

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Thursday, 12th June, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Municipal
Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)
Councillor M Gorman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Clark, J Clowes, L Crane, T Dean, S Gardiner, M Goldsmith,
D Jefferay, C O'Leary, J Rhodes, J Saunders and R Vernon

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ashley Hughes, Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer
Karen Wheeler, Corporate Improvement Director
Sal Khan, Interim Director of Finance and Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance Compliance and Monitoring Officer
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor F Wilson and Councillor
R Vernon attended as a substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 13 – Appointment of Independent Remuneration Panel,
Councillor S Gardiner declared that he knew one of the appointees and
stated that he would leave the meeting for this item and take no part in the
decision.

In relation to Item 13 – Appointment of Independent Remuneration Panel,
Councillor D Clark declared that she knew one of the appointees and
stated that she would leave the meeting for this item and take no part in
the decision.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March be approved as a
correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

5 FINAL OUTTURN 2024/25

The Committee received the report which set out the Final Outturn for 2024-25. Members considered the financial challenges being experienced by the Council and recognised the important activities aimed at minimising the impact on council services.

It was noted that the Corporate Services directorate had an underspend of £2.2 million due to vacancy management, underspends in ICT, savings and additional income.

With regards to Reserves, it was noted that there was a proposal to set up a new reserve to support transformation and improvement activities and concerns were raised about the lack of clarity on the reasons for the earmarked reserve, the total cost and expected savings from the Transformation Programme.

During debate, an amendment was proposed and seconded to:

“Delete Recommendation 3, insert the following and renumber:

3. instruct officers to bring a report for decision to the next meeting of Corporate Policy Committee setting out the justification for the proposed movement in reserves, including specific and costed proposals for the inclusion of an second reserve of up to £5.3m for the Transformation Programme (which is in addition to the £3.5m reserve approved by Council at its meeting in February 2025).
4. agree that any further changes in planned expenditure on the Transformation Programme, whether capital, revenue or via reserves, should be full justified and set out in a published report and receive prior approved by Corporate Policy Committee.”

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the overall financial performance of the Council in the 2024/25 financial year, as contained within the report, as follows:
 - a) a Net Revenue Overspend of £17.6m against a revised budget of £365.8m (4.8% variance) funded by conditional Exceptional Financial Support (Capitalisation Direction) via borrowing.
 - b) General Reserves closing balance of £6.3m
 - c) Capital Spending of £88.4m against an approved programme of £215.8m (59% variance)
- 2 note the content of Annex 1 to the report.

- 4 recommend to Council approval of the Supplementary Revenue Estimate Request for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £1,000,000 as set out in Annex 1 to the report at Section 3, Table 1)

RESOLVED (by majority): That the Committee

- 3 approve the new Reserves in the Reserves Section, as set out in Annex 1 to the report at Section 5, Table 1) which includes proposed movements to reserves.

6 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/2025

The Committee considered the report which provided an overview of organisational performance against the priorities and vision set out within the Council's 2024/25 Corporate Plan during Quarter 4 of 2024-25.

It was noted that of the sixty-six priority actions, 48 were on track and 6 had been fully completed. The remaining twelve actions were either amber or red and the report detailed the reasons and mitigating actions being taken.

The Committee commented on the vacancy rate which was 17.4% and were informed that workforce efficiency improvement was a key part of the transformation programme which would help reduce the vacancy rate. Concerns were raised about the retention of foster carers and that the same retention strategies used for staff should also applied to foster carers.

It was noted that in Adult Social Care the use of agency staff and staff turnover were down but despite this there was a 12% budget variance. In response it was stated that this increase was due to the increased demand for care services, which was a statutory responsibility for the Council.

Reference was made to the Middlewich Eastern Bypass project and that its status had changed to red due to lack of clarity from the government on funding. It was suggested that the action should be amended to reflect its dependency on external approval.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the report.

7 CHESHIRE EAST DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26

The Committee considered the report on the Cheshire East Delivery Plan 2025-26.

The Delivery Plan supported the commitments in the Cheshire East Plan 2025-26 and included a set of key performance indicators to measure progress.

Concerns were raised about the timing of the approval of the Delivery Plan with the development of the Corporate Improvement Plan and the receipt of the Non-Statutory Best Value Notice. It was noted that the Assurance Panel had recommended the prioritising and sequencing of plans to ensure effective performance management.

