

Economy and Growth Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday 17th January 2023
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 top of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making 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 and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022.

For requests for further information

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4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with 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.

5. **Corporate Asset Management Plan** (Pages 13 - 70)

To consider the Corporate Asset Management Plan and note the outcomes of the previous Corporate Asset Management Plan.

6. **Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 Consultation** (Pages 71 - 92)

To receive and respond to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27.

7. **Visitor Economy Strategy** (Pages 93 - 134)

To consider the Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 -2028.

8. **Town Centre Vitality Plans** (Pages 135 - 142)

To consider the Town Centre Vitality Plans for Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.

9. **Repurposing Our High Streets (Crewe) Grant Scheme** (Pages 143 - 160)

To consider the design and delivery of a new grant scheme aimed at improving occupancy of vacant commercial premises in Crewe town centre.

10. **Notice of Motion: Public Art Consultations** (Pages 161 - 178)

To consider the Notice of Motion on Public Art Consultations.

11. **Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report** (Pages 179 - 200)

To consider the Notice of Motion on the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report

12. **Mid-Year Performance Review 2022/23 - Growth and Enterprise**
(Pages 201 - 218)

To note the performance of the Growth & Enterprise department for the first two quarters of 2022-23.

13. **Work Programme** (Pages 219 - 220)

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

Membership: Councillors S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair), P Groves, S Hogben, M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, N Mannion (Chair), R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**
held on Tuesday, 15th November, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, P Groves, S Hogben,
M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development
Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates
David Fenton, Housing Options and Homelessness Manager
Chris Hutton, Senior Policy Officer
Jez Goodman, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner (Place)
Adrian Leslie, Lawyer
Mandy Withington, Team Manager (Corporate Property and Projects)
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 5 – Disposal of Public Open Space Land off Talke Road, Alsager, Councillor P Williams in the interest of openness stated that he was a ward member for Alsager and an Alsager Town councillor and had had interactions with the Council and others on the subject of Talke Road but declared that he had not pre-determined the outcome of the decision to be taken at the Committee's meeting.

In relation to Item 5 – Disposal of Public Open Space Land off Talke Road, Alsager, visiting member Councillor R Fletcher declared that an Alsager Town Councillor and had attended consultation meetings. He also referred to a post on social media and stated that he did not know this person and called for an apology from them.

In relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer Scheme, Councillor M Goldsmith declared that he owned property that was rented out.

In relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer Scheme, Councillor D Jefferay declared that he owned property that was rented out, but this was not in located in Cheshire East.

28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

29 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Councillor C Naismith addressed the committee in relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer. Whilst he asked the Committee to support the proposal, he felt it was not a long-term solution to the problem and asked what happened after the 6-month period had expired. Renters needed to be able to access affordable and good quality housing and that councils should look into building their own housing to provide this rather than just relying on social landlords and housing associations.

Sue Helliwell urged the Committee to give due and proper consideration to the representations received in relation to the land to the rear of Talke Road, Alsager and to support the retention of the site as public open space as spending time in the natural environment had a positive impact on people's mental and physical health.

Lindsay Belfield spoke against the disposal of the public open space off Talk Road, Alsager referring to the biodiversity of the site and to protecting and enhancing the environment rather than disposing of the land.

Mr MacDonald spoke against the disposal of the land as it provided a valuable piece of open space for the wellbeing of local residents and stated that the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 set out a vision for a more open and greener Cheshire East and was this proposal not contrary to that.

30 DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LAND OFF TALKE ROAD, ALSAGER

The Committee considered a report on the proposed disposal of public open space land at Talke Road, Alsager.

The Council was the freehold owner of the land which been included within the adopted Local Plan as a housing and employment site. The Council was authorised to dispose of any land that it owned but where land could be regarded as open space, as defined under s336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Council was required to advertise its intention to dispose of the land for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper

circulating in the area in which the land was situated and then consider any objections received in response.

The disposal of the land had been advertised for two weeks in the local press in December 2021 and the objections/representations received were set out in appendices III and IV to the report.

The Committee had originally considered the disposal of the public open space land at its meeting on 31 May 2022 and had resolved that the decision be deferred to enable alternative potential uses of the land to be considered. An Addendum to the report had been provided which set out details of alternative uses of the land and responded to questions raised by the Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2022.

Councillor Rod Fletcher, a ward councillor for Alsager, addressed the Committee setting out the history and previous use of the land under consideration.

The Committee asked questions on several matters including the definition of public open space, the use of the adjacent land, future uses of the land and type of housing, previous lapsed planning applications on the land, cost of decontamination of land, sale value on the open market and if the recovering of clinker on the site had been considered.

As a few the questions related to financial information, details of which were contained within the confidential appendix to the report, it was proposed and seconded that the meeting move into Part 2 to consider these matters.

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

The Committee asked, and officers responded, to question on finance and other matters contained within the confidential appendix to the report.

It was moved and seconded that the Committee move back into Part 1 to allow the press and public to return to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the meeting move back into Part 1 to enable the press and public to return to the meeting.

The Committee adjourned for a short break.

The Committee in considering the proposal to dispose of the public open spaces land raised the following matters during the debate:

- the land being a brownfield site and labelled as such in the local plan, where it was identified for development
- concern about the loss of open space for use by local residents
- loss of trees and if tree preservation orders could be applied for
- loss of biodiversity
- concern about contamination of the site from previous use
- could a percentage of the proceeds of a sale be used to improve biodiversity in Alsager and this be raised with future developer if the land was disposed of
- sale would be capital receipt for the Council.

The recommendations of the report, having been moved and seconded, were put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That the Committee

- 1 having considered the responses received as a result of the public notices, approve the disposal of the public open space land off Talke Road, Alsager.
- 2 delegate power to the Head of Estates to negotiate and agree terms for the disposal of the land, and to instruct the Director of Governance and Compliance to negotiate and enter into the legal agreements necessary to facilitate the disposal of the land.

31 **HOUSING OPTIONS DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

The Committee considered the Housing Option's Domestic Abuse policy, which had been developed to outline the services survivors/victims of domestic abuse would receive from the Housing Options Service.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 29 April 2021 and introduced new duties on local authorities to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse and their children could access the right support in safe accommodation.

The Housing Options Team had been working towards gaining the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which was a scheme open to housing associations, local authority housing teams and homelessness providers across the UK to help improve their response to domestic abuse. The Housing Options Team were assessed in June 2022 and successfully awarded the DAHA accreditation.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 approve the Housing Options Domestic Abuse Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

- 2 delegates authority to make any future minor amendments or legislation changes to the policy to the Director of Growth and Enterprise in consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee.

32 THE INTRODUCTION OF A PRIVATE LANDLORD OFFER SCHEME

The Committee considered the Private Landlord Offer Scheme which was being proposed to provide the Housing Options Team with the ability to negotiate with Private Sector Landlords to secure private rented accommodation for those who were a priority on the social housing waiting list or were currently homeless.

The Scheme would provide the council with the ability to directly refer prospective tenants to a landlord who had agreed to the terms of the scheme. The scheme aimed to provide enhanced financial cover to landlords and provide peace of mind that they would have a dedicated liaison officer who would be on hand to support them with any issues. It was proposed that the scheme would be piloted for a period of two years. The Committee requested that an update on the scheme be brought back in 12 months' time.

RESOLVED: That the Committee

- 1 approves the Private Landlord Offer Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, including the adoption of a rent guarantee to underwrite a tenant's rent liability, and a finder's fee to encourage uptake from private landlords to accept referrals and help address housing need in the borough.
- 2 authorise the Director of Growth and Enterprise, in consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee, to make further minor amendments to the scheme to ensure ongoing compliance with the law and guidance from the Government.

33 SECTION 106 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIEU OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report which provide an update on the Section 106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing policy.

The policy had been approved by the Committee in September 2021 and it had been agreed that the policy would be reviewed on an annual basis and any changes reported to the Committee.

A review of the policy had taken place in August 2022 and a small number of amendments were required to the policy. These included updating the policy to align with the recent Subsidy Control advice, amending the decision maker for projects, in line with the most recent version of the Constitution, and including an additional priority which allowed funding

from individual contributions to be combined with others, if a project required this.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 approve the updated S106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing policy, as set out in appendix 1 to the report.
- 2 note the changes made and delegate authority to approve any spends of financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing in line with the Cheshire East Council Constitution.

34 **FINANCIAL REVIEW OF 2022/23**

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23.

It was reported that a financial management training session would be held for members of the Committee on 5 December 2022.

The Committee noted the reduction in visitor numbers at Tatton Park and increases in costs increases due to inflation and asked what the revenue budget was for Tatton Park. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to committee members.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the report of the Finance Sub Committee of 9 November 2022 and specifically the recommendations of that Sub Committee:
 - 1.1 Finance Sub Committee recommend Services Committees to
 - 1.1.1 note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
 - 1.1.2. note that officers will seek to improve the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.
- 2 note Appendix 4 and the following sections specific to the Committee:
 - changes to Revenue budget 2022/23
 - Action Plan 2022/23
 - Corporate Grants Register
 - Debt Management
 - Capital Strategy
 - Reserve Strategy

35 CREWE REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on progress with the Crewe Town Centre regeneration programme, including projects supported by funding from the Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund.

Crewe Town Board had undertaken an independent review to consider the cost and delivery risks facing the projects in the Towns Fund programme, particularly in relation to the increasing risk and potential impact of cost inflation.

The outcome of the review was to request the withdrawal of the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the programme, which would create a saving of £4,998,000, which would be reallocated across the programme. As the accountable body for Crewe Town Board and the Towns Fund, the Council's S151 officer was required to approve any change requests to the Government and given the significance of the decision, the Committee was asked to support this decision.

It was asked if the table at Appendix 2 to the report was up to date and if not, could the latest version be circulated to committee members.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the report and agree to further briefings being brought to the committee on the Crewe Town Centre regeneration programme.
- 2 approve that submission of a request to Government to remove the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the Towns Fund programme and to delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Crewe Town Board, to propose the reallocation of funding across the remaining Town Funds programme.

36 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

With regards to the item on Handforth Garden Village – Delivery Strategy, it was understood that the Strategic Planning Board would be considering the planning application in January 2023, and it was therefore suggested that an additional meeting of the committee be held after this in early February 2023 to consider this matter.

Reference was made to the letter sent by the Chair of the Committee to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, following the last meeting, raising concern about the delay in the review of car parking provision as this was linked to the Town Centre Vitality Plans. It was understood that there was still no item on the Highways and Transport

Committee work programme for it to consider this matter, and it was therefore requested that the Chair write again to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee asking for the review of car parking provision to be added to their work programme.

Reference was made to the item for the January 2023 committee on the Regional Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Report and it was suggested that the committee would benefit from a briefing on the role and work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

It was asked if the Committee could be briefed on the land owned by the Council, with specific reference to the land in the south Macclesfield area. It was noted that some of this land was subject to planning applications. It was agreed that consideration would be given to this request.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

37 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

38 HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT CONTRACT

The Committee considered the report on the Housing Related Support Contract.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 5.22 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Corporate Asset Management Plan
Report of:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/03/2022-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The requirement for an Asset Management Plan ("AMP") is set out in the Constitution of the Council. The report sets out how the Asset Management Plan will be used to manage its Land and Property over the period 2022 to 2025.
- 1.2.** The content is directly linked to the Council's Aims of Open, Fair and Green. As the Council uses physical assets to deliver its services, it also is directly linked to the Council's priorities of being an open and enabling organisation, a council which empowers and cares about people and a thriving and sustainable place. However, the most important factor is that the Council is transparent in its property dealings and therefore this report directly responds to the Council being an open and enabling organisation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** The requirement for an Asset Management Plan is set out in the Constitution of the Council.
- 2.2.** The Council's current Corporate Asset Management Plan was created in 2015 with a plan period of five years and therefore the plan needs to be updated. This update was delayed by the pandemic.
- 2.3.** The Economy and Growth Committee responsibilities includes the development and delivery of the Council's Estates, Land and Physical Assets Policies. The Council's Head of Estates is responsible for

maintaining and regular reporting of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.

- 2.4. In November 2021, the Economy and Growth Committee received a report, Asset Management Plan Principles, which provided context and elements of the Council's proposed Asset Management Plan. It provided information that increased the Committee Members understanding of the process and potential approvals that may be required and set out the principles of an asset management plan.
- 2.5. The Council Corporate Plan for the period of 2021 to 2025, sets out its aims and priorities for the plan period. The Council's aims are to be open, fair and green and its priorities are an open and enabling organisation, a Council which empowers and cares about people and thriving and sustainable place. The development of the Asset Management Strategy captures these aims and priorities as the core values of the Strategy and its alignment to the current corporate plan.
- 2.6. The Council in delivering an asset management strategy is transparent and open about the activities that it is undertaking relating to land and sets out the projects, strategies, procedures and protocols that are relevant to the plan. These activities are part of the Council's solution to address inequalities, promote fairness, opportunity and support vulnerable residents whilst also addressing the other factors that the Council has to deliver whilst dealing with property. The crosscutting themes of the environment, the climate emergency and the Council's ambitions relating to sustainable development are also a significant factor to the way the Council deals with its property. It is clear from the plan that the Council's estate is key to the delivery of the Council's ambition for Cheshire East.
- 2.7. This report presents the Council's proposed Asset Management Plan, following on from the Asset Management Plan Principles Report, for the plan period of 2022 to 2025. The plan period of three years is to allow realignment with the normal cycle of planning, synchronises with the end of the Council's Carbon Management Strategy and Corporate Plan. It will also allow an opportunity to reconsider the Council Land and Property needs once the challenging signals in the economy that affect land and property sector have settled.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Committee approves the Corporate Asset Management Plan and notes the outcomes of the previous Corporate Asset Management Plan.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Councils Asset Management Plan ("AMP") sits alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy ("MTFS") as a key document in supporting the

Councils' decision making about investment in its land and property assets to deliver the Councils' properties and services.

- 4.2. CIPFA ("Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability) guidance advises Councils to agree an Asset Management plan as part of their budget strategy from 2020/2021. CIFA's guidance on asset management includes ensuring that councils regularly review their need for property with operationally or strategically.
- 4.3. The Council's Corporate Asset Management plans was agreed in July 2015 by Cabinet. At that time, it was envisaged that the report would be updated regularly as there may be significant progress and change over the course of the plan to require an update. It is important that the plan is updated regularly to ensure it is useful in supporting capital investment decisions which will deliver the MTFS priorities.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. There is no legislative requirement for the Council to have an asset management plan, it is regarded as good practice to have one. Therefore, the Council could choose not to have an asset management plan in place. The asset management plan lasts until 2025 and can be refreshed periodically. If this does not occur, the plan will not reflect the most recent changes and the plan will not be as helpful in the development in the Councils budget strategy.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	<p>The Council would not have an asset management plan in place and would not be compliant with the constitution.</p> <p>It would delay the implementation of the actions of the Asset Management Plan</p>	The Council would not be an open and transparent organisation.

6. Background

- 6.1. The Council has a continued commitment to creating a vibrant local community with a strong local economy and good provision of infrastructure, housing and employment, Buildings are important in creating a sense of place and property assets which the Council owns make a contributions to creating sustainable communities, this presents the Council with the challenge of reviewing its property portfolio to ensure that it is optimised in terms of its resources and so that it can contribute to community needs and

the Council's budget. The AMP describes the Council's assessment management policy and practice and provides a baseline on property and land matters and supports capital investment decisions identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy ("MTFS")

6.2. It identifies the key strategic policy and resources influences affecting the Council and sets out parameters for asset management over the medium term. The plan has a five-year horizon with regular reporting on progress. The Asset management plan is intended to demonstrate efficient use of assets and that property is effectively managed and for purpose: the plan will be used to:-

- help to guide decisions making about capital investment decisions in Council property to support the Council objectives
- help identify land and property which is surplus to requirement for current purposes and help guide decisions about the future use of the land or property
- support decisions on acquisitions and disposals
- indicate where reviews will be required to ensure best use of assets in the future.

