recycling points. New government may change all.	6

How can the Council support those who may be negatively impacted?

Respondents were then asked, what, if anything, can the council do to support those households who may be negatively impacted 4,218 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Suggestions relating to three-weekly black bin collections:

- Stick with fortnightly collection / collect more often / go with option 1 or 3 instead, 2,275 mentions.
- Provide larger or second bins / collect additional bagged waste, 816 mentions.
- Keep the local HWRC open / provide easier access, 289 mentions.
- Provide education and guidance, 162 mentions.
- Provide extra bin collections for certain households / areas / during certain times, 142 mentions.
- Listen to residents' views and opinions / discuss their specific needs, 76 mentions.
- Provide a bin cleaning / pest control service and clean up fly tipping / the streets, 63 mentions.
- Provide more public / communal bins and or stores for waste / recycling, 47 mentions.
- Ensure a reliable service / collect missed bins promptly, 30 mentions.
- Look at what other councils do / share resource, 9 mentions.
- Trial the approach and assess the impact, 23 mentions.
- Other suggestions inc. Large grey bins for recycling or more often for those, 23 suggestions.

General negative comments / council wide suggestions:

- General negative comment regarding the proposal or the council / save money elsewhere, 485 mentions.
- Reduce council tax, 81 mentions.
- Request for more information / clarification, 15 mentions.

Suggestions / comments relating to food waste collections:

- Allow food waste to be placed into the green bin / stop the green bin charge, 227 mentions.
- Food waste collection is a waste of time and money / will not be collecting food waste, 90 mentions.
- Provide larger more robust food waste caddies / liners, 59 mentions.

Other comments:

- Little or no impact, 14 mentions.
- General comment or statement, 17 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by question, theme and sub theme is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: And what, if anything, can the council do to support those households who may be negatively impacted?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Suggestions / comments relating to three-weekly black bin collections		
Stick with fortnightly collection / collect more often / go with option 1 or 3 instead	Do not introduce this scheme, collect more regularly rather than less so. Keep the fortnightly collection. Do not change it. Choose option 1 or 3 instead.	2,275
Provide larger or second bins / collect additional bagged waste	Option for a larger black bin or second bin for all that request them, especially for larger families, for households with 4 or more people, for those with medical needs, for households with children in nappies and those with pets. Remove the charges for the larger black bin, should not have to pay for a larger bin seen as it is not our fault the collections are changing. Sealable bins for medical waste, pet waste and nappies. Allow additional bagged waste in addition to the bin. Issues with smell and hygiene will however still be an issue.	816
Keep the local HWRC open and provide easier access	Re-open the local HWRC (e.g. Congleton, Middlewich, Bollington, and Poynton sites). Keep the local tips open. Provide easier access to the tip, scrap the booking system. Increase the opening times.	289
Provide education and guidance	Education and clearer guidance. Launch a comprehensive campaign to inform residents about the new collection schedules, the benefits of food waste recycling, and how to manage waste effectively. Ensuring residents, particularly in houses of multiple occupancy, understand how to manage waste effectively is critical. This can include flyers, online resources, and community meetings. Stickers inside bin lids for households to get it right first time. Provide advice on how to minimise food waste. Actively promoting and advertising the availability of reusable nappies. Calander showing clearly when each collection is due / written timetable to look at each week.	162
Provide extra bin collections for certain households / areas / during certain times	Offer extra / separate collection of animal / human waste on a more frequent basis inc. nappies, disposable bed sheets, incontinence pads, soiled dressing etc. Extra collections for larger families. Consider maintaining more frequent collections for areas identified as high-risk for fly-tipping and waste management issues. Collect fortnightly during spring and summer, and three-weekly during autumn/winter. Additional collections during the Christmas period. Additional 'paid for' collections on request, would rather pay a small fee to ensure the black bin is emptied fortnightly. Extra collections for larger communal properties e.g. flats, nursing homes. Help with bulky waste disposal.	142
Listen to residents' views and opinions / discuss their specific needs – not a one size fits all	Listen to residents' views and opinions. Identify such households and discuss with them directly their worries and then attempt to address their specific issues. Assess what wards are in greater need, should not be a one size fits all approach. Offer support for families, and disabled people. Provide support to those who cannot move heavy bins. There should be consideration for households and individuals who are vulnerable and not able to drive to their local tip. Consider small businesses e.g. home dog boarders. Consider the impact on people in flats, multi occupancy and high-rise accommodation. Could there be a way of making the council aware of households with someone who will struggle with the rules due to memory loss or cognitive impairment?	76