It was proposed and seconded that the Cheshire East Delivery Plan 2025-26 be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee so that it could be presented along the Corporate Improvement Plan for approval and adoption.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Committee defer consideration of the Cheshire East Delivery Plan 2025-26 until the next meeting of the Committee so that the Delivery Plan can be considered alongside the Corporate Improvement Plan.

8 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, revisit report and non-statutory Best Value Notice.

In relation to the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, it was highlighted that 51 of the 73 actions had been completed and that 4 of the 18 recommendations from the Peer Challenge had been implemented. There had been significant progress in senior officer recruitment, improved financial reporting and development of the Cheshire East Plan. The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Revisit had acknowledged progress was being made but had highlighted the inconsistent pace and the need for clearer outcomes.

An overarching Corporate Improvement Plan was being developed, which would supersede the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, and would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

It was noted that the Assurance Panel would be issuing a formal letter to Council in July 2025 and clarification was sought that the letter would be from the Chair of the Panel and not involve any Cheshire East members or officers on the Panel.

Concerns were raised about the delay in the review of the Council's decision-making framework and the importance of making changes sooner rather than later to ensure better decision making and efficient scrutiny.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the progress in delivering the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

- 2 note the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge revisit report and Best Value Notice at Appendices 2 and 3 to the report.
- 3 agree the approach and timeline for developing an overarching Corporate Improvement Plan, as set out in paragraph 15 of the report, including agreement of the Plan at the Committee's meeting in August 2025.

9 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS OF COUNCIL SERVICES FOR LIBRARIES SHARED SERVICES AND CHESHIRE RURAL TOURING ARTS

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Shared Services Joint Committee at its meeting on 25 April 2025 in relation to the future arrangements for Libraries Shared Services and Cheshire Rural Touring Arts.

It was proposed that the Libraries Shared Services move from the shared service model to a managed service and the Cheshire Rural Touring Arts move to strategic partnership arrangement, in accordance with the decision of the Shared Services Joint Committee in June 2022.

A friendly amendment was proposed and accepted in relation to recommendation 3 to include the wording "in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee".

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 approve the changes to the shared services in accordance with the Shared Services Review, as set out in the report of the Shared Services Joint Committee of 17 June 2022.
- 2 approve the proposed managed service and strategic partnership arrangements and principle of the revised Administration Agreement.
- 3 delegate authority to the Executive Director Place and Executive Director Resources (S151), in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee, to jointly implement the final transition to the separate arrangements including completion of the necessary legal agreements with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

10 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2024-25

The Committee received the report which provided a summary and analysis of complaints and compliments received by the Council during 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

It was noted that the Council had received 4,314 complaints in 2024/25, which was an increase of 41% on the previous year, and 935 compliments compared to 824 in 2023/24. The main reason for the increase in complaints related to the introduction of the garden waste subscription, stricter bin replacement policies and changes in adult social care charging policies.

The Committee referred to the report presentation and it was suggested that in future it should be a shorter, clearer report with narrative summaries and data tables rather than the use of pie charts. The Committee also stressed the importance of highlighting compliments, as in adult social care these had outnumber complaints.

Members suggested that if there was significant spike in the number of complaints for a service area or large financial payments made, then these should be reported to the relevant service committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the report.

11 DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING - INTERIM MEASURES

Consideration was given to the adoption of the ANSA Drugs and Alcohol Testing policy for new starters, on a random and 'for cause' basis for all identified operations roles within Environmental Services and Operations for employees appointed under Cheshire East Terms and Conditions until a corporate decision had been taken on the approach to continued Drug and Alcohol Testing.

It was reported that this would be an interim arrangement whilst the corporate approach to continued Drug and Alcohol testing was developed in consultation with trade unions and that the policy would be brought to the Corporate Policy Committee for consideration and approval at a future meeting.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 adopt the ANSA Drug and Alcohol Testing policy for new starters, on a random and 'for cause' basis for all identified operational roles within Environmental Services and Operations and, after the date of transfer, Transport and Infrastructure, as listed in paragraph 20 of the report, for employees appointed under Cheshire East Terms and Conditions, until a corporate decision has been taken on the approach to continued Drug and Alcohol Testing.
- 2 note that a proposal for the corporate approach to continued Drug and Alcohol Testing will be developed, in consultation with trade unions, and brought to Corporate Policy Committee for

consideration and with recommendations for approval at a future meeting.

12 CONSTITUTION OFFICER SCHEMES OF DELEGATION

The Committee considered the report on the new officer schemes of delegation.

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

Concerns were raised about the lack of uniformity and that some of the schemes were too vague, listing multiple delegates without clarity. In response it was stated that each scheme had been developed by the respective Executive Director and senior management and the variations reflected the unique structure and needs of each service area.