6.3. The objectives of the AMP are:-

- Deal with the impact of Climate Change
- Deliver services to the Community and Customers of the Council
- Deliver a compliant Estate with appropriate governance systems
- Enabling and delivery of an efficient Council
- Delivery of Economic Growth in Cheshire East
- Enabling the delivery of quality of place

6.4. These objectives will:-

- Ensure the Council's land and property assets support the Council's objectives include considering use of land housing growth and to ensure Council's assets are used to support economic growth.
- Create a strategic framework for asset management to be able to support decisions about prioritising capital investment.
- Ensure the council's operational assets are fit for purpose for service delivery and the assets are reviewed at a local level with paths to improve service provision in communities.
- Reduce the council's environmental impact arising from its asset use or development.

- Maximising income opportunities and reduce asset running costs to support the MTFS.
- Ensure the Council's property is in good condition and compliant with all relevant health and safety requirements, equalities and access policy and standards to ensure accessible for people with disabilities.
- Ensure that during 2022-2025 the Plan will develop an integrated capital strategy to incorporate outcomes of service area plans.
- Highlight the need to develop an access policy and guidance.

6.5. Land and Property is the largest element of the Council physical asset base, valued at c.£500 million, excluding infrastructure. The Councils owns a diverse property portfolio. These are

- Operational- those support direct service provisions
- Investment- those providing a positive financial return
- Surplus- property no longer used in service provisions which are vacant or sublet
- Strategic land or property with growth and regeneration potential

6.6. The diverse property estate is spread throughout its administrative area. The majority of the estate is operation land used directly for services which the Council has a statutory duty or discretionary responsibility. The Council holds land adopting a corporate landlord approach for the management and ownership of its assets. This enables the Council to utilise its assets to deliver its services for residents and communities, deliver physical projects, generate investment return, and where assets are no longer required be reused for different purposes or unlocking the value of assets for reinvestment in the capital programme. The corporate landlord approach also allows the Council to be fair to residents only using the resources it needs to deliver its services. The formation of a Corporate Asset Management Plan is a key element to enabling this activity. A copy of the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2022 to 2025 can be found at Appendix A.

6.7. The purpose of an asset management plan is to align the asset portfolio with the needs of the organisation. The Council has recognised the benefits of an Asset Management Plan, specifically incorporating the need to have one in its Constitution. The needs of the Council at a high level are expressed in its corporate plan. These are then converted into actions through the asset management plan. The needs of an organisation, such as a Council are complex and at times at a transactional level may appear to be competing. An asset management plan also needs to understand the complexity of the

Council's needs. The asset management plan aids the Council to deliver its aims and objectives as they relate to the Council's Land and Property in an assured and consistent way.

- 6.8.** The Council's previous asset management plan was for the years 2015 to 2020. The Council has been delayed in generating an updated asset management plan whilst the Council focused on pandemic response.
- 6.9.** The environment the Council finds itself in has changed radically since 2015, becoming increasingly challenging, which in turn has an impact on the Council's land and property assets, for example;
- 6.9.1. Like all local authorities and other government services, Cheshire East Council is in general experiencing an increased demand for its services, but with reduced resources to deliver these services. This has become more evident as the Country recovers from the impact of the pandemic.
- 6.9.2. During the pandemic, the already growing and inevitable trend toward digital has been accelerated with consumers increasingly accessing the goods and services they need in this way. This has accelerated pre-existing trends in the commercial property market and also driven the residential market as well. However not all residents have the ability to access services through digital means and the Council has sought to consider these factors in its Digital Strategy. The consequences of the pandemic from a land and property perspective will take time to work through.
- 6.9.3. The Council has also proven the value that can be obtained from differing styles of working and therefore it is reasonable to prepare the Council for a more hybrid style of working post pandemic, which in turn will have property implications.
- 6.9.4. The construction and maintenance of physical assets is also meeting a challenge with the cost of goods and services related to construction increasing significantly. This is due to a number of factors, but principally one of increased demand and insufficient supply.
- 6.9.5. Energy security and cost is increasingly having an impact on the day to day lives of residents and also the Council. The reasons for instability in the energy market are global and outside the control of the Council.
- 6.9.6. The implications of the UK's decision to exit the European Union is still being worked through, particularly in the Farming sector, where the Government plans to replace the CAP with a UK alternative. Offering opportunities, it will also have implications for the Council as an owner of Farmland.
- 6.10.** In addition to these day to day challenges the Council has also recognised the significant global implications of climate change and in 2019 looked to play its part in addressing the climate emergency, seeking to become carbon neutral by 2025 and therefore looking to build on and accelerate previous

success in this area. Further to this the Council has also accepted the challenge of the Borough becoming carbon neutral by 2045, where it will have to take a clear leadership role in delivering this ambition.

- 6.11.** Changes to legislation and regulation have also had an effect on the way the Council could choose to use assets. For example, the Council has prudently tracked the Government's emerging position on Public Works Loan Board borrowing. As a consequence, it is not likely that the Council would seek to acquire assets purely for investment purposes over the plan period and this is reflected in the plan.
- 6.12.** The Council has also developed a number of policies that have an impact on the way that the Council uses its assets. For example, the Community Asset Transfer Framework and the Housing Development Framework look to achieve best value outcomes for property assets rather than achieving best consideration through a Capital Receipt. The Corporate Asset Management Plan identifies these differing needs for assets, generating a framework to derive the overall best solution for the Council in a pragmatic and consistent way.
- 6.13.** Despite these changes and challenges since 2015, the Council has achieved good progress against the Corporate Asset Management Plan for the previous plan period. A non-exhaustive commentary about performance against the previous asset management plan is set out in Appendix B. Although some of these have been reported previously it is worth noting the following key successes;

 - 6.13.1.** Release of just under £43m since 2015 / 16 Financial year, releasing over 120 properties to their future economic uses and supporting assets for future economic use and supporting the Council's Capital Programme in line with the MTFS.
 - 6.13.2.** Delivered a wide range of physical projects ranging from Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Environmental Waste Hub and Composting plants, numerous school expansion projects in Congleton, Sandbach, Crewe, Alsager, Nantwich and Macclesfield.
 - 6.13.3.** Achievement of a compliance score for Council Accommodation of 97% in 2021, building from 87% in 2018, continuing to keep our workforce safe undertaking various statutory inspections, including legionella and removing over 7.8 tonnes of Asbestos from the Council's estate, since 2018.
 - 6.13.4.** The Council has also made good progress on carbon neutrality both prior and following the introduction of the Carbon Neutral Plan.
 - 6.13.5.** The Council has also improved the understanding of its ownership of property, developed improved governance systems and improved its ability to take decisions about land and property. In addition,

the Council has enhanced its ability to scrutinise matters relating to land and property through the development of the Committee system.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** The Corporate Landlord has engaged with a wide range of services in the development of the Corporate Asset Management Plan. A report setting out the principles behind asset management planning and those used for the Corporate Asset Management Plan has been presented previously to the Committee.

Members were consulted on the asset management plan between 02nd September and 16th October and their comments and observations were worked into the plan.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1** The Council has a number of powers to acquire land for its various functions and also to dispose of land those power include general powers under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011.

8.1.2 Holding property assets creates a variety of liabilities, some of which are irrespective of active use. Liabilities include legislative ones – for example, the liability to pay rates on a variety of properties, both domestic or non-domestic. There are also actions that are those of a prudent property owner such as keeping the property in reasonable repair to prevent legislative liability arising – such as under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 and making sure that the property does not become the source of a private or public nuisance; There are contractual ones that may arise through the use of property such as landlord's obligations when a property is let. The Council has a number of powers to acquire land for its various functions and also to dispose of land. Those powers include general powers under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011.

- 8.1.3** All actions involving the disposal or acquisition of property assets must be taken in accordance with the Council's Constitution current at the time of taking the decision. The Council's Constitution (December 2021) Chapter 2, Part 5, Paragraph 53 currently delegates to the Executive Director of Place authority to acquire and dispose of assets and requires that:

8.1.3.1 Under Chapter 3, Part 4, Section 4, Paragraph 42 The Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Director Place must be consulted on all proposed acquisitions and disposals of land and property

8.1.3.2 Under Chapter 3, Part 4, Section 4 in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules Acquisition and disposal of land and property over £2 million is the responsibility of the Finance Sub-Committee; and below £2m is

a member of the Corporate Leadership Team in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Director Place.

8.1.4 The Council operates a "Cascade" principle of delegation under Chapter 2 of the Constitution to ensure that decisions are taken at an appropriate level.

8.1.5 It is recognised good practice for local authorities to produce and implement an Asset Management Plan to enable the Council to manage, develop and rationalise their built and land assets.

8.1.6 The Localism Act 2011 introduced the General Power of Competence, which allows the Council to do anything an individual can do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. These powers have replaced the previous wellbeing powers; however, the use of these powers must be in support of a reasonable and accountable decision made in line with public law principles.

8.1.7 The Council has a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers and must fulfil this duty in a way which is accountable to local people and when land is being disposed of it should be ensured that the land is disposed of for best consideration. In instances where land is disposed of at less than best consideration the Council is providing a subsidy to the occupier of the land. In such cases the Council must ensure that the nature and amount of the subsidy complies with Subsidy Control rules.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. The net book value of the Land and Buildings estate is £487 million. This includes £29 million of Investment properties, managed on a commercial basis with the aim of generating a medium to long-term return on investment.

8.2.2. Many capital investment projects are related to the Council's fixed assets, such as its stock of buildings. Needs and priorities identified in the Asset Management Strategy will require consideration for inclusion in the Council's Capital Programme and have wider financial consequences. Equally important is the opportunity to generate capital receipts from the disposal of land/property where there is no current or likely future operational need.

8.2.3. The asset management strategy will therefore link up with the capital strategy and map out the Council's longer-term requirement for the successful management of the asset base and more importantly the ambition for the expected future asset base.

8.2.4. When prioritising investment it is essential to understand the long term cost of maintaining and operating existing assets and their fitness for purpose, having consideration of which are deemed essential in continued service delivery or which can be considered for alternative uses.

8.2.5. The backlog of maintenance in some key assets is recognised and alternative approaches to longer term solutions will be considered to address

the risks this poses rather than continued investment by the Council in the same assets. This is neither an effective asset management approach nor affordable in the long term. These will be considerations in key assets such as schools and administrative buildings required for the long term.

- 8.2.6. A disposal strategy is in place to relinquish or find alternative beneficial uses for assets deemed surplus to requirements.
- 8.2.7. Capital receipts from asset disposal represent a finite funding source and it is important that a planned and structured manner of disposals is created to support the priorities of the Council. Cash receipts from the disposal of surplus assets are to be used to fund new capital investment or offset future debt or transitional costs.
- 8.2.8. The Council will continue to maintain a policy of not ring-fencing the use of capital receipts to fund new investment in specific schemes or service areas unless a suitable business case is made available, but instead subject to any claw back provisions, to allocate resources in accordance with key aims and priorities.
- 8.2.9. Capital receipts have been an important source of finance in previous financial years. However, in considering the 2022/23 capital programme, a prudent approach has been taken and there has been no assumption of any significant additional capital receipts. A minimum amount of £1.0m additional capital receipts has been anticipated in 2022/23. The Council's current strategy is to realise net receipts of £4.0m for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 and that these receipts will reduce the overall Capital Financing Budget.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. This paper provides the Committee information directly relating to the role of the Committee, enabling it to undertake its functions as set out in the constitution.
- 8.3.2. The Corporate Asset Management Plan firmly establishes the link between the Council's Corporate Plan, the MTFS and other Capstone plans and policies and how the Council will deal with its assets.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. This is an information report that describes the Council's activity in developing an Asset Management Plan. It does not consider any property transactions, specific projects, or policies. Equality implications are considered at the point of creation of a specific business case or project and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is not required to support this report. It is however noted that there is an opportunity to shape the direction of the Council's approach to its assets in the formulated Corporate Asset Management Plan.

8.5. Human Resources

8.5.1. None.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1. The risks associated with management of risk for property are dealt with on a case by case basis, at a project and programme level. There is a general risk that the Council with limited resources is not able to achieve all its objectives that it would hope in delivery of its asset management plan. this will be dealt with by prioritising where appropriate the various needs of the Council and risks are escalated where appropriate.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1. The Asset Management Plan supports programmes of activity that link directly to the Council's Corporate Plan which in turn helps deliver the Council's Aims and Priorities in rural communities. This includes the management and delivery of activity on the Farms Estate, where new entrants into farming are given the opportunity to start their farming careers. Other elements of Policy such as the Community Asset Transfer Framework can give communities the opportunity to have greater involvement in their communities. The section on the Rural Action plan in the AMP articulates the important linkage between Rural Communities, the Council's land and property assets and their use.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1.1. The Asset Management Plan supports programmes of activity that directly link the Council's Corporate Plan, which in turn delivers the Council's Aims and Priorities through the delivery of the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan Objectives. The range of activity will have an impact on this sector of our community, for example the use of council land to deliver affordable homes or understanding the barriers to customers accessing digital services very much drive the objectives and outcomes and actions of the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. The Asset Management Plan supports programmes of activity that the directly link the Council's Corporate Plan, which in turn delivers the Council's Aims and Priorities through the delivery of the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan Objectives. For example it considers the inequalities across the borough that is articulated in the Joint needs assessment (the Tartan Rug) in the delivery of the Council's services through its physical assets.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. Climate change implications are considered on a case by case basis for each project requiring using physical assets, acquisition or each disposal activity. However, by setting Climate change at the centre of the

asset management plan this will allow the council to emphasise the specific issue as part of the overall development of the asset management plan.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates Andy.kehoe@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07973 892082
Appendices:	A – Corporate Asset Management Plan B – Performance against previous CAMP
Background Papers:	None.

Corporate Asset Management Plan 2022 - 2025

Cheshire East Council

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Asset Management Strategy	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Vision.....	5
3. Core Values and priorities	5
4. Objectives	6
4.1 Dealing with the impact of Climate Change	6
4.2 Delivery of services to the Community and Customers of the Council	7
4.3 Compliant Estate with appropriate governance systems	8
4.4 Enabling and delivery of an efficient Council	8
4.5 Delivery of Economic Growth in Cheshire East.....	9
4.6 Enabling the delivery of quality of place	9
5. Summary	10
Part 2: Corporate Asset Management Plan.....	12
1. Introduction	12
2. Scope of Asset Management Plan.....	12
2.1 Highways	12
2.2 Schools	13
2.3 Parks, Public Open Space and incidental Open Space	13
3. Strategic Alignment.....	14
3.1 Customer Experience	14
3.2 Capital Programme.....	15
3.3 One Public Estate.....	15
3.4 Sufficiency Statement.....	16
3.5 Farms Strategy	16
3.6 Regeneration Strategy.....	16
3.7 Workforce Strategy	17
3.8 Estate Transformation, Strategic Leisure and Neighbourhood Review	17
3.9 Rural Action Plan.....	18
3.10 Environmental Strategy	18
4. Asset Management Strategy Objectives	19
4.1 Values and Objectives of the Asset Management Strategy.....	19
5. Governance for Decisions	20
.....	20

5.1	Committees	21
5.2	Corporate Landlord Approach	21
5.3	Officer Governance	22
5.4	Decision Making	23
6.	Pipeline of Activity	26
6.1	Acquisition of Land and Property	26
6.2	Maintenance of Council assets	26
6.3	Review of Council Assets	27
6.4	Development of Council Assets	27
6.5	Disposal of Council Assets	27
7.	Asset Portfolio Description and Inventory	29
8.	Risk Management	30
8.1	Insurance	30
8.2	Market Forces	30
8.3	Statutory Compliance Risk	31
8.4	The council's approach to maintenance of its assets	32
8.5	Asset Rationalisation	32
8.6	Investment in Assets	33
8.7	Prioritisation of requirements	33
9.	Performance Measures	33
	Action 01: Right size the Asset Base	33
	Action 02: Carbon Neutral Council by 2025	34
	Action 03: Deliver key projects and policies	34
	Action 04: Governance	35
Appendices	37
	Appendix A: Categorisation of assets held by the Council	38
	Appendix B: Value of Land and Buildings held by the Council	39

Part 1: Asset Management Strategy

1. Introduction

The Council's Asset Management Strategy sets out the vision, core values and objectives that form the context for the preparation of the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

The Council has adopted a Corporate Landlord model for the management and ownership of its land and property assets. This means that the responsibility for management and maintenance of assets is transferred from service directorates to the Corporate Landlord, which is a centralised function. The practical way that this is delivered is by a number of services working together, in detail, to deliver this positive outcome for the Council, its residents and customers. Land and Property have a corporate nature to them. They have value and are also used to deliver our services.