Table 2: And what, if anything, can the council do to support those households who may be negatively impacted?		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Provide a bin cleaning / pest control service and clean up fly tipping / the streets.	Offer regular bin cleans, free bin cleaning service, free bin freshener, odour neutralisers. Discounted pest control, provide free pest control services. Plan to manage vermin, rat infestation control. Mechanism to compact the black bin waste. Road sweepers and cleaners, clean up fly tipping. Catch out fly tippers, increase fines for fly tipping, review the current enforcement actions, take legal action, mandate that bins are returned onto driveways.	63
Provide more public / communal bins and or stores for waste / recycling	Local small deposit spots for waste. Provide communal bins for overspill waste, community skip days, community composts, more public bins, more dog waste bins, bins at each passing place, more local facilities for recycling, mobile tip to become fortnightly. Consider implementing additional or alternative waste disposal options in high-density areas. Make facilities for recycling soft plastics accessible. Local collection places so smelly waste is not left near homes or left on pavements / find a place where bins can be stored off the footpaths.	47
Ensure a reliable service / collect missed bins promptly	Provide a reliable service, ensure bins are emptied on the given day. Provide a genuine re-collection service when bins reported to be missed, commit to emptying missed bins within 48 hours.	30
Look at what other councils do / share resource	Look at what other councils do, follow Stockport, look at Trafford as a model to follow. Look at pooling waste collections with other LAs to properly maximise efficiency and reduce carbon footprint, look at alternative facilities with neighbouring towns to share services.	12
Trial the approach and assess the impact	A 2-month trial could be done to see how it works and what impact this has had on households – follow up with a survey. Give a slow phased approach, test it in certain areas. Undertake an analysis of black bin capacity over a few months and assess. Assess the impact of the new weekly food disposal on the black bins after a few months and adjust schedule if needed.	9
Other suggestions	Large grey bins for recycling or more often for those. Let everyone have one free garden pass a year. Schedule should be user friendly / keep collection days as they are at least. Reduce other collections instead e.g. garden waste, recycling bin. Make all bin types for different types of waste weekly to help with the environment. Provide rural households with the same variety of bins as urban households.	23
General negative comments / council wide suggestions		
General negative comment regarding the proposal or the council / save money elsewhere	All households will be negatively impacted, have a vermin problem, will be impacted by fly tipping. Do the job you are paid to do / provide value for money. Improve services instead of reducing them. Already closed the tips and charged for green waste collection whilst increasing costs for tax collection, now this. Stop wasting money, cut council salary, expense costs, and manage budgets better. Reduce spend in other areas. The council will not do anything to support residents. Not sure the council can do anything / nothing, probably already decided.	485
Reduce council tax	Reduce council tax in line with reduced services. Incentivise.	81
Request for more information / clarification	Provide more information regarding how this will work. What about those that do not pay for the green waste bin, will they have weekly food waste collections? Is it not cheaper to run less vehicles and sort the waste at the recycling centre? Publish the impact on land fill waste. Information on how much money is allocated to each	15

Table 2: And what, if anything, can the council do to support those households who may be negatively impacted?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	service in a simple format would be helpful, the funding the council receives and where council tax goes. Prove it is not possible to make savings in any other category. Highlight the issue is lack of funding and that this has been cut over the years.	
Suggestions relating to food waste collections		
Allow food waste to be placed into the green bin / stop the green bin charge	Allow the continued disposal of food waste in the large green garden bins. Revert to putting food waste in the green / brown bin and for that service to be fortnightly and free of charge as before, therefore no need for extra expenditure of new bins or additional costs of its collection.	227
Food waste collection is a waste of time and money / will not be collecting food waste	A weekly food waste collection service is a waste of time & money. It has been tried before, and it did not work. Do not waste more money on caddies for everyone, only give food caddies to those who want to participate. Will not be collecting food waste, do not waste that much food. Provide compost bins for gardens where practical - no need for collection. Lobby the new Labour government to remove the requirement for weekly food waste collections.	90
Provide larger more robust food waste caddies / liners	Provide larger food waste bins, small caddy will not suffice. Caddies must be strong and secure. All caddies must be provided free of charge. Provide bin liners for the food waste bins.	59
Other comments		
Little or no impact	Do not think many households should be negatively affected especially if recycling properly, collecting food waste. Households should manage their own waste.	14
General comment or statement	See what the new government will do first. Appeal for more grants. Education does not work, and enforcement rarely used. Take away green bins not used. Concentrate investment in waste education / enforcement in urban areas where poor waste management is most prevalent. Put pressure on supermarkets to reduce non-recyclable packaging.	17

Section 2: Limiting the potential impact within local areas

As part of the preferred option, if implemented, we would look to invest in a number of areas to ensure we can counter any potential negative impacts brought about by the changes such as the recruitment of additional waste education specialists community enforcement officers as well as the adoption of wider area enforcement powers. These resources will be targeted at the areas of greatest need.

Respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with the approach outlined which aims to limit any negative impacts within local areas, 67% of respondents disagreed with the approach whilst 16% agreed, see Figure 3.

Figure 3: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the approach outlined, which aims to limit any negative impacts within local areas?