It was noted that the reference in the adults' services section to children's commissioning would be removed as this no longer applied.

It was reported that organisational charts would be included for clarity on reporting lines and responsibilities and that ongoing reviews and updates would take place especially as leadership or structures changes.

Councillors M Goldsmith and J Rhodes left the meeting during the consideration of this item and did not return.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 approve in principle the new draft officer Schemes of Delegation, as set out in Appendices A to G to the report.
- 2 recommend to Full Council approval and adoption of the new officer Schemes of Delegation, as set out in Appendices A to G to the report, to be incorporated into the Constitution at Chapter 2 Part 5 to replace the existing schemes and the revocation of all former officer schemes of delegation, including local or service specific schemes.
- 3 Delegate authority to the Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer to make any further minor amendments required prior to Full Council, if necessary, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee.

13 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Having previously declared an interest, Councillors D Clark and S Gardiner left the meeting during consideration of this item.

Consideration was given to the report which invited the Committee to approve the appointment of three individuals to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a four-year term of officer.

Councillor J Saunders left the meeting during the consideration of this item and did not return.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 re-appoint Mandy Ramsden and Jacquie Grinham to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of four years, to commence immediately until 2029.
- 2 appoint Dylan Edward (known as Eddie) Watkins to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of four years, to commence immediately until 2029.
- 3 approve the appointment of Mandy Ramsden to the position of Chair of the Panel for a period of four years, to commence immediately until 2029.
- 4 Agree that an allowance, to be determined by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders, be paid to the Chair in recognition of their role.

14 APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, PANELS, BOARDS AND JOINT COMMITTEES

The Committee considered a report on the appointment of and appointments to sub-committees, working groups, panels, boards and joint committees for the 2025-26 municipal year.

In relation to the Electoral and Polling District Review Sub Committee, Councillor R Vernon, Labour Group Administrator, stated that the Labour group had previously withdrawn from the Sub Committee due to what they felt were flaws in the process, but reserved their right to nominate members if the Labour group decided to return to the Sub Committee.

Councillor D Jefferay stated that he had previously been on the Electoral and Polling District Review Sub Committee and would fill the independent group place on the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 agree the appointment of and appointments to sub-committees, working groups, panels, boards and joint committees for 2025-265, as set out in the report, as follows:

Constitution Working Group - 6 members (2:2:2:0)

Cllr S Gardiner	Cllr L Crane	Cllr A Moran
Cllr C O'Leary	Cllr K Edwards	Cllr M Warren

Staffing Appeals Sub Committee – pool of 10 members (4:4:2:0)

Cllr R Bailey	Cllr L Crane	Cllr N Cook
Cllr E Hall	Cllr D Clark	Cllr E Gilman
Cllr J Pratt	Cllr G Smith	
Cllr L Wardlaw	Cllr F Wilson	

General Appeals Sub Committee – pool of 10 members (4:4:2:0)

Cllr T Dean	Cllr S Bennett-Wake	Cllr E Gilman
Cllr S Edgar	Cllr H Faddes	Cllr G Marshall
Cllr J Pearson	Cllr B Puddicombe	
Cllr L Smetham	Cllr R Vernon	

Shared Services Joint Committee - 3 members (1:1:1:0)

Cllr P Redstone	Cllr J Rhodes	Cllr M Warren
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Electoral and Polling District Review Sub Committee
7 members (3:3:1:0)

Cllr S Gardiner		Cllr D Jefferay
Cllr C O'Leary		
Cllr J Pearson		

Joint Member Scrutiny Task Group - 3 members (1:1:1:0)

Cllr J Pearson	Cllr B Drake	Cllr L Anderson
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Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board

Cllr S Corcoran

Joint Extra Care Housing Management Board

Cllr N Mannion

Governance and Decision-Making Task and Finish Group

9 members (4:3:2:0)

Cllr M Beanland	Cllr L Braithwaite	Cllr M Gorman
Cllr S Gardiner	Cllr A Burton	Cllr M Warren
Cllr C O'Leary	Cllr F Wilson	
Cllr L Wardlaw		

- 2 approve the appointment of one individual to become a member of the Independent School Admission Appeals Panel and Independent Review Panel for Exclusion Reviews.
- 3 where appropriate, member nominations to the bodies be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services.

15 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the Work Programme 2025-26.

16 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance Sub Committee held on 10 March 2025 and the General Appeals Sub Committee held on 4 March 2025 be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.25 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)