This strategy and the associated corporate asset management plan, builds on the work of the Council's previous asset management strategy, set in 2015. It references where appropriate the plans, policies, strategies, procedures and protocols that have been developed by the Council to ensure sound asset management and obtains its direction from the Council's Corporate plan for 2021-2024 and the products it delivers are set out in part two, section nine of this document.

The Council finds itself in unprecedented and uncertain times. Although the Council has successfully dealt with the organisational challenge of the pandemic, both enabling itself to continue to operate and also using all its resources, including its land and property to support residents and businesses in Cheshire East through the pandemic, it now faces additional challenges. As global economies seek to recover, the cost of Energy, construction cost inflation and other economic issues have directly impacted the Council as a landowner and also affected the Council's customers, its partners and businesses in the Borough. Further unwanted and unwelcome instability has been introduced on the global stage early in 2022, amplifying these effects. The full implications of the transition away from the EU, particularly for the farming sector, needs to be understood.

These factors have generated economic uncertainty for many and have the potential to impact areas of deprivation within the borough disproportionately. The Council also understands the significant impact that Climate change will bring and sees the urgent need to change the approach to management of carbon and has a plan in place to deal with its own carbon emissions by 2025. The Council, through the challenge of the Pandemic, understands that there is a once in a generation opportunity to work in different ways to improve delivery of services, outcomes for our residents and our improve our customer experience. Due to these factors it is appropriate the plan period of the Council's Asset Management Strategy is from 2022 to 2025.

Despite the complexity that the Council faces, as an owner of land and property, it is in a good position to deal with the issues it faces and the actions set out in part two, section nine will deliver the outcomes required for the estate.

2. Vision

The purpose of the vision of the estate is to set its strategic direction, satisfy the Council's aspirations for the future and provides a strong link to the fundamental purpose behind the Council holding assets.

*Deliver a fit for purpose, efficient estate that meets the needs of our residents, services, partners and our organisation's delivery that is centred on the Council's aims of **Open, Fair and Green** and enables the Council to deliver its priorities, of being an open and enabling organisation, which empowers and cares about people whilst delivering a thriving and sustainable place.*

The core values of the Asset Management Strategy and its objectives flow from this vision.

3. Core Values and priorities

The Council Corporate Plan for the period of 2021 to 2024, sets out its aims and priorities for the plan period. The Council's aims are to be open, fair and green and its priorities are an open and enabling organisation, a Council which empowers and cares about people and thriving and sustainable place. The development of the Asset Management Strategy captures these aims and priorities as the core values of the Strategy and its alignment to the current corporate plan. Further information on the corporate plan can be found at the link below.

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/council_finance_and_governance/corporate-plan.aspx

The Council in delivering an asset management strategy is transparent and open about the activities that it is undertaking relating to land and sets out the projects, strategies, procedures and protocols that are relevant to the plan. These activities are part of the Council's solution to address inequalities, promote fairness, opportunity and support vulnerable residents whilst also addressing the other factors that the Council has to deliver whilst dealing with property. The crosscutting themes of the environment, the climate emergency and the Council's ambitions relating to sustainable development are also a significant factor to the way the Council deals with its property. It is clear from the plan that the Council's estate is key to the delivery of the Council's ambition for Cheshire East.

The Council priorities are being an open and enabling organisation, which empowers and cares about people and delivers a thriving and sustainable place. These also bring and additional focus to the Asset Management Strategy.

Therefore, the way that the Council chooses to use the assets is aligned to its corporate plan, its aim and objectives and is underpinned by legislation and government guidance relating to land and property transactions and use.

4. Objectives

Despite the challenging situation that the Council has found itself in whilst it responded to the pandemic, its awareness of the Climate Emergency and more generally the property and economic related uncertainty, risks and challenges it faces into the future, the Council is well placed to deal with these. The basic themes of asset management remain generally unchanged although additional emphasis may be placed on certain areas. Fundamentally the Council as a land and property owner uses its assets to deliver services to its customers. Good examples of the range of activity that this would cover are meeting the demand for school places, supporting Council as a corporate parent, delivery of Economic Development or release of assets to support the Capital Strategy. Ultimately the Council needs to make sensible policy related decisions about its land and property.

There are a significant number of factors that will affect how the Council's Estate will operate into the future. These range from the hopefully short-term implications of the Pandemic, Brexit and the adjustments needed to reflect a future economic situation as a consequence of these. Then more strategically, a potential shift in the way the Council delivers its services and the Council's response to climate change is potentially longer-term factors, that will require a modal shift by the Council in the way it does its business to achieve its plans and finally the normal economic pressures and challenges that the Council faces to achieve a balanced MTFS.

It is important to consider what way the objectives of an Estates Strategy will interact with each other. This is due to the competing nature of the various demands on the Estate. The objectives need to work in balance, recognising that there are statutory obligations and other factors on the Council that will from time to time influence the weight that these objectives have in arriving at a conclusion about a particular property related matter.

Finally, in setting objectives, there is a need to allow sufficient flexibility that will allow the Corporate Asset Strategy to be able to with any unforeseen eventualities or increase the emphasis on specific objectives. Therefore, the design of the objectives and the way that these will interact with each other will allow for this flexibility in the strategy.

4.1 Dealing with the impact of Climate Change

This captures the Council's Corporate aim of GREEN and cross cuts the Council's three priorities. In 2019 the Council set itself the target of being Carbon Neutral by 2025. The immediate effect that the Council wishes to have is to mitigate its own impact, but it also wishes to influence those in its supply chain and more widely Cheshire East. This is a challenging and demanding target, which has implications for the Council's property portfolio and therefore must be an objective for the asset management plan strategy. It includes revising the way energy for the council's buildings is generated and used, using the Council's land for generation of carbon efficient power and planting projects. Further to this the Council has also sought to take a lead in delivering a carbon neutral Borough by 2045, thereby placing itself in a leadership role, with a need to demonstrate leadership in this area.

Putting aside the issue of climate change, the general idea of managing any estate in a sustainable way makes perfect sense, particularly for organisations, like the Council, that are long-term custodians of public assets. In addition, reducing our reliance on international energy sources (in particular Gas) will make the Council more resilient and less sensitive to global and national threats and similarly switching to green electricity, which tends to be UK based also improves the resilience of the Council. More broadly the Council will need to evolve its thinking about how it uses the land in its custodianship to be more reflective of the Council's Carbon Action plan and embed this in its future plans, policies and strategies.

Given the specific deadline set by the Council to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2025 and its longer term ambitions by 2045, and the compelling reason of climate emergency sitting behind this objective, this is strategically the most important objective to the Council in the delivery of its services through its asset portfolio.

4.2 Delivery of services to the Community and Customers of the Council

At its centre the Council is an organisation that delivers services to the community it serves. Local Authorities will mainly hold assets to enable the delivery of public services: perhaps the most obvious asset examples would be public buildings, highways, schools and parks. The Council has a statutory obligation to deliver some of the services it provides, and this may have implications for land and property assets in the control of the Council. Adequate forward planning by services is required to ensure that service needs are mapped out and correct and timely conclusions about property transactions can be made.

The Council recognises the complexities of the borough and though the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment it understands the challenges faced in each of its communities with noticeably differing outcomes and areas of deprivation within the Borough. The introduction of Integrated Care Partnerships in 2022 offers an opportunity to align the Council's services to the eight care community areas.

This objective responds to the Council's Corporate aim of FAIR, however given that land and property assets are used to deliver the Council's services it touches on all the other priorities as well.

The Council continues to face an economic challenge of responding to an increased demand for its services, in a challenging economic climate and as a result, the Council has been working hard to simplify its estate and also look for opportunities for the Community, where appropriate, to engage in the delivery of services through its assets.

A new factor in this specific objective area has been the pandemic which is unprecedented in recent times. It has radically shaken up the way the Country and every business, including the Council, works and has been a significant disruptor in the way that the Council operates. In the main this has accelerated thinking related to ways of working accelerating pre-existing, obvious, trends. This factor has also accelerated new ways of accessing goods and services. The full impact of this acceleration is not yet fully understood but it is clear that land and property may have a different role to play in the delivery of future services alongside other solutions and therefore this should be a principle of the asset management plan.

The Council's Digital Strategy, 2022 to 2024, considers the implications of this for our residents and customers. Whilst digital undoubtedly creates opportunities, it also brings challenges. Supporting those who are unable or choose not able to use digital channels is an important factor for the Council's physical footprint. The Council needs to address inequalities for those

in our most disadvantaged communities and those communities where individuals and businesses have poor connectivity.

Finally, whilst considering these important elements, there is also a recognition that the resources of the Council are finite, the Council's estate needs to be efficient and retention of assets that are underused presents financial challenges to the Council.

4.3 Compliant Estate with appropriate governance systems

As an owner of land and property the Council has obligations towards its property and those that use it. These obligations can be statutory, and the Council must comply with certain regulations. In addition to this the Council also has to comply with its own governance arrangements, flowing from the constitution and its statutory obligations from holding public assets.

The Council has good systems in place to achieve this, but it must remain vigilant to maintain and improve the standards it has set and also seek out opportunities to improve its performance in this area, minimising risk for the Council.

As the Council continues to face a challenging economic environment, where funding of capital and revenue is challenging and care is needed to focus the Council's resources carefully, care needs to be exercised to ensure that these activities are completed and therefore this objective must be part of the plan. Capital Receipts do enable the delivery of the Council's MTFS and in particular, the Capital Programme. It reduces the need to borrow in order to deliver the schemes within the Capital Programme, which have been recognised corporately as been important to the Council as part of its delivery of its vision, core values and priorities.

The Council also has extra statutory obligations imposed on it as an owner of property in the public sector. Since the previous Asset management Plan, the Council has developed its property governance systems reviewing its governance arrangements relating to land transactions and developed robust processes to allow transparent and compliant decisions on land and property to be made.

Therefore, from a day-to-day Operational Estate service perspective, appropriate governance systems are the most important objective for the Council. As not achieving success in this area would have immediate consequences for the Council.

4.4 Enabling and delivery of an efficient Council

This objective responds to the Council's Corporate aim of FAIR and touches on the Council's three priorities. By statute and practice the Council, as a custodian of public money seeks to deliver, with limited resources, an efficient Council and services which is aligned to Corporate Plan and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Therefore, the Council will also seek to achieve this with its land and property assets.

It is logical when considering this objective that the Council's Estate is 'right sized' to deliver its services to customers and partners. It makes sense that efficiency is sought in the running of those assets and that its corporate risk is appropriately managed. Over the previous plan period the Council has worked hard to address long standing property matters, making good progress, for example rationalising vacant buildings in its portfolio and releasing them to their future economic use.

Where assets are surplus, these should be released to allow them to be brought back into an economic use. Where appropriate this may mean that the Council would generate a Capital Receipt to contribute to the MTFS or deliver another objective of the Council, for example release of an asset to community use through the asset transfer framework or delivery of housing through the Housing Delivery Framework.

When the Council considers assets that are potentially surplus it will also consider the needs of all services, where the release of an asset for an alternative purpose, for example education, may achieve a good outcome for the Council, both in terms of the delivery of services, but also from an economic perspective. Therefore, adequate forward planning by services is required to ensure that service needs are mapped out so correct and timely conclusions about property transactions can be made.

The Council delivers its capital programme through the MTFS and the Capital Strategy. It makes sense to synergise capital investment and disinvestment of assets, preventing investment in assets that will be disposed of and timing Capital investment aligned to Capital Receipts. Obtaining the best possible understanding of whole life costs of projects at inception is also appropriate as is alignment of the Council's limited resources to the capital programme to ensure that the tempo of projects can be achieved.

An additional factor that the Council must deal with in the short term is the inflationary cost of construction and energy in the UK and internationally, where significant upward shifts in the norm have been experienced as the world seeks to recover from the Pandemic.

4.5 Delivery of Economic Growth in Cheshire East

Responding to the Council's corporate aim of FAIR and is directly linked to the Council's priority of delivering a thriving and sustainable place.

Although Cheshire East should be rightly proud of its economic performance overall both regionally and nationally, there is a high level of inequality across the borough in addition to this the community is also split between its urban centres and its rural communities. The Council has a number of plans led by the Economic Development team which will assist in the delivery of this objective. As part of their plans, Council owned physical assets are an important element of their plans.

It stands to reason that delivery of Economic Growth should be an objective for the asset management Strategy.

4.6 Enabling the delivery of quality of place

This objective focuses on the Council's corporate aim of FAIR and the corporate priority of a thriving and sustainable place.

Without doubt Cheshire East is a great place to live, grow and work, however there are significant variations in the borough in terms of inequality, urban and rural communities, with differing life outcomes as set out in joint strategic needs assessment. There is a need to respond to national Policy and take a lead locally regarding the changing environment as referenced in the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission. Thinking on how places will be developed in the future, for example 20-minute neighbourhoods, also needs to evolve, in part to enable the enhancement of the quality of place, but also to make our places more

sustainable. Cheshire also benefits from a wide range of heritage assets where there are opportunities to lead by example, for example the delivery of Macclesfield's Heritage Asset Regeneration Plan in 2018.

The Council is a significant stakeholder in the Borough, with statutory duties relating to a range of services it delivers. It also has land and property and statutory powers to make a difference at a local level.

Therefore, this objective should be part of the plan.

5. Summary

These estate core values, priorities and objectives are underpinned by the functional strategies, policies, procedures and protocols that deliver them. These documents and activities are the way that the Council will look to implement the Strategy and on a day to day deliver the objectives of the Asset Management Plan.

The Council's aims are to be **open**, **fair** and **green** and the Council's priorities are an **open** and **enabling** organisation, a Council which **empowers** and **cares** about people and **thriving** and **sustainable** place. These are the core values of the asset management strategy and this strategy, through its implementation will deliver the Council's aims priorities as set out in the table below.

Asset Management Strategy Objectives	Examples of Strategies, policies, procedures and protocols	Council Aim	Council priority
Dealing with the impact of Climate Change	Carbon Neutral Council by 2025	Green	Sustainable
Compliant estate delivered with appropriate governance systems	Events on Council Land Statutory Compliance and H&S Implementation of revised property system Corporate Landlord model Property Assurance Framework	Open	Thriving Cares Enabling Enabling
Delivery of services to the community and customers of the Council	Community Asset Transfer Framework Events on Council Land Housing Development Framework One Public Estate	Fair	Empowers Thriving Sustainable Enabling
Enabling and delivery of an efficient Council	The Medium Term Financial Strategy Estate Optimisation, improving the financial position of the Council, review of assets (Eg Estate Transformation, Strategic Leisure Review, Disposals programme, Farms Strategy, Surplus asset process) Support to Services Asset Management Strategy and Plan	Fair	Open, Sustainable Sustainable Enabling Open, Enabling
Delivery of Economic Growth in Cheshire East	HS2 Town Centre Regeneration and TCVP / Regeneration plans Highway Schemes	Fair	Thriving Thriving Enabling

Enabling the delivery of a Quality of place	Quality of Place	Fair	Sustainable Thriving /
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Part 2: Corporate Asset Management Plan

1. Introduction

The Corporate Asset Management Plan applies the vision, core values and objectives of the Council's Asset Management Strategy and translates this into a workable plan with specific actions that can then be followed delivered and by Officers and Members.

There are a range of competing demands on the Council for the use of its resources, including its Land and Property. Through the Council's Asset Management Strategy the linkage is created between the Council Corporate Plan, the MTFs and Capital Strategy and other key strategies, policies, procedures and protocols that underpin the Corporate Asset Management Plan.

These documents link the actions falling out of the Corporate Asset Management Plan, right size the asset base, carbon neutral by 2025, delivering key projects and policies and governance, to the Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan.

2. Scope of Asset Management Plan

As part of delivery of its services and responsibilities the Council holds land and property assets. It stands to reason that the Council would have a plan in place to describe how it manages these assets. This is the reason to create an asset management plan, to bring together the policies, processes and statutory responsibilities to set out how the Council manages its assets and also give Officers and Members of the Council a handrail when it comes to decision taking in the future that relates to assets. It allows Residents, Officers, Members, partners, and other stakeholders to understand the Council's approach to its assets and to test whether the approach continues to serve the overall needs of the Council as the plan is delivered.