Base for % = 6,156

Section 3: Further comments

At the end of the survey respondents had the opportunity to let us know if they had any further comments to make on the options. 3,094 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Comments / concerns relating to three-weekly black bin collections:

- Stick with fortnightly collection / go with option 1 or 3 instead, 569 mentions.
- Will increase fly tipping especially in rural areas, 490 mentions.
- Closure of HWRC's will have a knock-on effect, 408 mentions.
- Support three-weekly collections, 140 mentions.
- Already struggle with the current level of service / should be increased, 72 mentions.

Comments / concerns about the food waste collection:

- Green waste charges should be removed or reviewed to align with food waste, 329 mentions.
- Would lead to an increase in unhygienic conditions / mess / vermin, 249 mentions.
- Do not want a food waste caddy, 206 mentions.
- Do not make food waste, would not use the service, 188 mentions.

- Food waste caddy is too small / not secure, 180 mentions.
- Extra food waste collections are not environmentally friendly, 26 mentions.

General negative comments / council wide suggestions:

- Paying more council tax for fewer services / Council should sort its own spending out, 373 mentions.
- General negative comment regarding the proposal, 275 mentions.
- Sceptical that residents' views will be listened to, 71 mentions.
- Other general negative comment / statement, 130 mentions.

Comments on the recruitment of additional waste education specialists' community enforcement officers:

- Against spending money for more staff in this area, 681 mentions.
- Consideration of extra support for Crewe, 72 mentions.
- Individuals are being punished / do not like waste policing, 70 mentions.

Considerations / requests for clarification:

- Require further clarification on use of green bin / collection days, 229 mentions.
- Challenge the requirement for weekly food waste collection, 108 mentions.
- Should help people to recycle more, 88 mentions.
- Should offer larger bins free of charge, 31 mentions.
- Provide assurance around missed collections, 26 mentions.
- Different waste types need further consideration, 26 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by theme and sub theme is presented in Table 3.

38 emails were also received during the consultation, 28 from individuals and 10 from a group / organisation or town / parish council / councillor. A summary of the comments received can be seen in Table 4.

Table 3: Further comments on the options

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Comments / concerns relating to three-weekly black bin collections		
Stick with fortnightly collection / go with option 1 or 3 instead	Against the move to three-weekly collections, needs to remain as fortnightly, especially given the charges for green waste and the closure of local HWRC's. Option 1 or option 3 is the preferred choice. Waste management is an essential service and savings should not be made in this area.	569
Will increase fly tipping especially in rural areas	Will lead to an increase in fly tipping as people's bins will be full / do not have access to an alternative method of disposal. Rural areas will be disproportionately affected, and these incidents are not tracked as they are often on private land. Why is Middlewich not on the fly tipping chart? Fly tipping is already poorly managed. More should be done to prevent fly tipping of trade waste	490
Closure of HWRC's will have a knock-on effect	The reduction in waste services to 3 weekly is unacceptable given the closure of HWRC's (e.g. Congleton, Middlewich, Bollington, and Poynton sites). Certain residents will have limited or no travel options to get to the remaining waste sites. Use savings from the scheme to re-open these sites to ensure a good alternative service for those with extra waste. Wary of the fly-tipping data especially as the impact of the closure of the sites has not been captured yet.	408
Support three-weekly collections	Collecting food waste weekly is a positive step. Collections could be considered going to 4-weekly in some cases due to most waste being recycled.	140
Already struggle with the current level of service / should be increased	Already struggle with a 2-weekly collection, it should be increased / restored to weekly rather than decreased further.	72
Comments / concerns about the food waste collection		
Green waste charges should be removed or reviewed to align with food waste	The decision to charge for green waste should be removed/reduced to encourage greater uptake. Use of the green bin on a free weekly collection would remove the need for caddies. Charging for this collection was shortsighted and could have been used for food waste implementation.	329
Would lead to an increase in unhygienic conditions/ mess/ vermin	Collecting waste in food caddies would lead to an increase in mess due to spillage and smells as well as a potential increase in vermin and pests who would be attracted by the food, especially in more rural areas. What about the mess caused by anti-social behaviour, who would be responsible for clearing up spilled food waste?	249
Do not want a food waste caddy	Don't have the space for a food caddy, don't like the design of them, they are unhygienic / smelly. Did not use the previous one that was provided. Will lead to more "clutter" on the pavement on collection day and on windy days the caddies may blow away.	206
Do not make food waste, would not use the service	Food waste collection is not needed as don't waste food / waste little food especially due to the increasing costs. Home compost own food waste and would have no need for a collection.	188