The Council uses a 'Corporate Landlord' model to deliver its services. As set out in the Constitution the ownership, management and maintenance of property assets is aligned to the corporate landlord as opposed to service directorates. This allows the Council to deliver better more efficient services, unlocks the value of assets, seeking efficiencies through joint arrangements with public sector partners and ensures a consistent approach to the management of the Council's property portfolio.

The Council's land and property assets are by far the most significant in terms of value when compared to all the other assets that the Council holds. However, the Council in the main uses its assets to deliver physical services and where the assets are no longer required, they are disposed of. The Council's Asset Management Plan recognises that there are elements of the Council's Asset Portfolio which are not directly covered by the Asset Management Plan, however the basic principles covered in the plan are aligned to the general way these assets are managed in the wider Estate. Therefore, this approach does not hinder the day-to-day operation and delivery of services. Examples of this are:

2.1 Highways

The Borough's Adopted highway infrastructure is dealt with under a Highway Asset Management Plan: this may include land which is in the ownership of the Council, for example land that has been acquired for a highway scheme.

2.2 Schools

Through devolved school management, introduced in 1993 the budget, management and maintenance of schools has been devolved to individual council-maintained schools, with the so they can best deliver their services in a way that benefits them. An element that has been devolved is management and maintenance of the physical assets of maintained schools. A further factor is the Academy process which will see the further devolution of maintained schools, with any new schools being implemented through this process as well. Very good progress has been made to convert Cheshire East's schools to Academies and we would expect that this work would continue.

It is noted that in order to deliver the required level of school places across the borough there may be a need for on-site expansion or development of new sites to meet increasing Borough demand.

It is noted that very often schools can and do 'buy back' Facilities Management Services from the Council. Where this happens, those services are delivered aligned to this plan. In addition to this the Council may also deliver capital construction schemes on school sites and again where applicable this plan is followed in the delivery of these schemes. Council schools may also opt to become an academy with all schools expected to become an academy by 2030. The Council also undertake capital maintenance works at schools, though the school capital maintenance grants in conjunction with Children's Services.

2.3 Parks, Public Open Space and incidental Open Space

The day-to-day management and maintenance of these spaces is delivered by the Council's Environment team through the ANSA contract or similar service providers. The Council is working closely with its partner to improve understanding of the detail of the assets that ANSA maintain and integrate this information with other data held on the Council's property systems, which in turn will lead to a greater understanding of this category of asset. Countryside parks are managed day to day in a similar way by the Countryside Service, with similar work ongoing.

The Council publishes information on its asset through its transparency pages and this information can be found through the Council's Internet pages. The Council manages its land and property assets through a property management system. The Estates Service in the previous plan period reprocured its system and is using this as an opportunity to increase the information it has easily available on its assets for management purposes. This is an ongoing piece of work which is being delivered organically by the team alongside their day to day activity. This work once complete will allow a deeper understanding of this asset category and enable further detailed analysis of the Council's Estate.

Although the Council, as a statutory body, may have powers available to it to manage the environment, these powers are not vested in the Corporate Landlord. As an owner of land, it is not able to maintain the assets of third parties, therefore activity on third party land is not covered in this plan.

The Council continues to improve its understanding of land ownership and areas of land in its management.

3. Strategic Alignment

This section describes the linkage between the Council's Corporate Plan and the Asset Management Plan. Given the Council's Land and Property Assets also have a value, it will demonstrate the linkage between the use of assets and the MTFS. It will also consider the linkages to the following non exhaustive list;

- Customer Experience
- Capital Programme
- One Public Estate
- Sufficiency statement
- Farms Strategy
- Regeneration Strategy
- Rural Action Plan
- Environmental Strategy
- Workforce Strategy
- Estate Transformation

It is noted that there are a significant number of pieces of legislation, policies, processes and procedures that directly or indirectly affect the Council's land and property assets.

The Council's Corporate Plan for the period of 2021 to 2024, has set out its aims and priorities for the Council until 2024, which aligns well to the normal Asset Management Plan period. It was anticipated that the Asset Management Plan would be delivered in 2020, however this was hampered by direct response to the pandemic. Since the pandemic there has been increased uncertainty which may affect property. Therefore, the next review of the asset management plan is set for 2025, to enable realignment of the corporate plan and the asset management plan and also allow a timely review to consider any implications of the current economic environment.

In the corporate plan the Council's aims are to be open, fair and green and its priorities are an open and enabling organisation, a Council which empowers and cares about people and thriving and sustainable place. The Asset Management Strategy uses the Corporate Plan's aims and priorities as its core values and sets out the linkages between these values, the objectives of the strategy and how through implementation of the Council's Strategies, policies, plans, procedures and protocols it references the Council's priorities.

At the very heart of the Council's use of assets is the delivery of its services, both front of house and back office, balancing the needs of front-line delivery with the need to deliver a balanced MTFS. The Council develops its understanding of how it wishes to employ its assets through its values and objectives of its strategy.

3.1 Customer Experience

The Council adopted a Customer Experience Strategy in 2021, covering the period of 2021 to 2024. Customer Experience refers not just to the services the Council provides but also how

the Council treats its customers accessing those services. This has a direct impact on the way the Council uses its assets.

The Council knows that it provides a wide range of services to its customers and know that the experience will differ depending on the service accessed and the way in which it is accessed. As a public service provider it is important that customers can trust the Council to design services which respond to their needs and the needs of the local area and that these are delivered in a way which provides value for their money. It is therefore clear the way that the Council uses its assets will be central to the delivery of the strategy.

The inter relationship between the Council's assets and Customer experience makes delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy's vision important, including design of joined up services with partners, ensuring services maintain flexibility to adapt to customers needs, adopting a digital first solutions and ensuring that the Council achieves value for money. It is noted that the Estates Service, as a corporate landlord, is also client and resident facing.

3.2 Capital Programme

The Capital Programme, which is part of the Council's MTFS is the way that the Council articulates the capital investments it will make in any given cycle of planning. Disposal of assets is directly linked to this activity in that it provides capital monies to achieve these planned objectives. The current Capital Programme includes:

- Investment in projects to enable the delivery of the aim to be a Carbon Neutral Council by 2025
- Town centre redevelopment and regeneration projects
- Investment in infrastructure to improve walking, cycling and rail capacity in the borough, and capacity on the roads to reduce congestion and improve air quality
- Investment to enable the delivery of housing sites that meet the needs of residents including affordable housing and housing for vulnerable and older people
- Investment in assets to support key front-line services such as improvement to our leisure centres, expansion of our schools and planned investment to maintain the highway network

The Asset Management Plan and Strategy are therefore linked to the Capital Programme, allowing projects to be constructed on council land and allowing capital to be released back into the programme.

3.3 One Public Estate

The Council has the appetite and desire to work closer with its public sector and third sector partners. The Council recognises that our partners can be best placed to lead and deliver better outcomes to our residents, or as set out in the Customer Experience Strategy we have the appetite to design joined up services that may deliver a greater benefit to our residents and customers. One Public Estate also generates opportunities to generate efficiency and improve value for money.

There are a number of opportunities that should mature in the plan period. Developments in the Health Sector, with the creation of Integrated Care Partnerships, should generate opportunities for the Council to explore with the NHS. The delivery of a revised Community Asset Transfer Policy in 2020 also generates opportunities for the next tier of local government and third sector originations to have more control and innovate the way they want to deliver in the day to day lives of our residents. Opportunities related to the delivery of HS2 and

implementation of Rail Network Improvements in the Crewe area will generate opportunities to work closer together with the Rail sector.

Following the pandemic, there is a generational opportunity to redefine the way the Council delivers services and thereby generate opportunities to work more closely with OPE Partners.

3.4 Sufficiency Statement

Cheshire East Council are committed to providing the best quality education and support for all our children and young people to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. Having the right educational placement is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that it has sufficiency of school places and also responds to the increasing demand for specialist SEN places. This is particularly important in areas where there are high priority planning areas. The Council's Education team has a robust and detailed plan to deliver school and specialist SEN places through existing education assets and where appropriate developing new educational sites. These sites may be delivered through the planning process or delivery using the Council's own assets. The Estates Service's Property Projects Team support the Education Team, part of the Children's Services Directorate through managing the development and delivery of agreed programmes of construction works to expand or build new facilities to provide the agreed School places.

The Council's sufficiency statement is set out on the Council's web site and the SEN provision plan 2020 to 2023, dated December 2020 articulates the requirements in that provision. As would be expected there is ongoing work to maintain the currency of this suite of documents.

3.5 Farms Strategy

The Council's Farms Estate provides entry level farming opportunities to aspiring farmers, using almost 4,900 acres of land in offering 47 farms on 19 separate estates geographically dispersed across the borough. As an income generating service, it is managed to a strategy developed and designed in 2011 and reviewed in 2018 to drive continuous improvement in the quality of offer to prospective tenants, environmental and financial performance within the framework of the Council's wider ambitions towards socio economic and environmental objectives.

Currently the Council is reconfiguring its Estate to make these opportunities more effective. Following the UK's exit from the European Union, Central Government is considering what steps it needs to take in the Farming sector, which in all likelihood will affect and adapt Government funding for the sector, with an anticipated shift of emphasis towards environmental measures. The Council also wishes to make its presence felt in the delivery of its target to be carbon neutral by 2025, which may have implications for its land holdings.

Although the current Farms Strategy has sufficient flex to deal with these issues, following the adoption of the Asset Management Plan, when a better understanding of Central Government's plans for the Farming sector has been established, it would be appropriate to review the Farms Strategy, within the CAMP period.

3.6 Regeneration Strategy

Cheshire East is a vibrant place, but the Council has clear ambitions to further enhance the economic prosperity and vitality of the borough.

The Asset management Plan recognises that the Council's land and built assets will frequently be key to unlocking economic development priorities including delivery of new homes on strategic Council owned housing sites, regeneration projects in Crewe town centre, projects linked to the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework, and projects which may stem from the emerging Town Centre Vitality Plans for the borough's nine key service centres.

The Estates service will work collaboratively with the Economic Development Service to identify and unlock those opportunities, harnessing the expertise and capacity in facilities management, valuation, information and project management, to ensure that the Council's asset portfolio is optimised to support economic wellbeing. This will generate opportunities to create new jobs, supporting the vitality and viability of town centres, and delivering new homes within the borough.

The development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), offer opportunities to empower our communities to secure wider economic benefit and vitality for our towns. Therefore as a owner of land and a leader of Economic Development in the Borough, the Council as an owner of land and property is open to the opportunity that this offers for our towns.

3.7 Workforce Strategy

The pandemic has brought many challenges for the Council however it has demonstrated that the Council and its workforce can work in different ways. The disruption to normal ways of working has provided a once in a generation opportunity to transform, to design a future workplace that improves work life balance, whilst keeping the Council's customers at the very heart of what it does. The Council therefore has delivered its workforce strategy in December 2021, covering the period 2021 to 2025.

The workforce strategy looks at the key challenges the Council faces, its future skills requirements, including attracting and retaining a more inclusive and representative workforce and enhancing career pathways.

3.8 Estate Transformation, Strategic Leisure and Neighbourhood Review

The Council has been disrupted by the effect of Covid and national lockdowns, which has acted as a driver for change, accelerating pre-existing changes to working practices and use of technology. This allows the Council, its Members and Officers and the residents that they serve the opportunity to change the shape of the services that are provided. It generates exciting opportunities to look closely at what is important, for example the opportunity to consider significantly altering the Council's Carbon Footprint, or offering greater opportunity for staff to be flexible when working for the Council, whilst noting that inequality in term of access to digital and other factors also need to be considered.

It is clear that the Council's operational estate is a significant factor in the implementation of the Workforce Strategy. The Council is examining its requirements for its operational office portfolio seeking to transform the estate creating alignment to the workforce strategy. This element of work is called Estate Transformation. The Council also wants to better understand how it can deliver its services in a consistent way to the neighbourhoods within the borough.

A strategic leisure review is currently underway to consider and ensure that a 'best fit' approach is adopted to any current or future commissioning of health and wellbeing activity

this will include the current management fee paid to Everybody Sport and Recreation. The review has a target to reduce council expenditure on Health and wellbeing activities of £250k.

3.9 Rural Action Plan

As part of delivering its Corporate Plan outcomes, the Council has undertaken to build a thriving and sustainable place and as part of that aim it seeks to have thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all with thriving and active rural communities. The Rural action Plan is part of this commitment.

A Rural Action Plan has been in place since 2018/19 and an update will be considered by Committee later in 2022 to cover the period 2022 -25. The Plan provides a framework for the Council's approach to the economy in rural areas that takes into account relevant policy and strategic direction, but with a rural focus.

The rural aspect of Cheshire East is significant in terms of population, economic impact, and its contribution to the borough's 'quality of place'. The Council's assets in rural areas include land, buildings and shared or co-located resources which can be used to support the Council's ambition for thriving rural economies and communities. For example, the current rural Action Plan highlights the opportunity to support local communities to identify assets that are important to them and promote the Register of Assets of Community Value as a means of recognising their value and potential for sale to community groups.

The Council also has a direct involvement in agricultural land through the Cheshire Farms Service, which was created to manage the agricultural estates of both Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council on their formation as unitary authorities in 2009. Cheshire East Council retains an estate of 4833 acres with a range of entry level farm types and sizes, providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture. Taking account of future changes to agricultural payments, climate change and the environment, there will be a need and an opportunity to ensure that the Council's farm estate is well placed to address these multiple agendas.

Decisions related to the use of Council land and assets can have a significant impact on the economy, environment and communities in Rural areas and there is an opportunity to ensure that such decisions are 'rural proofed' in order to deliver thriving rural economies and communities.

3.10 Environmental Strategy

In May 2019 Cheshire East Council committed to being a carbon neutral council by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough. In May 2020 the Council adopted a Carbon Action Plan which set out how it will achieve this. The plan set a carbon reduction target of 46% and an inseting target of 60% by 2025 from 2019 baseline levels. To date the Council has achieved carbon reduction of 5% and delivered 28% of its inseting target. However, there are a series of projects in development that are forecasting total carbon reduction of 49% and total inseting of 60%; these projects remain subject to delivery. The Council has an active plan to achieve these targets and these are replicated as actions in this plan. Among the recommendations accepted was for the council to reduce carbon from buildings by adopting the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) 'Excellent' or equivalent standard for new buildings and aiming for the highest BREEAM standard achievable for refurbished Council buildings. This is also baked into this plan for any future property projects that will enter the MTFs. Further to this the Council has also set out

its ambition for the Borough to be carbon neutral by 2045. With higher than average CO2 emission it is clear that the leadership of the Council will be important to achieve this goal. The Council's target to achieve its own Carbon Neutral status by 2025 is an important step in that leadership.

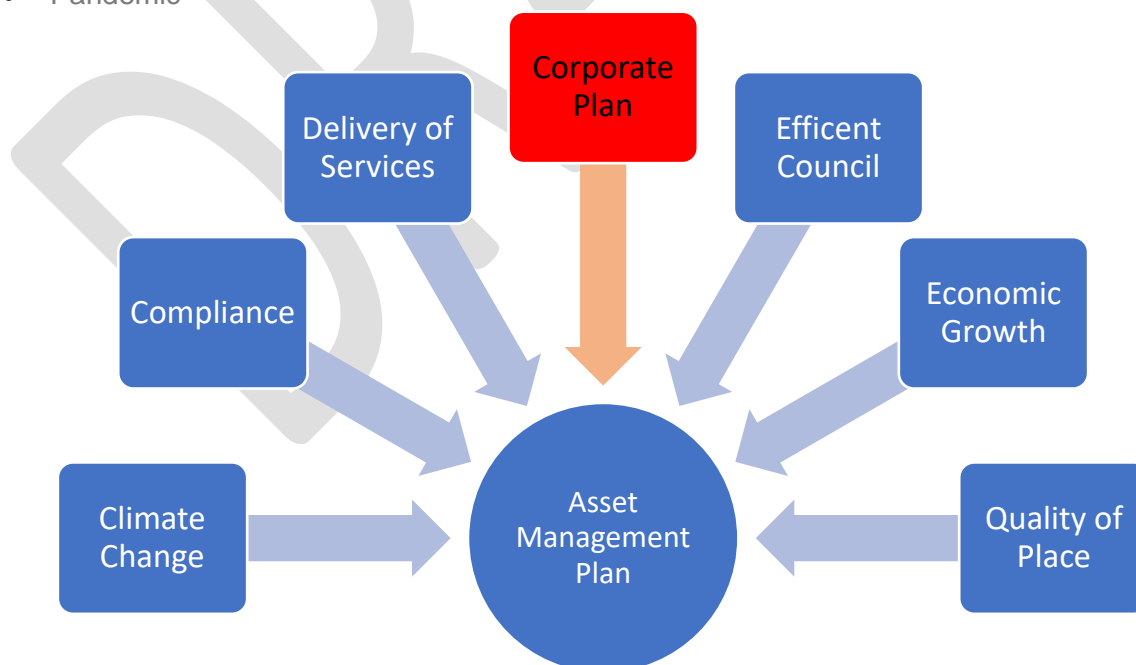
4. Asset Management Strategy Objectives

The Asset management Strategy sets the context for the Council's asset management plan which seeks to align the Council's assets to its organisational needs. The AMS obtains its direction from the Council's Capstone document, the Corporate Plan, to which it is aligned to. Therefore, the asset management strategy objectives directly read over into the asset management plan and is linked to the Corporate plan by this means. There are host of other factors that affect the Council, ranging from the current challenging economic climate that the Council finds itself in, through to issue like dealing with the Pandemic and Climate Emergency. It also has to factor issues such as statutory process, inclusive of s123 of the Local Government Act. The Asset Management Strategy sets out the tactical activities that are delivered to enable the strategy and in turn the asset management strategy to deliver the Asset Management Strategy Objectives and ultimately deliver the Council's Corporate Plan.

4.1 Values and Objectives of the Asset Management Strategy

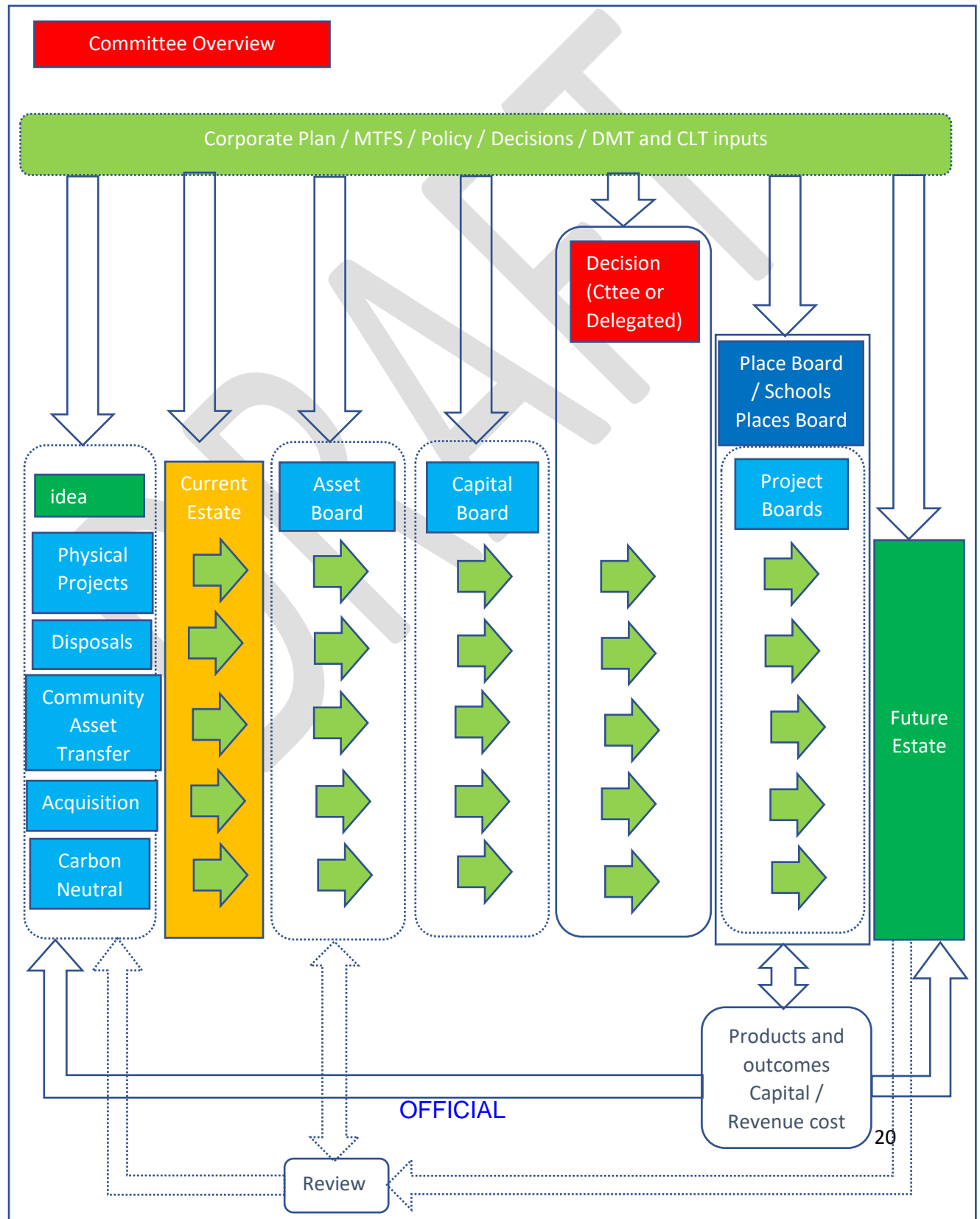
Influencing Factors

- CE, UK and International economic climate and outlook
- Climate Emergency
- Statutory process
- Pandemic



5. Governance for Decisions

The Council's approach to Land and Property Governance combines the policy setting and scrutiny of members with the day-to-day management of the Council's Land and Property assets being delivered by Officers. The approach taken is described diagrammatically below.



5.1 Committees

There are two committees that have an interest in the governance of land and property matters. These are in general the Finance Sub Cttee and the Economy and Growth Cttee. This is due to the unique nature of land and property: it has a commercial value, therefore it is entirely understandable that the Finance Sub Cttee will have an interest in land and property, however unlike a normal financial instrument it has a physical presence in the Place and therefore the Economy and Growth Cttee with its task to deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth will also have an interest in this category of asset. The responsibilities of these Committees are definitively set out in full in the Council's Constitution, however in summary:

- **Finance Sub Committee**

With responsibilities for the Council's finance and performance, its responsibilities include property transactions including the buying, selling and appropriation of land and property and oversight, scrutiny and budgetary review of land and property.

- **Economy and Growth Committee**

The Committee is responsible for policies and making decisions on matters relating to delivering inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Its responsibilities include development and delivery of the Council's Estates, Land and Physical Assets Policies and Oversight, scrutiny reviewing outcomes, performance, budget monitoring and risk management for facilities management, assets and Farms.

5.2 Corporate Landlord Approach

The Council has adopted a corporate landlord approach, which enables the Council to utilise its assets to deliver better, more efficient services to our communities. It unlocks the value of assets, seeks efficiencies through joint arrangements with public sector partners and maximises private sector investment. It ensures the provision of a consistent, corporate and strategic approach to the management of the Council's property portfolio, consolidating resources, eliminating duplication improving efficiency procurement and the establishment of corporate property standards and supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. The area covered by the corporate landlord includes the operational, industrial, community, highways, surplus, education, drainage and green spaces. Services based in / operating the operational estate are in essence 'tenants of the Corporate Landlord'.

The Corporate Landlord, personified in the role of Executive Director Place, is delivered by the Estates Service, working in partnership with other services, with officer oversight provided by the Assets Board and the relevant committees described earlier. The Estates service

provides property projects, property services, data management, facilities management and hosts the Farms shared service. The Corporate Landlord is based upon the following principles:

- As a corporate resource land and property is not in the sole control of any one directorate or service. The objective of any resource of the Council is to deliver the best outcome for residents as a whole.
- Property related activity and budgets are managed centrally, although for practical service reasons some assets are treated separately, for example:
 - Environmental Services, responsible for grounds maintenance, operationally manage the Council's these elements though a separate budget, although the asset remains in the ownership of the Corporate Landlord and the buildings on these assets are maintained by the Corporate Landlord.
 - Highways, and their adjacent lands are managed thought the Council's Highways contracts, with planning, maintenance and operation delivered though the relevant budgets, although the land remains in the ownership of the Corporate Landlord.
 - Other services, including the Countryside Service, Tatton Park and the Farms Estate operate under similar arrangements.
 - The day-to-day management of Schools in Council ownership are devolved to those schools governing bodies, with the potential of buy back of relevant services where this is required from the corporate landlord.
- The Corporate Landlord is responsible for maintenance of condition and compliance of the Council's operational buildings. This is particularly important whilst the Council drives to achieve its Carbon Neutral targets and in a post Grenfell era.
- The Corporate Landlord leads on all property transactions and reviews such as, land and property review, leases, acquisitions, disposals, land assignments, valuations, CPO's and wayleaves. The Corporate Landlord also provides surveying advice and support to services, should they need this in the delivery of their plans.
- Services should not commence negotiations related to any land and property asset related plans / co-locations / bids, change of use or additional expenditure without it being agreed through the Corporate Landlord and they must consult with the Executive Director Place on the same.

The Corporate Landlord takes the lead for property reviews and rationalising the Council's Estate. It does this in conjunction with other services of the Council and this is overviewed by the Asset Board. Products from this review include the Council's disposal programme, inputs include works such as the Council's Schools Sufficiency Statement.

5.3 Officer Governance

As set out day to day, routine property transactions are dealt with by the Estates Service, led by the Head of Estates. This typically translates into a high volume of low value transactions and enquiries. The assets board, which draws from all services within the Council has been created to deal with more complex matters and ensure that a broad spectrum of views is obtained in developing officer recommendations.

- 5.3.1 The Asset Board.** A non-decision-making officer board, it enables the development of officer recommendations for decisions relating to assets and obtaining inter department engagement in development of proposals relating to assets. Routine asset matters are not considered by the board, only those that have a strategic importance to the Council or ones where there is a requirement for inter department consideration of the course of action that is proposed. It acts as a pathway for capital projects not contained in the MTFS to the Capital Programme Board. It enables officer governance and review of asset related matters, monitoring performance against the property assurance framework. It allows for cross council requirements for land and property to be considered, and review of assets that may come forward for disposal. It does not replace the valued oversight and scrutiny of the Cttee system.
- 5.3.2 Capital Programme Board.** A non-decision-making officer board, it is interested in enabling the delivery of the agreed Capital Strategy as set out in the MTFS. It considers business cases of projects that come forward for funding and assists in the development of officer recommendations for decision takers. Further information on the process that underpin the board can be found in the Capital Strategy section of the MTFS.
- 5.3.3 Programme and Project Boards.** Following inception and the decision to progress with asset projects they are managed by way of project boards. These boards bring the relevant project management support, technical support and enablers to support the project lead and the SRO for the projects. Programme Boards are then used to escalate decisions and issues and monitor projects, at an Officer level, generating officer recommendations, where applicable for decision takers. It monitors products and outcomes, capital and revenue cost of projects. The Place programme board is an example of the operation of this type of officer governance.
- 5.3.4 Schools Place Planning Board.** The council is enhancing its governance arrangements around the delivery of school projects. It is developing a Strategic Programme Board and a Tactical Programme Board, which will align with the Corporate Asset Board. The relationship between both Boards will be established and embedded during the lifetime of this plan.

5.4 Decision Making

Decision making for assets is delivered in line with the Constitution and within Council's scheme of delegation. Where appropriate it has the benefit of development of the proposal and its officer recommendations through the asset and capital programme boards.

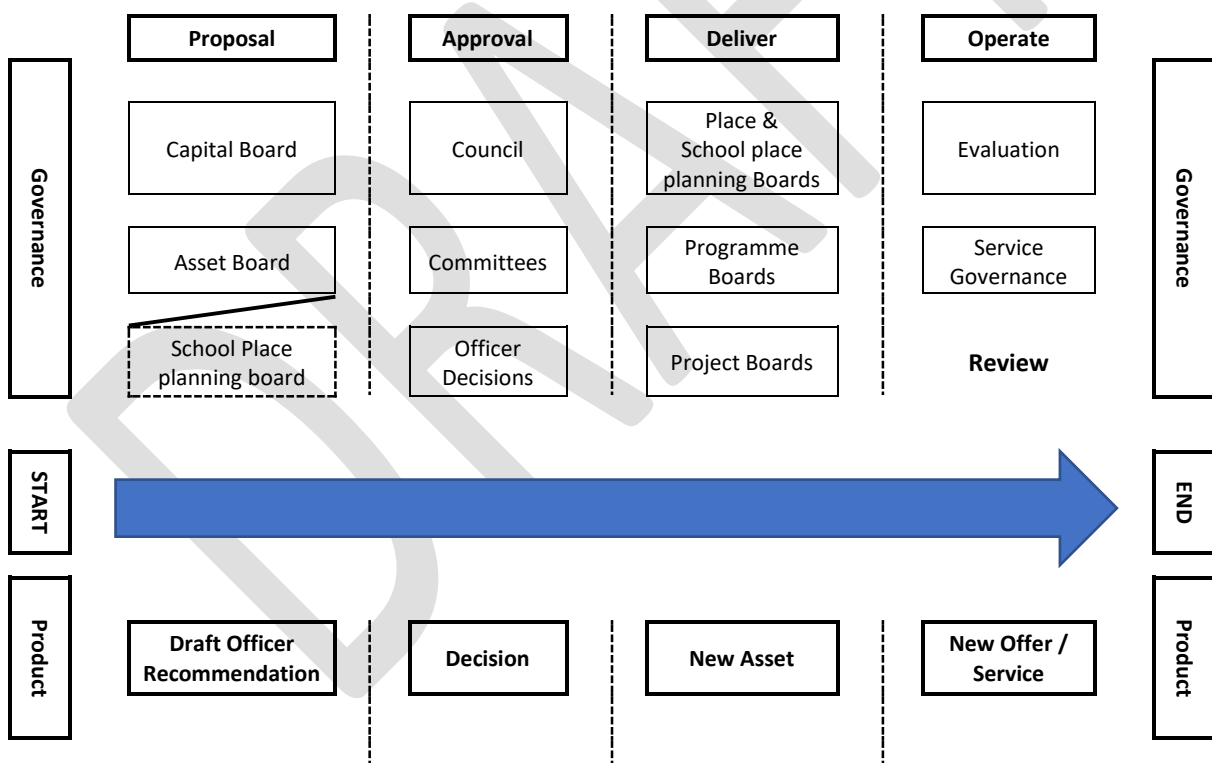
The Acquisition and disposal of land and property and other assets over £2m is the responsibility of the Finance Sub Committee and below £2m is the responsibility of a member of the Corporate Leadership team in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Director of Place. There is an officer scheme of delegation in place to allow decisions to sit at an appropriate level within the organisation.

The Secretary of State, under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, is required to make decisions on property matters where there is a less than best consideration of £2m or more.

Officer Decision Records and Committee decisions are supported by Legal Services and Finance Services formal consultation. The earliest engagement of the Estates Service where property is involved is strongly recommended.

A key factor to making good decisions is the requirement for reporting so progress can be monitored, and improvements made during the lifetime of the plan.

A schematic showing this process is set out below.



Notes	<p>This tests whether the project is feasible: for example, do we have the funds to do it? Do we have the land and property assets to do it? Are there better uses of the resources that would be needed?</p>	<p>The approval process takes the draft recommendation, supported by the relevant reporting, key service and officer inputs, consultations, and tests this as appropriate at DMT's and Corporate Leadership Team as appropriate.</p>	<p>Manages the implementation, escalates issues to the relevant levels as schemes progress. Enhanced by Cttee responsibilities set out in constitution.</p>	<p>Scheme complete and then evaluated, control given to the user to 'operate'. Day to day running delivered by relevant service. Enhanced by Cttee responsibilities set out in constitution.</p>	Notes
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Development of a Project: relationship between governance and approval elements

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6. Pipeline of Activity

The Council has a series of programmes of work that affect its land and property. As a land and property owner the Council acquires, maintains, develops and disposes of assets. These activities are aligned to the Council's constitution and also legislation where this is applicable.

6.1 Acquisition of Land and Property

The Council acquires land and property to deliver physical projects or services within the Borough. Notably the Council is delivering a number of significant highways schemes which require third party land and rights and are supported by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) procedures. In line with the constitution the Council's Committees are vested with the power to exercise CPO powers. These programmes are developed and aligned to the MTFS with the Capital Programme Board taking a key role in developing the proposals to be put forward for consideration. Once live, where appropriate, these schemes will be monitored by programme boards until they are brought to conclusion.