Food waste caddy is too small / not secure	The previous caddies supplied by Cheshire East were too small and not secure enough – would fill it too quickly. A larger caddy would be more appropriate and secure or even a small bin. Some respondents reported not receiving a caddy on the last distribution and wanted to make sure they would receive one. Live in communal housing or flats and not able to access such as service. Bio-degradable bags should be allowed / given with the caddies for hygiene reasons.	180
Extra food waste collections are not environmentally friendly	Distribution of the plastic caddies as well as having another round for waste collection can't be environmentally friendly, especially if the new vehicles are not electric.	12
General negative comments / council wide suggestions		
Paying more council tax for fewer services / Council should sort its own spending out	Seem to be paying more for less services, already charge for green waste and closed HWRC's. Council tax should reduce if waste collections go to 3-weekl. Making cuts to an essential service such as waste is unacceptable, look at saving efficiencies closer to home either through management, staff or "vanity project" spending.	373
General negative comment regarding the proposal	Dreadful idea, seems short sighted / not properly thought-out, doesn't solve the underlying problem. Won't save money / waste of time. Review information from other local authorities before proceeding.	275
Sceptical that residents' views will be listened to	Sceptical that that any views or concerns put forward will be considered by the council, seems like another 'tick boxing' exercise.	71
Other general negative comment / statement	General negative comments outside of the consultation scope e.g. poor road conditions / or generally negative statement with no further expansion or explanation given.	130
Comments on the recruitment of additional waste education specialists' community enforcement officers		
Against spending money for more staff in this area	This is a counter-intuitive move, the proposed savings for reducing collections seem to be offset by increased spend in this area. Dislike the idea, what is the benefit that such staff would bring aside increased costs. Should not invest in this area - 2 weekly collections should remain instead.	681
Consideration of extra support for Crewe	Opinion was split here with some feeling that the data supported the need for further support and consideration to Crewe given the high fly tipping rate, transient population, and shared bins. There were concerns that a "one size fits all" approach to bin collections would not work here. Others felt that too much focus was being placed on Crewe at the expense of other areas.	72
Individuals are being punished / do not like waste policing	The proposed enforcement / education staff are "draconian" measure, the council should look at using more incentives and less punishment when it comes to change behaviour in waste. Would likely punish individuals who were just trying their best to dispose of waste.	70
Considerations / requests for clarification		
Require further clarification on use of green bin / collection days	Can food waste continue to be placed in the green waste bin if paying for one - this is the preference rather than using a caddy. The number of collections could lead to confusion and must be communicated clearly.	229

Challenge the requirement for weekly food waste collection	Why aren't you challenging the requirement for weekly food waste collection or seeking appropriate funding? Doesn't need to be collected on a weekly basis, can just place in green bins as previously.	108
Should help people to recycle more	Need to provide more information about what can and can't be recycled as well as offering support in reducing household food waste. Should be less about enforcement measures and more about helping individuals.	88
Should offer larger bins free of charge	Larger black waste bins should be offered to households free of charge / at a reduced cost if the council moves to 3 weekly waste collections to accommodate.	31
Provide assurance around missed collections	Need assurance that if a collection is missed it will be collected before the next - many reported experiencing a poor service currently and a 6 weekly collection would not be manageable.	26
Different waste types need further consideration	Concerned about the handling of pet and medical waste, a 3-weekly collection of those would not be appropriate or safe. Consideration needs to be made for households with additional needs such as adults requiring support.	26

Table 4: Email responses

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Individual mentions concerning three weekly black bin collections		
Would be a health hazard due to the increased risk of pests, vermin, and smells	Should remain at 2 weeks for health reasons, waste in black bins smells and attracts vermin, flies / maggots, especially in the warmer months.	11
General objection / negative comment	Object to the move in collecting black bins every three weeks. Our council tax increases every year, and services are decreased every year. If you do insist on reducing collections maybe you should consider reducing the council tax.	7
Black bins are already full after 2 weeks, will lead to overspill	Bin is already full after 2 weeks, bags will be left on pavements, are you going to take black bags as well? Already suffer from a plague of bins, often overflowing and lining streets permanently due to constraints of poor access for collection.	6
Will increase fly tipping	Will increase fly tipping, especially since the closure of the local tip.	6
Issue with missed bins	Our bins are often forgotten and are not picked up until the next cycle. Often work away and can miss bin collection if this happens would have to wait 6 weeks for collection.	5
Consider those who cannot get to the tip	Please think how it will affect working families who may not have time to go to the tip in between these collections' times. Local tip has closed which is an inconvenience.	3
Would require a larger bin	Larger wheelie bins would make three weekly collections more acceptable.	2
Agree to three-weekly collections with more guidance	More than happy for black bin waste to be collected every 3 weeks. More clear guidance needs to be offered about precisely which types of plastics can be recycled.	1
Impact on those in apartment blocks	No consideration of how changes affect apartment blocks. None of the alternatives are appropriate. It will be necessary to assess the needs of such properties individually to ensure an appropriate service.	1
Individual mentions concerning the food waste collection scheme		
Issue with food waste collection / caddies	Waste of time would not store food waste in bins, the additional cost for additional collections is unacceptable. How are we meant to safely hold food waste for a week. Food waste bin will smell and lead to maggots. Caddies would easily be blown over. Can you create a storage container that can be clipped to the handrails of an actual bin by residents?	6
Query regarding green bin scheme and food waste	I would like to understand the cost of this new weekly collection proposal vs the income gained from charging for the green bin scheme. If all residents retained their green bin, then surely your weekly commitment would be met. Is it planned to throw the food waste in with the garden waste - why can't the food waste be included in the garden waste bin by residents if this is the case?	2
Group / organisation or town / parish council / councillor mentions		
On behalf of a group of flat owners	Writing on behalf of 36 flat owners to object to the proposed move to a 3-week collection for general waste bins. We are allocated (and only have space in the bin sheds for 6 Euro Bins (4 general waste and 2 re-cycling). By the end of 2 weeks our general waste bins are	