Infrastructure schemes do span a significant period of time, from inception, through land acquisition, physical construction and completion to conclusion of compensation claims which are governed by statutory processes. The Council are dealing with large number of individual land or rights acquisitions which need to be agreed in accordance to statute and anticipate a further significant volume of work that will be needed to deal with further compensation claims arising from these schemes. It is anticipated that this work will continue beyond this asset management plan period.

The Council has also tracked Central Government's position on use of PWLB for investment purposes. During the plan period it is not anticipated that the Council will acquire assets primarily for investment purposes over the plan period.

6.2 Maintenance of Council assets

In ensure the Council's estate remains fit for purpose, and meets all statutory compliance requirements, both capital and revenue maintenance works across the Council's estate are undertaken. This includes capital maintenance at schools. The Council has undertaken a full asset verification exercise which enables both the planned and cyclical maintenance programmes to be programmed, in addition to reactive works. There are some 16,000 maintenance orders raised annually:

- 6,000 Reactive maintenance,
- 3,500 Planned maintenance,
- 6,500 compliance – of which 1,500 are for statutory works.

Planned projects across the estate are developed for both maintenance and improvement works with an average of 200 projects delivered per year. Many of these are undertaken to enable the Council to meet its Carbon reduction commitments.

Annual audits are also undertaken to ensure the Council's buildings and schools are meeting their statutory compliance requirements, protecting residents, staff and mitigating corporate risk.

6.3 Review of Council Assets

The Council reviews its assets on a regular basis. This may be a consequence of service led work where due to changes in delivery the requirement for land and property assets change, however the Council, through the corporate landlord also delivers review of land and property. This work is fed into the Assets Board, with outcomes being then reported into the appropriate decision takers. The product of these reviews can be the Council releasing assets to their future economic use, investment or re purposing, of continuance of the use of the asset. During these reviews the opportunity is taken to improve the Council's ownership information about its assets as well.

6.4 Development of Council Assets

Several projects identified within the MTFS, and Capital programme will require the redevelopment of existing or newly acquired assets. The Property Projects team provides professional / technical construction related advice, in line with the Council's, Government, and Construction best practice, to ensure the satisfactory and compliant procurement, development and delivery of those projects is undertaken satisfactorily. Key activities of the Property Projects team include:

- project management of construction works at council-owned properties
- implementation and management of UK compliant frameworks – Several frameworks have been procured / set up to call off Construction works for Council wide use and its related parties, Parish, Town Councils, Academies
- procurement of professional consultants and contractors - Several frameworks have been procured / set up to call off professional Consultancy services for Council wide use and its related parties, Parish, Town Councils, Academies
- providing professional & technical construction-related advice

On average, a portfolio of construction projects, circa £70million is managed by the team on behalf of front-line Services, at various stages of development and across a wide and diverse range of the estate, with circa £10million of capital projects reaching successful completion each year. Typical projects include School expansions, Leisure refurbishments and development, Heritage protection and restoration, Demolition, Site remediation and Regeneration.

6.5 Disposal of Council Assets

Once an asset is no longer required for operational reasons, the normal process is for the Council to dispose of the asset so it can be brought back into economic use and the value of the asset be released to be used in a different way by the Council. From time to time the Council may not have an active use for an asset but look to retain the asset for strategic purposes or reasons. These assets are retained and reviewed periodically. The Council undertakes a thorough review of its vacant assets on a regular basis, focusing on vacant assets that are for some reason difficult to bring to the market or reuse. The Council has three main ways to dispose of land and property.

6.4.1 Disposal to the open market. The Council has a well-established Disposals Programme, which delivers Capital Receipts which are fed back into the Capital

Programme, funding those Capital Projects set out in the MTFS. As the disposal of assets supports the agreed Capital Programme a binding principle is that the Council does not ringfence Capital Receipts, as to do so would undermine the Council's own agreed Capital Programme. Assets disposed of on the open market are sold on the statutory basis (S123 Local Government Act 1972) of achieving best price/consideration that can be reasonably obtained through appropriate marketing and considerations and the Council exerts little in the way of control on the future use of the asset in order to achieve that maximised value. This programme of activity is monitored by the Finance Sub Committee. In the financial year 2021-2022 the Council disposed of six assets valued at £1.3m. The Council's 2022-26 Medium Term Financial Strategy includes an ambitious capital programme, totalling £633.7m. 62% of the programme is externally funded from grants and developer contributions; 32% is funded through prudential borrowing, with 6% funded from capital receipts and direct revenue contributions. Capital receipts have been an important source of finance in previous financial years. A more prudent approach has been taken in recent years and there has been no assumption of any significant additional capital receipts. A minimum amount of £1m additional capital receipts has been anticipated in 2022/23. The Council's current strategy is to realise net receipts of £4m for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26.

6.4.2 Disposal through the Housing delivery Framework. The Council has recognised the need for affordable housing across the borough as a result it has identified a series of assets which it will test through the Housing Delivery Framework in order to generate additional affordable housing. The framework will give the Council ability to intervene in the market and bring forward further housing provision will also enable the Council to:

- Contribute towards the housing supply across the Borough in order
- address identified housing need, including specialist housing
- provision and older persons housing provision.
- Support our economic ambition to increase the levels of working age professionals living in the area.
- To reduce the current use and cost of temporary accommodation.
- Have the potential to provide a revenue stream for the Council as opposed to a one-off capital receipt.

The framework will contribute towards the outcomes set out within our Economic Development Strategy, which highlights the need to provide the right housing offer to support the Council's economic ambition. The establishment of a Housing Development framework supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan as follows:

- Open - The selection of organisations to work with the Council has been established following a robust, transparent procurement process. The framework will deliver much needed housing.
- Fair - The proposal provides the Council with an opportunity to influence the type of development to meet housing need, especially in relation to increasing affordable housing and specialist housing provision.
- Green - Through the framework we will deliver homes which are well designed, affordable and safe, contributing to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the Borough.

6.4.3 Disposal through the Community Asset Transfer Framework. The final main method the Council uses to dispose of assets is the Community Asset Transfer

Framework. This recognises the important contribution the next tier of local government and third sector organisations can make in the community and the contribution that the Council can make in providing assets to these groups to deliver services. The Framework, approved in 2021, sets out the process a recipient organisation needs to follow and steps them through the process in a clear way to receive the asset. Disposals are predicated on groups providing significant value to the Community, that the asset is transferred 'as is', typically on a best value, not best price, basis and do have restrictions to ensure compliance with legislation and also to protect the Council's value in the asset. There are currently 17 assets working through this process.

7. Asset Portfolio Description and Inventory

On formation of the Council assets from all four antecedent authorities were brought into the ownership of the Council. Since this period of time the Council has undertaken an exercise to better understand these assets and also voluntarily register the bulk of its assets with HMLR. Although this work is not complete the Council has a very good understanding of its property ownership and what type of maintenance is carried out on land in its control. The Council publishes information about its assets for the general public to view on its web site and it also holds information on its assets on its corporate GIS and Property Management Systems.

In 2021 the Council has adopted a new property management system, and this has led to the Estates Service actively reviewing and improving the information it holds and deepening its understanding of its land and property assets. Additional benefits to running the service, such as case management delivered through the system has also currently been developed as is the integration and interoperability of the Council's asset register held for finance purposes.

The Council holds assets for a wide variety of reasons. The main reason the Council holds assets is for the delivery of services, for example schools, playing fields, its offices and parks – these are operational assets. It also holds assets which are not used for the Council to directly deliver its own services, these are non-operational assets and assets are primarily held to generate a financial return to the Council, for example business centres are deemed to be in this category. Finally, the Council also holds assets surplus, where they have been declared no longer required by the Council and held for disposal at a point in the future.

Like every other landowner it is a considerable challenge to maintain assets at a level that is acceptable to the authority and the Council's approach to this is set out in more detail in the risk section of this plan. The service has to maintain the assets within a tight financial envelope with constrained resources to deliver outcomes.

The Council owns 2,654 land and property assets and a summary table of these can be found at Appendix A. The value of the Council's land and property assets is £1.3bn and a summary of how this figure is arrived at is shown in Appendix B. Care needs to be taken when considering these numbers: although the Council appears to own a large portfolio of land and property worth a great deal of money, the reason it holds this land and property is typically for operational reasons and therefore the Council would not be able to realise the value or reduce its land holdings.

8. Risk Management

Risk management is a key factor for the Council in the way it delivers activity in its property in part due to the Council wishing to deliver its statutory responsibility but then also to deliver a quality environment for its employees and residents. Issues such as insurance and self-insurance, service risk and market trends and market forces are factors to consider.

The Estates Service approach to risk is to work closely with a variety of services to articulate the implication of various risks developing a no surprises culture. Where appropriate funding to deal with risk is applied for with appropriate time horizons so risk can be managed within the Council's capital strategy.

8.1 Insurance

The Council takes its responsibilities towards the land and property assets in its control seriously. More information on what the Council does to address its corporate H and S risk is set out below in the statutory compliance risk section. The Council's prudent and sensible approach to risk is an important factor for Insurers when considering the risk that they are willing to insure.

The Council has a number of decisions to take when considering insurance on its property assets. The specific details of the Council's insurance are commercially sensitive however it does actively consider factors such as affordability, excess and other factors. Therefore, having a prudent approach to risk management is a key factor in allowing the Council to access the insurance market at an affordable level, whilst also maintaining the level of insurance that is expected of it.

8.2 Market Forces

Immediately prior to the pandemic, the UK experienced a relatively benign period of low economic growth with low inflation and interest rates. During the pandemic the economy was subject to a wide range of stresses and inputs, which distorted the delivery of services, and the way property was used when compared to the previous marketplace. As the global economy sought to recover a range of further pressures emerged related to property: construction cost inflation, energy cost inflation and shortage of workforce, along with uncertainty about how physical property would be used in the future. The distinct shift in the marketplace to digital has also had a marked impact in the way services and products are acquired, used and accessed. In the opening months of 2022 pressure remains on the market with elevated international instability leading to further global uncertainty. It is currently not clear what the outcome of these changes will be, however it is certain that these may translate into short, medium and long-term implications for the property sector, which in turn may impact the Council, its physical assets and the land and property related projects it seeks to deliver.

When considering the commercial property market in the UK it is clear that there are significantly different drivers in the Industrial, Office and Retail sectors – this has been the case for some time. In addition to this the shift in the way town centres are used has also been noticeable. These are not surprising and affect not only primary but secondary property retail stock in town centres. In large part there has been a steady shift away from traditional high street retail towards the convenience of out of town retail and increasingly online, the

pandemic acting as a significant accelerant for the latter mode of retailing. It is not yet clear what the national proposition for back of office staff will be post pandemic, although it appears to be certain that some form of Hybrid working will be a feature for most, but not all office workers.

Significant construction cost inflation, supply of materials and trained workforce is hoped to be a short-lived issue as the global economy transitions out from under the impact of the pandemic. The Country has also experienced a significant spike in the cost of energy in the winter of 2021/22 with significant increase in the cost of energy expected over the balance of 2022 and into 2023, which painful in the short term may accelerate the national drive towards more renewable energy sources.

More locally, Cheshire East is in demand with pressure to build housing, the supply for which has been well established in the Local Plan. There is also an increasingly strong demand for industrial space within Cheshire East, outpacing supply, in particular in the North of the borough, which also has a strong demand for more lucrative housing.

The risks around Market Forces are regularly reported on through a wide range of decision making channels, at a variety of levels, within the Council so these can be appropriately managed and risks mitigated. Although the market is challenging there is always a need for residents to live work and play within the borough and as a result land and property owned by the Council, coupled with its regeneration and investment activities, will play a very real and vibrant part of the Borough's journey into the future.

It is also worth noting the elevated risk that residents face in a high inflation and high energy cost environment. As set out in Cheshire East's Borough Profile 2019 – 2020, in 2016 over 10% of the borough are in fuel poverty due to low income and high energy costs. Given the factor of inflation and significantly increasing energy there is a real risk that this may place additional pressures on the most deprived within the borough, which in turn may place more demand on the Council's services. This may see direct or indirect demand: for example, increased dependence on adult and children's directorates services or indirectly, using Council assets to keep warm during the day.

8.3 Statutory Compliance Risk

The Facilities Management Team, which is part of the Estates Service undertakes the role of managing and monitoring to ensure that all building-related statutory compliance requirements, for the CEC building portfolio, are met through a combination of maintenance obligations, routine inspections and regular risk assessment.

The Service has a strategic partner to deliver servicing, maintenance, statutory compliance and specialist consultancy services for the building fabric and the plant/equipment installed within all of the Council's building stock.

The Council as an owner of land and property has a general duty to those that use those assets through legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act and other specific statutory instruments and legislation which relates to particular issues of asset categories.

A wide range of statutory compliance tests are carried out on the Council's estate and in addition to this the service undertakes annual compliance reviews at each of the Council's operational premises, to ensure that all the statutory checks and records are in place and that local management are helped and guided to ensure they met with their statutory obligations.

The trend for the last four years has seen a steady improvement of performance with average compliance scores rising from 87.11% in 2018 to 97% in 2021

The service also undertakes statutory compliance audits for all 'maintained' CEC schools through an annual on-site compliance review inspection. Currently, schools inspected during the 2020-21 academic year were achieving compliance scores in excess of 85%.

8.4 The council's approach to maintenance of its assets

It is not possible for a property owner to maintain all its assets to the highest possible standard at all times. This is unavoidable due to the disproportionate cost of doing so but also the scale and nature of the land and property holdings of an asset owner would make this difficult. Even if such an approach would be possible it would also be questionable if such an approach would present value for money. It is noted that the Council's resources are finite and has to operate within a financial envelope in order to assist the Council achieve a balanced MTFS.

Therefore, the approach that the Council takes is to prioritise the maintenance of its assets is primarily focused on statutory compliance and then prioritised on a condition basis, which is achievable through the holding of a full asset verification register, which identifies those assets most at risk. Funding is held centrally within the Facilities Management team, which is part of the Estates Service to allow works to be delivered as an overall programme. Although the service does strive to achieve perfection at times it needs to deliver good enough in order to achieve its wider responsibilities.

8.5 Asset Rationalisation

The Council is also seeking to have a lean physical foot print so it can focus its limited resources to those assets and property that count so it can effectively deliver services overall to its customers, residents, staff and partners. Taking a 'need' not 'want' approach means the Council is best able to offer value for money to its residents.

Capital Receipts are an important element of the Capital Programme, supporting the MTFS. Disposing of land and property assets that are not required by the Council reduces the Council's requirement to borrow, enables it to more effectively deliver the key projects set out in the Capital Programme and in turn enables the Council vision, aims and priorities to be delivered. The Council also has a Community Asset Transfer policy which enables the next tier of local government and third sector organisations to deliver services to their communities.

Therefore, the Council seeks to rationalise its property portfolio where there are opportunities to do so. This will also allow savings to be released, reducing the burden on the Council overall, or reduce the volume of ongoing holding costs enabling improved services. It delivers this through releasing these assets to future economic uses, through its programme of community asset transfers, releasing assets onto the open market or reusing its assets for its own purposes. This allows the Council to consume less in the delivery of its services thereby having additional benefits such as carbon footprint reduction. The Council has also sought to address challenging to deal with properties, which have longstanding complex matters sitting behind them, and now has a good track record of dealing with this category of asset. The Council maps out the rationalisation of its assets through its disposal programme and this is reported to the Finance Sub Committee for overview and scrutiny.

8.6 Investment in Assets

The Council can and does plan new investment in assets as part of developing the MTFS and the Capital Strategy. This is delivered through the development of HLBC (High Level Business Cases) for each proposal. A significant factor for the Corporate Landlord is to ensure that these projects consider the whole life cost at the earliest stage so this can be integrated into the Council's long term financial planning. The Estates Service along with the Finance team are able and willing to support services in the development of these business cases.

8.7 Prioritisation of requirements

There is an inherent risk that competing corporate needs of the Council may be in conflict when considering the approach to programmes of work, budgets or the use of a specific asset. This risk is managed by the decision-making process where varying requirements can be tested minimises the risk of this, as does the Council corporate policies protocols and procedures.

9. Performance Measures

The approach of the asset management plan is to ensure performance by adopting a series of achievable actions, that are monitored at officer level through the governance structures set out in this report and are reported and scrutinised by the relevant Committee. In this way progress can be monitored against the plan. This approach is key in that it will drive delivery ensuring that the plan is central to the way the Council delivers activity for its estate. The actions arising from the asset management are set out below

Action 01: Right size the Asset Base

In outline: Right size the asset base of the Council to best serve customers and residents

Detail: This will enable the Council to release underused assets to future economic or community uses, generate capital receipts, make the Council more efficient and simpler to operate and increasing value for money, generating carbon benefits through a simpler estate, undertaking the following actions:

01.1 Delivery of Capital Receipts in line with the MTFS. Deliver the agreed target of a minimum amount of £1m in capital receipts has been anticipated in 2022/23. The Council's current strategy is to realise net receipts of £4m for the period 2022/23 to 2025/25. The Council will continue to adopt a 'best effort' approach to releasing assets, seeking at all times to exceed these targets.

01.2 Asset Transfer. Transfer assets to the next tier of Local Government and Community Partners through the Asset Transfer Framework. Providing an annual report on performance to the Economy and Growth Committee.

01.3 Review the operational property portfolio. Complete and implement the Estate Transformation, Strategic Leisure and Neighbourhood Reviews.

01.4 Use the Estate to Collaboratively work with Partners. Seek out opportunities to work with Partners on an OPE basis and in particular explore ways to develop the model of delivery for the Integrated Care Partnership.

Action 02: Carbon Neutral Council by 2025

In outline: Drive delivery of the Council's Carbon Neutral by 2025 agenda and deliver a sustainable estate.

Detail: Use assets to support the delivery of the Council's Carbon Neutral Strategy and provide professional and technical property advice to support this work stream. Achieve the plan targets set, achieving a carbon reduction target of 46% and an inseting target of 60% by 2025 from 2019 baseline levels and in detail deliver the following activities:

02.1 Sequestration: by 2025 deliver a minimum of 120 hectares of additional tree planting or equivalent sequestration.

02.2 Energy: by 2025 deliver a minimum of 18MW of additional electricity generation or equivalent carbon savings.

02.2 Buildings: by 2025 deliver a 28% reduction in carbon from gas use and 71% from electricity across our estate.

In addition, the Council will use its property portfolio and the Estates Service, where applicable to support the following targets set out the Council's Carbon Neutral Strategy

02.3 Streetlighting: by 2025 to reduce the carbon from our streetlights by 67%.

02.4 Fleet: by 2025 to reduce the carbon from our vehicle fleet by 29%.

02.5 Business Travel: by 2025 to reduce the carbon from our business travel by 25%.

02.6 Waste and Water: by 2025 to reduce the carbon from waste and water use by 16%.

And

02.7 Reduce carbon from buildings: Adopt the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) 'Excellent' or the Cheshire standard for assets under £10m and aiming for the highest BREEAM standard (or equivalent) achievable for refurbished Council buildings.

Action 03: Deliver key projects and policies

In outline: The Council as an owner of land and property will work with the respective services delivering key projects and policies.

Detail: The Council are delivering a wide variety of projects that require the Council's land and property and technical and professional property advice. The success of these is key to the Council's plans for regeneration, investment and creating a sense of place in the Borough.

03.1: The Corporate Landlord will support the key projects set out within the MTFs and Capital Strategy to implementation. Identifying land and property where appropriate for these projects.

03.2: The Corporate Landlord will support services in the development of their high level business cases for submission into the Capital Strategy, through the Assets Board and the Capital Programme Board.

03.3: Monitor key projects and programmes (for example the disposal programme), to mitigate the risk of over investment in assets, which may be renewed or disposed of.

Action 04: Governance

In outline: The Estates service, in conjunction with others, will continue to manage risk, deliver governance activities, seek to improve its knowledge of the Council's Estate and continue to review and refine relevant strategies, policies and procedures, including the delivery of a Farms Strategy.

Detail: It is key that any organisation is well run and the appropriate checks and balances are in place to monitor performance and provide opportunities to improve the service that is provided.

04.1: Ensuring Statutory Compliance. Delivery of a safe Estate that complies with Government Guidelines and Legislation is a key factor for any property owner and additionally so for Local Government where the Council is has a key role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its residents. Along with managerial monitoring of performance a report will be submitted to the Economy and Growth Committee for scrutiny

04.2: Maintain Governance and compliance. Ongoing management of the property assurance framework with an annual report produced to demonstrate compliance and progress against the framework. This will be provided to the Economy and Growth Committee to scrutinise.

Performance against the Asset Management Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, with a report on the same provided to the Economy and Growth Committee to scrutinise.

04.3: Continue to improve the Council's property data. The Estates Service, and where applicable other services, will continue to improve the data held on the Council's Corporate systems relating to its property holdings. In year performance on this matter will be reported to the Economy and Growth Committee. In addition, the Estates and Finance team plan to improve the interoperability of their respective datasets in the plan period.

04.4: Review and Deliver a Farms Strategy. Within the Asset Management Plan period 2022 – 2025 and following Central Governments replacement of the CAP, review the current policy, considering the Council's Carbon Neutral plans and seeking opportunities to best serve new commercial entrants to farming.

04.5: Risk Management: The service will continually review its assets for risks and escalate these as appropriate. Where applicable it will develop the appropriate business cases to mitigate these risks.

04.6: Reporting: develop an annual cycle of reporting, refresh areas of policy as appropriate during the plan period, create a robust linkage between the MTFS and the Asset Management Plan.

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Appendices

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Appendix A: Categorisation of assets held by the Council

Category	Sub-category	Sub-count	Count
Administrative			10
Libraries			15
Tenanted properties			123
Comprising:-	Assets commercial portfolio - buildings	33	
	Farms	32	
	Ad hoc	58	
Public/Community/Local Infrastructure-Civic Amenities			70
Car parks			118
Depots/landfills			12
Land			1892
Recreation/Outdoor Leisure sites			214
Comprising:-	Countryside recreation/leisure	21	
	Parks/gardens/memorials	32	
	Other managed recreation/leisure	161	
Other			36
Hostels/Residential			51
Day Centres			9
Schools (incl 78 transferred as Academies)			140
Youth/Children/Family support			34
	Childrens centres/nursery	14	
	CommunityYouthLearning Centre	20	
	Total assets		2724

Appendix B: Value of Land and Buildings held by the Council

2020/21 Asset Base	Other Land and Buildings £000	Community Assets £000	Surplus Assets £000	Investment Property £000	Assets Held for Sale £000	TOTAL £000
Net Book Value as at 31 st March 2021	420,399	2,508	31,726	29,227	2,790	486,650

Source: Statement of Accounts 2020/21 – Extract - Balance Sheet and Note 8

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Appendix B

The actions set out in the previous Corporate Asset Management Plan are aligned to the themes set out below.

The below is a non-exhaustive list activity that the Council has achieved since the setting of the previous Corporate Asset Management Plan.

1. Delivery of a significant capital receipts Programme

The Council has delivered the following programme of Capital Receipts in the previous plan period. It is noted that over 120 assets have been disposed of in the period releasing just under £43m to be fed back into the Capital Programme, with these assets been released to their future economic use, thereby increasing the return to the Council through Business Rates and generating an improved economic performance for the Borough and its businesses. This exercise has also allowed the Estates Service to reduce the number of assets the Council holds, leading to a simpler better value and more effective estate, allowing efficiencies to be made reducing the revenue impact of holding assets.

Year		Number	Value	Remarks
2015	2016	13	£16,039,155	
2016	2017	21	£9,034,425	
2017	2018	14	£4,979,861	
2018	2019	17	£4,808,789	
2019	2020	17	£5,673,966	
2020	2021	5	£1,117,000	
2021	2022	6	£1,300,000	
		93	£42,953,196	

The Council also has a Programme of Community Asset Transfers. These assets are released under the Council's Asset Transfer Policy and usually do not generate a Capital Receipt. There have been 28 Asset Transfers since 2015 bringing the total of assets released to future uses to over 120.

This does not articulate all the disposals that the Council has completed, or the complete picture for Capital Receipts. The Council also is required to undertake other disposals, for example Right to Buy, or releasing other assets, for example vehicles or receipts associated with loan repayments. These assets are not included in this exercise but are reported as part of the Capital Programme.

During the plan period the disposals team has also deliberately elected to address difficult properties as part of the basket of assets to dispose of, minimising risk to the Council.

2. Increasing inward investment opportunities

Although the Council does not track the future use of these assets in the plan period this release of assets has:

- The Council has actively disposed of over 120 assets in the plan period. This has released these assets to their future economic uses, removing the burden of their management from the Council and also generated opportunities for the Council to benefit from Business Rates, or Council Tax revenue when these assets are reused.
- The release of assets has generated employment and housing opportunities for residents and allowed businesses in the borough to continue to trade or to offer opportunities for businesses to grow.
- The Council has led on the delivery of a number of regenerative schemes in the borough, using its land and property to provide greater opportunities for its residents.
- The Borough has also invested in its infrastructure, improving its schools and leisure centres, which in turn have made Cheshire East a more attractive place to Live and Work.
- The Estates Service has delivered a number of significant property projects in the plan period. For example projects of note since 2020 include School expansions projects in Congleton, Sandbach, Crewe, Alsager, Nantwich and Macclesfield valued at £60m, Macclesfield and Nantwich Leisure Centre Refurbishments valued at £4.5m and Crewe Market Hall at £3.9m.

The Council, during the plan period has also instigated a number of regeneration projects which are anticipated to be delivered outside the plan period. A key factor for these projects has been the ownership of land and property assets that can be used to deliver these proposals.

3. Strategic Asset Management Planning

Since 2016 the Council has undertaken a considerable journey to consolidate and improve how it delivers an Estate that is fit for purpose and delivers for customers, set against the challenging background set out in this report.

It has taken the opportunity to learn from the past and from other Local Authorities and developed robust systems of governance that are set out in the Corporate Asset Management Plan. Forums such as the Asset Board and Capital Programme Board allow officers to develop appropriate coherent and well thought through recommendations about the Council's Land and Property.

It has integrated corporate direction, for example, Carbon Neutral Council by 2025, to drive its thinking and innovate about how it will use its assets now and in the future and also how it delivers its services into the future.

4. Collaborative working with other stakeholders

The Council looks to work closely with Local Government partners and Community bodies. Through the refreshed Community Asset Transfer process it generates opportunities for a wide range of groups to use assets to deliver services for their communities.

During the previous plan period the Council has worked closely with its OPE partners for example the Council has sought to understand the NHS' requirements and identify opportunities to work collaboratively and as OPE partners understand the opportunities that can be generated by working closely together. This has included co location and partnership working in NHS and Council assets. A similar journey has been worked though with other OPE partners as well.

The Council also plugs into wider opportunities with our adjoining local authorities though close officer working and through structures such as the LEP.

5. Improving data management

The Council has also undertaken a significant exercise in voluntarily registering the assets it owns early in the plan period. This has been followed up with a data verification exercise aligning the Council's systems and data held by HMLR. Additional work remains to be done, however the Council now has a excellent understanding of its registered ownership.

The Council did rely on a functional but rapidly aging property management system and one of the significant achievements in the plan period has been the replacement of this system.

The migration process itself allowed the service to undertake further data cleansing prior to the implementation of the new system and the assets to be categorised with much closer alignment to the services within the Council and the asset register from which valuation lists are drawn for their four-year cyclical review.

The implementation of a more robust property information system means that the Council now holds more information not only on the property it owns, but those individual components (assets) within the buildings it actively manages which assists with the programming of maintenance. Obtaining key supplier buy-in to utilise the same system for the management of their orders allows real-time reporting of progress which has brought efficiencies.

The approach on the surveying side has been slow and steady, utilising existing resources within the service. By embedding the work to improve the system into the team's case load activity the service is gradually densifying the data that it holds and allows a financially and operationally sustainable approach to completing the exercise.

The Council has also deepened its understanding of some of its most complex assets during the plan period, for example contaminated land and reservoirs, working closely with teams within the Council and outside bodies, where appropriate, including the Environment Agency. The system readily displays all current and recent surveying,

revenue and capital projects and orders and customer relating to any one site enabling a more holistic management of the asset.

An improved auditing capability tracks all edits and amendments made to data, as well as enabling necessary financial controls and capturing the full approvals process. A case management module is used to effectively capture all enquiries coming into the property helpdesk so that those few enquiries that are at risk of not meeting the service's customer service level standards can be identified and further support offered. A workflow to handle property transactions is near completion which will enable the same full visibility as cases advance along their route to completion, including the periods where they are allocated to other corporate services across the Council. At each stage the system will prompt for notes from case officers, confirmation that defined tasks have been completed, or that key documents supporting decisions eg valuations, are stored within the system.

The Council also has dealt with the challenges of implementing new systems and processes around GDPR, which affected the way it retains and uses data, however the more modern system can readily purge customer data within set retention schedules.

6. Ensuring statutory compliance

The Facilities Management Team ensure the Council meet its statutory requirements, not only within our buildings, but also in areas such as reservoirs and septic tanks which are outside the Council's land ownership, but for which the Council has retained a liability. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Asbestos Management (annual re-inspections and R&D surveys);
- Legionella Management (weekly/monthly monitoring, plus risk assessments and cleaning);
- Fire Safety Management (risk assessments);
- Energy DEC and EPC Certification;
- Fire Remedial Works Programme;
- Asbestos Removal Programme (7.8 tonnes has been removed since 2018 – equivalent to 7 Giraffes or 3 Elephants);
- Statutory Compliance Training.

The Council has also improved its score for Council Accommodation of 97% in 2021, building from 87% in 2018.

Although certain aspects of the Council's activities may be more exciting, delivery of statutory compliance is a critical activity to the Council and underpins all its other activity. It continues to be key to engage a wide range of stakeholders and have the appropriate attention for example through the Corporate H and S forum and relevant upward reporting.

Key to achieving the positive results set out here has been the buy in of staff and the Corporate H and S team.

7. Sustainability

The Council is migrating to a more sustainable estate through a number of factors.

- **Right Sizing the Estate.** The service has worked hard to reduce the number of assets that it holds, over the plan period disposing of 120 assets.
- **Carbon Neutral.** The Council has also adopted a carbon neutral plan. In order to support this the corporate landlord has been successful in obtaining Public Sector Decarbonisation Grants in the first three schemes – Phase 1 - £2.4m; Phase 2 - £604k; Phase 3 - £3.7m.
This has, and will continue to, assist in both the decarbonisation of the Council's estate by the installation of air source heat pumps, Photovoltaic Panels, LED lighting; building insulation. This will help the Council reduce consumption within its buildings.
- **Water Management:** In addition, works have been undertaken to ensure that the Council has a full understanding of its water management within buildings, by the installation of automatic meter readers, which help with early detection of excess usage.
- **New Ways of working:** The service has supported the Council in the transition to remote working and also facilitated innovation in the way people work together. It is delivering new hybrid meeting capability within the Council's Office spaces.

During the plan period the Council has also introduced its policy Carbon Neutral by 2025 and this has been baked into the processes of the Council when it considers activities in and on its land and property.

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 Consultation
Report of:	Alex Thompson – Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer)
Report Reference No:	EG/08/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Economy and Growth Committee is being asked to provide feedback, as consultees, on the development of the Cheshire East Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27. Feedback is requested in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee.
- 1.2. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out how the Council will resource the achievement of the Corporate Plan and is subject to consultation and approval on an annual basis.
- 1.3. Developing the strategy requires a wide range of stakeholder engagement, including all Members. Feedback will be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee for consideration on, 9 February 2023, before a balanced budget is presented to the full Council meeting of 22 February 2023 for final review and approval.
- 1.4. The full consultation document can be accessed on the [Cheshire East Council](#) website.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. 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.