Table 4: Email responses

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	usually full and the re-cycling bins are full to over-flowing. The move would cause a safety and hygiene concern - over-flowing bins, resulting in smells and vermin. A weekly collection of food waste from separate containers is unworkable for 36 flats. Need a more suitable arrangement for communal properties.	
The Planning & Environment Committee at Poynton Town Council	Cannot support the proposal for black bins to be collected on a three-weekly cycle. Too long for noxious items such as nappies to be left, especially in the summer months. The recent decision to close the local household waste and recycling centre at Poynton will only increase the use of and demand for the black bins.	
Buckley and Ridley Parish Council	<p>Effect on Households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed bin collections would lead to an intolerably long 6 weeks - concerned that overfilled bins left uncollected for long period will encourage vermin and smells. There is no clear evidence that it would not lead to fly-tipping. To maintain public support from local taxpayers it is important CEC provides at least minimum service levels. <p>Uncertainty over Government Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the uncertainty over government policy and funding this is the wrong time for CEC to be seeking public consultation on a proposed change to waste collection services. CEC should wait until government policy and funding is more certain. <p>Budgetary Analysis</p> <p>The consultation only provided limited detail on the budgetary implications of the four proposals, there is no wider consideration of the cost to the wider economy and to individual households:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option proposed by CEC might be cheapest for CEC but end up being the most expensive to the wider local economy. The larger bins would be a cost to households and the local economy. This should be considered as part of the cost. Additional health, pest control and Fly tipping controls and expenditure should be considered. The cost of employing more officers in unproductive activity The expected additional inconvenience to households has no measurable cost and so is being ignored 	
Councillor for Crewe East	In Crewe South, after 2 weeks there are already black bins with raised lids and side waste, after 3 weeks this will be even worse. No thought into how this policy will affect areas where there are many rental properties and densely packed terraced housing. Not all of them understand recycling either. With only 4 operatives for the whole of the Borough education techniques do not look like a viable approach based on the daily reports of fly tipping of waste in Crewe. Add to this the transient nature of the population and educating residents who move within a couple of months is going to be a Herculean task. One size does not fit all!	
Cranage Parish Council	The Parish Council have concerns that, whilst an additional bin could be accommodated easily in more rural areas where dwellings generally have a garden, this is not the case in urban areas, such as Crewe. In urban areas with terraced housing, an increasing number of bins will cause congestion to the front of properties and resultant unsightliness on the streets. This will be exacerbated with more homes requesting a larger capacity bin.	

Table 4: Email responses

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Bollington Ward Councillor	<p>The major practical questions raised:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What provision will there be for those residents who currently require a black bag collection scheme? 2. What protection will there be for those residents that require the regular disposal of sanitary waste? <p>Must have robust and sustainable answers before any move to 3 weekly black waste are introduced.</p>	
Church Lawton Parish Council	<p>The Parish Council request that the black bin and garden waste are collected fortnightly for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service changes will be confusing, especially for the older and vulnerable community members whose needs should be assessed. • The type of waste that is put in a black bin should not be left for up to 3 weeks e.g. pet waste, human waste, and the health hazards associated with this should be considered. • If a household misses a back bin collection due to disruption to the service or error this will be result in waste not being collected for six weeks. • New housing and most existing housing are not designed to take so many bins, so there may be a lack of space provided to store the bins. • Periodically, there will be four bins on the pavement or roads from each property whilst waiting for collection. This will be especially problematic for terraced properties, maisonettes, and flats. And will lead to the pavements being impeded. • The arrangements may impact on people's health and hygiene and attract vermin due to fermented waste. 	
Bollington Town Council	<p>Of the options put forward we consider Option 2 and Option 4 (moving to 3 weekly black bin collections. unacceptable due to:</p> <p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Feasibility Study contains no reference to public and environmental health. What assessment has been made of Health Risks? • Bollington contains approximately 400 properties (generally terraced cottages. where black bins cannot be used due to space and access restrictions. These residents have to use black bin bags. The loss of a nearby HWRC makes it likely that more waste will accumulate in these black bags creating a health hazard. • Approximately 140/150 folk in Bollington, mainly aged, require a care package. These and others, many of whom live in properties that cannot use black bins, will use Absorbent Hygiene Products (incontinence pads., the accumulation of which will add to the health risks and unacceptable odours. • Added to this is the confusion arising from three weekly collection intervals, with the prospect of a six-week interval between collections if one is inadvertently missed. • Additionally, there are many young families in Bollington who will also be using Absorbent Hygiene Products (nappies. on a regular basis. • In addition, the loss of the HWRC in Bollington will lead to more waste going into Black bins. <p>Cost Considerations</p> <p>A number of conclusions in the Feasibility study arise from the modelling assumptions. The Cost argument in favour of moving to 3 weekly black bin collections is primarily based on an illogical assumption that it will result in less residual waste than for a 2-weekly</p>	

Table 4: Email responses

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	collection. Waste does not just disappear; it must go somewhere else! The cost argument is predicated on a highly contestable key assumption that impacts the cost analysis by over £1M. The authors of the report state in their conclusion....'However there is uncertainty on the size of the waste prevention effect and whether waste streams at HWRC's or fly-tipping would increase, so disposal savings should be treated with caution.'	
Macclesfield Broken Cross & Upton Ward Councillor	<p>Public and Environmental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the residents in Broken Cross and Upton live in terraced houses. There are already issues with litter in ginnels and passageways, a less regular collection of black bin waste will lead to more litter – effectively fly tipping and greater likelihood of animals being able to get into supplementary black bin bags. This cannot be healthy or hygienic. The data in the feasibility assessment suggests that in a modelling comparison with Mid Devon District Council which made a change from fortnightly collections to three weekly ones quite recently, data suggests that 'there may be a genuine waste prevention effect of moving to three weekly residual collections. I find this difficult to accept and an explanation for this suggestion is not provided. Further, I wonder about the overall use of separate budgets to deal with fly tipping and street cleaning as well as environmental health which would erode a level of any possible savings made across budgets. The feasibility study itself concludes this paragraph with 'caution must be used when considering the savings possible' in this context. There are significant numbers of residents who are elderly, vulnerable and/or live with disabilities. Concern has been expressed that such residents may use clinical or absorbent hygiene products and have significant amounts of medical waste to dispose of this waste has hygiene and health implications. There are also large numbers of families with young children who will use disposable nappies. What additional provision is proposed for those residents who require the regular disposal of sanitary and medical waste? Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed which addresses the needs of those who will be disproportionately affected by a change to three weekly black bin collections? <p>Variable performance of recent bin collection service Concerns relating to recent missed collections in the ward, often it is not possible to replace the collection, and it goes over to the next collection. If this change is made, a resident will have to wait for six weeks for their usual collection.</p> <p>Please retain the fortnightly collections of black bins. Complaints from residents will increase if Cheshire East changes black bin collections from fortnightly to three-weekly.</p>	
Prestbury Parish Council	<p>Three weeks seems a long time for the time between the black bin being emptied for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The black bin contains matter such as dog waste and human waste (dressings etc. which could pose a health hazard if left three weeks. The weight of the bin after three weeks may become problematic to some members of the community, particularly the elderly. The three weekly collections could attract vermin (due to some of the nature of the waste as in the first comment. The service changes will be confusing, especially for the older and vulnerable community members. It does seem a complicated system to keep on top of. 	

Table 4: Email responses

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a household misses a back bin collection due to disruption to the service or error this will be result in waste not being collected for six weeks.• Some properties may struggle to store four bins (food waste, general waste, garden waste and recycling).• Periodically, there will be four bins on the pavement or roads from each property whilst waiting for collection. This will be especially problematic for terraced properties, maisonettes, and flats. Four bins per property could also lead to pavements being impeded making it difficult for push chairs and wheelchairs	

Appendix 1: Demographic breakdowns

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All the questions were optional and therefore will not add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 5: Number of survey respondents by representation. Respondents could select all that apply.

Category	Count	Percent
As a resident of Cheshire East	6,134	99%
As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor / Town/Parish Councillor or on behalf of a Town / Parish Council	32	<1%
On behalf of a group, organisation, or club	10	<1%
An elected Member of Cheshire East	8	<1%
On behalf of a local business	6	<1%
Other inc. MP, on behalf of a resident, residents association, volunteer	12	<1%
Grand Total	6,202	100%

Table 6: Number of survey respondents by gender

Category	Count	Percent
Female	3,207	58%
Male	1,857	34%
Other gender identity	< 5	< 1%
Prefer not to say	465	8%
Grand Total	5,530	100%

Table 7: Number of survey respondents by age group

Category	Count	Percent
16-24	49	1%
25-34	610	11%
35-44	1,144	20%
45-54	1,128	20%
55-64	1,101	20%
65-74	736	13%
75-84	372	7%
85 and over	34	1%
Prefer not to say	452	8%
Grand Total	5,626	100%

Table 8: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin

Category	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	4,692	85%
Any other White background	101	2%
Asian/Asian British	57	1%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	27	<1%
Black African/Caribbean/Black British	10	<1%
Other ethnic origin	5	<1%
Prefer not to say	603	11%
Grand Total	5,495	100%

Table 9: Number of survey respondents by religious belief

Category	Count	Percent
Christian	2,191	41%
No Religion	2,093	39%
Buddhist	18	< 1%
Muslim	16	< 1%
Hindu	11	< 1%
Sikh	9	< 1%
Jewish	3	< 1%
Other religious belief	24	< 1%
Prefer not to say	1,002	19%
Grand Total	5,367	100%

Table 10: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability

Category	Count	Percent
Yes, a lot	753	14%
Yes, a little	480	9%
Not at all	3,484	63%
Prefer not to say	842	15%
Grand Total	5,559	100%

Appendix 2: Members engagement session – key questions and responses

Table 11: Key questions and responses from the Members engagement session

Key questions / comments	Key responses / answers
Concerning the move to three-weekly collections	
Where I am, people seem to have issues with missed bin collections. How will this be addressed? It is unacceptable to have to wait a further three weeks for collection especially those families who need and dispose of sanitary products.	We do monitor missed bins and have performance targets against this, generally performance against that target is good but there is always room for improvement. If there is a specific problem with a particular street / area than we need to address that. We would need to review the black bin collection process anyway if the preferred option is approved. Part of that process would involve looking at those small pockets in certain locations which may get missed more than others and build additional capacity to address those one-off missed bin collections / problematic areas.
You may have a problem with communal buildings and collecting three-weekly residual waste. As an example, there is an older person's development in Disley with a limit to how many bins can be put out due to space.	Communal properties tend to have bigger Euro bins not wheelie bins. The three-week collection is mostly focused on the household rounds. We will try and move towards the three weekly collections for communal properties were pragmatic also, however, understand we may need to provide bespoke arrangements for certain properties.
You may have an increase in fly-tipping, more so in rural areas	The feasibility report matches us with like for like authorities demographically and they have not seen an increase in fly-tipping associated with introducing three-weekly collections. We will continue to monitor the fly-tipping hotspots and seek to address those. Where we already have problems with people misusing bins the move to three-weekly could make this issue worse which is why we are increasing our community and education specialists, and more so in those areas with greatest need.
What is the size of the larger black bins?	360 litres – the standard bins are 240 litres.
Concerned about health waste and the safety of operatives due to how heavy the bins could get after 3 weeks	Double bagging health waste is recommended for things like adult medical waste. We will be working with our operatives and assessing health and safety; however, the wheel bins are automatic lifts so the weight should not particularly be an issue.
Concerned with the level of enforcement and education that is going to be required, especially for Crewe South. Already have an issue with contaminated bins and side waste. It will not be the only area in Cheshire East with terraced properties and transient communities	We can look at how other authorities have dealt with this issue plus we will have an investment in additional community enforcement officers, waste educational teams and powers put in place for section 46 notices. This resource will be targeted at those existing areas where data tells us that we have a larger problem – this will be regularly reviewed. We are reliant on people reporting and highlighting these areas of challenge. On the back of the cleaner Crewe project, we are working behind the scenes with Crewe Town Council to also support the outcomes of that.
Have concerns about around Macclesfield and houses of multiple occupation. Do they get bigger bins? Regarding enforcement how do you know who is responsible?	Yes, there will be different sized containers depending on property type. Houses with multiple occupation is a wider piece to do with the good landlord practice. Waste management is one aspect so we can raise that and receive further clarification on what is happening from our housing team. Enforcement activity will be targeted in areas with greatest need, and this will be regularly reviewed.

Currently terraced houses leave their bins outside of the property because they have not got enough room to store all the bins, some people are leaving the bins out on the main roads. That is going to cause issues.	We are looking at options around further enforcement powers so that the community enforcement officers can take more pro-active action against, for example, residents leaving bins on the highway. There will be a process of politely asking them not to do this and to change their behaviour which moves towards enforcement action. This will be on a more borough wide process, reliant on people reporting the issue.
Where are the £1,000,000 savings going to come from?	The savings are associated with a shift in the reduction of black bin waste. This is the highest type of waste cost we have to treat and dispose of. More people should attempt to recycle better and with the food waste being extracted this waste does not make its way through the very costly disposal contract process. It is cheaper to deal with recyclable, garden, and food waste.
Concerning the food waste collection	
Will we be getting a new food waste caddy that is different to the current kitchen caddy that we have?	Yes, all households will receive a dedicated curb-side caddy which is bigger than the current kitchen caddy, it is 24 litres. Households will be asked to present this bigger caddy at the curb side every week for collection.
What if people do not want the food waste -caddy as they compost (or do not waste much food. can they reject them?	We are unfortunately unable to offer bespoke deliveries due to the number of households in the borough. However, in the past we have allowed people to deposit there caddies back to HWRC sites if not needed. We could look into this again.
How have we factored in the price of the electric vehicles to collect the food waste on a weekly basis?	The electric vehicles are part of the capital costs quoted as part of the business case, these are required to deliver the weekly food waste collection which had been mandated by the government. They are smaller than the standardised bin waggons.
Will food waste still be allowed in the green waste bin?	The details for this have not been 100% agreed however the plan would be for people to switch to using the curb side caddy for food waste. This allows us to potentially not have to process garden waste and food waste together which is another saving to the authority. It also means people can see just how much food waste they are throwing away and hopefully this leads to a change in behaviour and habits.
Are the food waste bins rodent proof?	Yes, they are national standard used by authorities. They are designed to be rodent proof when the handle goes down it locks the lid.
The food waste caddies could be heavy particularly for the elderly to move, will they have wheels.	No, they do not have wheels, there is the option for assisted collections for those that need them. Elderly person households however should have less food waste so it would be unusual for such households to fill up the bin.
Are you going to run a campaign to encourage home composting?	Yes, we will be running campaigns this year relating to the disposing of waste in different ways.

Report produced on 24 October 2024 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

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Environment and Communities Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Report Reference	Environment & Communities Committee	Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Consultation	Equality Impact Assessment	Corporate Plan Priority	Part of Budget and Policy Framework	Exempt Item	Is the report for decision or scrutiny?
January 2025										
EC/17/24-25	30/01/25	Carbon Neutral Programme Update and Approval of Carbon Neutral 2045 Action Plan	To provide an annual update on the progress of the implementation of the carbon neutral programme. To also seek approval to adopt the action plan associated with the delivery of the Carbon Neutral 2045 borough target.	Interim Director Planning & Environment	No	No	Open / Green	Yes	Yes	Decision / Scrutiny
EC/15/24-25	30/01/25	Local Plan Update – feedback on Issues Paper	To provide feedback from the consultation undertaken on the Issues Paper as presented to Committee in March 2024 and set out the next steps for the Local Plan review.	Interim Director Planning & Environment	Yes	Yes	Open	No	No	Decision
EC/16/24-25	30/01/25	Strategic Leisure Review - Implementation Update	To provide an update to Committee in relation to the implementation of the initiatives brought forward under the Strategic Leisure Review and where appropriate set out any additional	Interim Director Planning & Environment	Yes	Yes	Open	No	No	Decision / Scrutiny

Environment and Communities Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Report Reference	Environment & Communities Committee	Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Consultation	Equality Impact Assessment	Corporate Plan Priority	Part of Budget and Policy Framework	Exempt Item	Is the report for decision or scrutiny?
			savings proposals.							
EC/26/24-25	30/01/25	Third Financial Review of 2024/25 (Environment & Communities Committee)	To note and comment on the Third Financial Review and Performance position of 2024/25, including progress on policy proposals and material variances from the MTFS and (if necessary) approve Supplementary Estimates and Virements.	Interim Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Open	Yes	No	Decision / Scrutiny
EC/28/24-25	30/01/25	Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2025/26 - 2028/29 Provisional Settlement Update (Environment & Communities Committee)	All Committees were being asked to provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub-Committee in March 2024. Responses to the consultation would be reported to the Corporate Policy Committee to support that	Interim Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Open	Yes	No	Decision / Scrutiny

Environment and Communities Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Report Reference	Environment & Communities Committee	Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Consultation	Equality Impact Assessment	Corporate Plan Priority	Part of Budget and Policy Framework	Exempt Item	Is the report for decision or scrutiny?
			Committee in making recommendations to Council on changes to the current financial strategy.							
EC/33/24-25	30/01/25	Review of CCTV Service	To seek approval for implementation of the preferred option relating to the review of the Council's CCTV Service.	Interim Director Planning & Environment	TBC	Yes	Open	Yes	No	Decision / Scrutiny
March 2025										
EC/18/24-25	27/03/25	Cemeteries Investment Programme	To seek committee approval to the proposed investment programme for the Cheshire East Council operated cemeteries	Interim Director Planning & Environment	No	Yes	Open	Yes	No	Decision
EC/10/24-25	27/03/25	Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	To provide an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Interim Director Planning & Environment	Yes	No	Open	No	No	Decision / Scrutiny
EC/19/24-25	27/03/25	Updated Local List of Historic Buildings	To seek approval to the updated local list of historic buildings	Interim Director Planning & Environment	TBC	No	Open	TBC	No	Decision
EC/27/24-25	27/03/25	Service Budgets 2025/26 (Environment & Communities Committee)	The purpose of this report is to set out the allocation of approved budgets for	Interim Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Open	Yes	No	Scrutiny

Environment and Communities Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Report Reference	Environment & Communities Committee	Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Consultation	Equality Impact Assessment	Corporate Plan Priority	Part of Budget and Policy Framework	Exempt Item	Is the report for decision or scrutiny?
			2025/26 for services under the Committee's remit, as determined by Finance Sub Committee							