- 2.2. In February 2021 the Council approved the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 which articulates the vision of how these services will make Cheshire East an Open, Fair and Green borough:
 - 2.2.1. Open - We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East.
 - 2.2.2. Fair - We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents.
 - 2.2.3. Green - We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.
- 2.3. Committees are responsible for overseeing the achievement of these priorities. Resources, including Revenue, Capital and Reserves were allocated by the Finance Sub-Committee in March 2022, following the budget Council. All resources are allocated to a specific Service Committee or the Finance Sub-Committee.
- 2.4. Each Committee plays an important role in developing the Strategy before it is approved by Council on 22 February 2023.
- 2.5. The full MTFS is provided on the Council's website along with supporting consultation material. Each Committee is receiving an extract from the Full MTFS to assist with focusing on the Constitutional responsibilities of the Committee.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Committee notes:
 - 3.1.1. The year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 (**Appendix 1**).
 - 3.1.2. The financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (**MTFS report Annex C, Section 1**).
 - 3.1.3. Revenue Grant Funding (**Appendix 4**).
 - 3.1.4. Earmarked Reserves (**Appendix 5**).
- 3.2. That the Committee provides feedback on the proposals within the MTFS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise Full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/24, in the following areas:
 - 3.2.1. Revenue Proposals (Details are at **Appendix 2**).

MTFS Section 1 Ref No	Detailed List of Proposed Budget Changes – Service Budgets
	Economy and Growth Committee
64	Assets - Buildings and Operational
65	Pay inflation
66	Rates increase for Cheshire East properties
67	Rates increase from Collection Fund EMR
68	Office Estate Rationalisation
69	Rural and Visitor Economy
70	Cultural
71	Housing
72	Assets - Transactions
73	Inflation in Utility costs and enhanced Carbon Management
74	Pension Costs Adjustment
75	Restructuring Potential
76	Investment in Public Rights of Way
77	Tatton Park
78	Asset / Service Transfer
79	Transfer of Congleton Visitor Information Centre

3.2.2. Capital Programme (**Appendix 3**).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** 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.
- 4.2.** 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 financial proposals before they are approved by Full Council.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1.** 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.

- 5.2. 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.

6. Background

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. All councils are legally required to set a balanced budget each year.
- 6.4. The Budget Setting Process 2023-2027 has enabled a set of proposals to be developed for consultation.
- 6.5. The MTFS report is based on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24. This was released on 19 December 2022. The final settlement is expected in early February 2023 with a debate by Members of Parliament in the House of Commons expected in mid-February (after the publication date of this report to Committee) to agree the position.
- 6.6. The MTFS report continues to include estimated grant allocations in relation to several Specific Grants (**Appendix C, Annex 7 and Committee specific at Appendix 4** of this report). These will be refined as appropriate in due course.
- 6.7. Any changes made as a result of the engagement process and further debate will be reported to Members at the Council meeting on 22 February 2023.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1. The business planning process involved a series of events during 2022. Details of how this process was managed is included within the **MTFS report Appendix C, Annex 2**.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. The Council should have robust processes so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. Please see all Sections of this report.

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. The MTFS report outlines policy and budget proposals which will impact on service delivery arrangements.

8.3.2. The Corporate Plan will drive and inform Council policy and priorities for service delivery. The priorities and actions listed may have direct policy implications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, decision makers must show 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between those groups.

8.4.2. The protected characteristics are age, disability, sex, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

8.4.3. 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.

8.4.4. 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.

8.4.5. The proposals within the MTFS include positive and negative impacts. A separate Equality Impact Assessment has been produced and is included in **Appendix C, Annex 3**.

8.4.6. The Corporate 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.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1.** A number of the proposals will impact on staff. See **MTFS report Appendix C, Section 1** for full list of change proposals.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1.** The steps outlined in this report mitigate the four main legal and financial risks to the Council's financial management arrangements:

- The Council must set a balanced Budget.
- Setting the Council Tax for 2023/24 must follow a compliant process.
- The Council should provide high quality evidence to support submissions for external assessment.
- That Council borrowing will comply with the Treasury Management Strategy which is underpinned by the Prudential Code.

- 8.6.2.** A risk assessment of the significant proposals being put forward has been carried out by each service and is included as part of the planning process.

- 8.6.3.** It is important to note that the Council faces significant financial challenges in achieving its desired outcomes. Management of risk is embedded within the organisation to ensure the Council can seize opportunities, introduce new, innovative models of service delivery, focus on improving outcomes for residents and review its range of services whilst identifying and controlling any resulting risks. The approach to risk management will continue to be assessed as the Council's plans and financial strategy are implemented.

- 8.6.4.** See **MTFS report Appendix C, Annex 4** for further information.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1.** The Corporate Plan, along with the 'Green' aim and supporting priorities will have direct and indirect implications for our rural communities across Cheshire East. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

- 8.7.2.** The MTFS report provides details of service provision across the borough. See **Appendix C, Section 1**.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1.** The Corporate Plan, along with the 'Fair' aim and supporting priorities will have direct and indirect implications for children and young people and cared for children which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

- 8.8.2.** See **MTFS report Appendix C, Section 1**.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. The Corporate Plan, along with the 'Fair' aim and supporting priorities will have direct and indirect implications for public health which will be considered individually and in line with the actions required. These impacts will be considered and reported through individual work programmes as they are developed.

8.9.2. See **MTFS report Appendix C, Section 1.**

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. The Corporate Plan has a very strong environmental thread throughout with a specific aim for the Council to be 'Greener'.

8.10.2. A number of priorities and activities are listed which will support the Council's commitment of being carbon neutral by 2025, including the ongoing delivery of an Environmental Strategy and a Carbon Action Plan.

8.10.3. Also see **MTFS report Appendix C, Annex 3** for further information.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer) Email: alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Forecast Outturn 2022/23 Appendix 2 – Revenue Budget Changes for the Period 2023/24 to 2026/27 Appendix 3 – Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27 Appendix 4 – Revenue Grant Funding Appendix 5 – Earmarked Reserves
Background Papers:	Outturn Report 2021/22 (Finance Sub Committee Meeting) Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022-26 First Financial Review (Corporate Policy Meeting) Financial Review 2022/23 (Finance Sub-Committee) Financial Update 2022/23 (Corporate Policy Meeting) Council 14 December 2022: Domestic Taxbase Report and Council Tax Support Scheme

Appendix 1 - Forecast Outturn 2022/23

1. The Council aims to operate a financial cycle of planning, monitoring and reporting throughout the year. The First Financial Review 2022/23 was reported to Corporate Policy Committee on 6 October 2022 with a Financial Review 2022/23 report going to all other Committees during November.
2. A Financial Review Update was presented at Corporate Policy Committee on 1 December. A forecast outturn of £8.7m net overspend was reported at this meeting (The full report can be found [Agenda for Corporate Policy Committee on Monday, 1 December, 2022, 10.00 am, Item 10 | Cheshire East Council](#)).
3. The outturn position is now forecast to be an overspend of £7.7m. Table 1 shows a summary of the forecast outturn by Committee.

Table 1: Forecast Outturn 2022/23 summary by Committee

2022/23	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Change since Second Review
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET) £m	£m	£m	£m
Service Committee				
Adults and Health	121.1	130.0	8.9	0.0
Children and Families	74.2	77.7	3.5	(0.5)
Corporate Policy	40.6	41.0	0.4	(0.0)
Economy and Growth	23.6	22.8	(0.8)	(1.0)
Environment and Communities	44.4	47.3	2.9	1.2
Highways and Transport	13.8	13.6	(0.2)	(0.7)
Sub-Committee				
Finance Sub	(317.7)	(324.7)	(7.0)	-
TOTAL	-	7.7	7.7	(1.0)

Table 2: Forecast Outturn 2022/23 for Economy and Growth Committee

2022/23	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
(GROSS Revenue Budget £474.2m)	(NET) £m	£m	£m
Directorate	0.8	0.7	(0.1)
Growth & Enterprise	22.8	22.1	(0.7)
Economy and Growth Committee	23.6	22.8	(0.8)

4. The forecast underspend of £0.8m for Economy and Growth Committee is due to the following changes since the second review:
 - Growth and Enterprise forecast has improved by - £0.9m. Cost reduction in Estates of £0.3m due to deferral of some non-essential maintenance work. £0.4m due to release of reserve for the ELENA project and £0.2m grant received relating to Reopening High Streets Safely.
5. This forecast may be subject to variation in the final quarter, as budget managers will continue to take robust actions to control costs and reduce non-essential expenditure to improve this position further.
6. Individual pressures identified above are reflected in the MTFs for 2023/24 to 2026/27. Any betterment to the forecast outturn position should be utilised to replenish reserves in line with the priority of the Corporate Plan.

Appendix 2 - Revenue Budget Changes for the Period 2023/24 to 2026/27

Executive Director Commentary:

The proposals seek to address the underlying financial pressures in the Place Directorate. These focus on seeking to contain prices and cost inflation as much as possible, and by reducing energy usage and to cease non-essential maintenance and associated Facilities Management (FM) costs in council buildings.

In response to the impact of pay inflation, the focus will be to seek to offset existing employee costs through proactive vacancy management, prioritising statutory services and income generating roles. Through opportunities of restructuring seek to address better alignment of related services and management across Place, as well as continuing to explore and identify efficiencies and reductions in non-essential spend, and seek to end non statutory contracts. Identifying positive benefits by investing in training to increase

numbers of apprenticeships and career graded roles where appropriate to support capacity.

The Directorate will continue to rationalise the Council's property portfolio, and to engage opportunities for additional income regeneration. Alternative community options will be explored.

Managing capacity with the prioritisation of resources within economic development and regeneration will enable capacity to be sustained and provide focus to maximise access to external funding options and programmes, whilst also engaging increasingly with partnerships, such as the Local Enterprise partnership (LEP).

Proposals to vary the Budget in the Economy and Growth Budget are focused on these areas:

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[64] Assets - Buildings and Operational [NEW] The cost of managing and maintaining the Council's buildings is increasing, particularly due to national inflation in utility bills. Cost increases cannot be avoided entirely, but to reduce the impact the Council will only spend on maintenance where there is a specific Health and Safety risk that must be mitigated. A review of occupancy levels will also restrict access to floors of buildings that can be left vacant to achieve further savings. <i>(Note: this proposal does not reflect changes under proposal 68 which relates to office rationalisation)</i> <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	+2.480	+3.119	+0.423	+1.481
[65] Pay inflation [MTFS 22-26 [3&4]] This proposal includes incremental increases for eligible staff and nationally negotiated pay awards. Average increases are forecast at c.5% for 2023/24. This may not apply evenly across pay bands due to implications of the Living Wage. The proposals recognise the additional delayed impact of the 2022/23 pay negotiations that also affect the 2023/24 budget. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	+1.217	+0.486	+0.418	+0.428
<i>*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year</i>				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
<p>[66 & 67] Rates increase for Cheshire East properties [NEW]</p> <p>Non-Domestic Rates on Council properties are increasing due to uplifts in their rateable value. This additional budget requirement will be met from the Council's Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve. This approach may not be sustainable in the long term, but future reviews may be impacted by Government reviews of business rates or by changes to the size of the Council's overall buildings portfolio.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Impact on service budget =</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Contribution from Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve =</i></p>	<p>+0.343</p> <p>-0.343</p>			
<p>[68] Office Estate Rationalisation [NEW]</p> <p>Rationalisation of the Council's Office space buildings to reflect increased hybrid working, and to secure reduction of business rates and holding costs. Also targeting additional Carbon benefits in retained buildings. This proposal removes two pre-pandemic business cases related to neighbourhood and office buildings (£260k / £460k savings) and replaces them with a proposal to optimize the office estate only at this point. Key assets in the North and South of the borough will be retained and invested in to provide modern workplaces for staff, members and stakeholders. Consultation will also consider the option to relocate Macclesfield Library to the nearby Town Hall. Surplus assets will be considered for alternative use to generate income through rental or a capital receipt.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Impact on service budget =</i></p>	<p>+0.210</p>	<p>-0.550</p>	<p>-0.150</p>	
<p><i>*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23</i></p> <p><i>Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year</i></p>				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[69] Rural and Visitor Economy [NEW] Provides additional funding to manage increased costs. This reflects inflation in the price of materials and the staffing required to maintain a statutory standard of upkeep to existing public rights of way, and to maintain heritage buildings within Tatton Park. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	+0.165	+0.045	-0.021	
[70] Cultural [NEW] Provision of costs to support cultural framework required for regeneration projects across the borough, and safeguarding museum collections. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	+0.072	+0.020	+0.081	
*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[71] Housing [NEW] Resources required to support Government initiative on new support for affordable housing scheme known as First Homes. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>		+0.035		
[72] Assets - Transactions [NEW] Savings are being removed from a planned restructure of the Estates Team due to ongoing levels of activity and capacity requirements. This impact will be mostly mitigated by fast tracking the disposal of available land and property via Auction which would potentially release assets quicker. Proactive management lease renewals and rent reviews will also focus on achieving enhanced income returns. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	+0.023			
*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[73] Inflation in Utility costs and enhanced Carbon Management [MTFS 22-26 [57]] This saving removes a Growth Bid that funded expenditure in 2022/23. It related to increasing costs of energy on the wholesale market, which are as a result of factors outside the control of the Council, together with additional investment to support the Council's carbon neutral ambitions through energy efficiency in Council buildings. <i>(Note: Proposal 64 now reflects the impact of ongoing energy costs)</i> <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-1.500			
[74] Pension Costs Adjustment [NEW] This item relates to pension contributions funded by the Council. Contributions can be reduced now. This results from a successful financial strategy to secure stability in the funding of future pension liabilities. The effect is a reduction in overheads in pay cost budgets following a change in the employer's contribution rate confirmed by the Cheshire Pension Fund. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.663	-0.157	-0.164	
<i>*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year</i>				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[75] Restructuring Potential [NEW] Vacancy management – slow down or don't fill posts across Place in non-statutory services / non-income generating posts. Reductions in staffing could result in statutory services responding more slowly where we can. Prioritise Economic Development and Regeneration resources and workload. Restructure and alignment of service areas. To note this is a cross cutting proposal across Place and therefore actual figures may change from one committee to another. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.387	-0.387		
[76] Investment in Public Rights of Way [MTFS 22-26 [59]] Growth bid to increase capacity in statutory Public Rights of Way and related service delivery, access improvement and management of sustainable access routes, including a) determination of Definitive Map Modification Order applications; and b) revenue budget allocation to match inflation for continued maintenance of assets. <i>* Item represented a one-off spend in 2022/23. As it is not a permanent part of the budget the value of the proposal is reversed in 2023/24</i> <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.100*			
<i>*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year</i>				

Economy and Growth Committee Policy Proposals	2023/24 £m*	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
[77] Tatton Park [MTFS 22-26 [52]] These planned savings result from income and efficiencies generated through the investment programme in the facilities at Tatton Park, which will improve the visitor experience and reduce the overall subsidy the Council makes to Tatton Park. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.028	-0.046		
[78] Asset / Service Transfer [MTFS 22-26 [51]] The Council wishes to engage with Community organisations and Local Councils to explore opportunities to support service delivery and efficiencies for example through community asset transfers and partnership approaches to supporting services. Based on engagement with partner organisations we have reduced the savings target as a more deliverable target. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.020			
[79] Transfer of Congleton Visitor Information Centre [MTFS 22-26 [11]] Cheshire East Council has agreed a new operating model for Congleton Visitor Information Centre, with Congleton Town Council managing and operating the centre through the transfer of Visitor Information provision. <i>Impact on service budget =</i>	-0.010	-0.020		
*Values represent a +/- variation to the Cheshire East Council approved budget for 2022/23 Subsequent years are the incremental change from the previous year				

Revenue Budget Financial Table:

ECONOMY and GROWTH COMMITTEE - Summary				REVENUE BUDGET		
Service Area	Budget including Policy Proposals					
	2023/24			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	Expenditure	Income	Net	Net	Net	Net
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	Directorate	2,458	-1,612	846	846	846
	Growth and Enterprise	33,550	-9,560	23,990	26,535	27,122
	Total Cost of Service	36,008	-11,172	24,836	27,381	27,968
Policy Proposals included above						
Policy Proposals						
Growth and Enterprise	1,514	-55	1,459	2,545	587	1,909
Financial Impact of Policy Proposals	1,514	-55	1,459	2,545	587	1,909

Appendix 3 - Capital Programme

Economy and Growth												CAPITAL
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24- 2026/27												
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure					Total Forecast Budget 2023/27 £000	Forecast Funding					Total Funding £000
	Prior Years £000	Forecast Budget 2023/24 £000	Forecast Budget 2024/25 £000	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £000	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £000		Grants £000	External Contributions £000	Revenue Contributions £000	Capital Receipts £000	Prudential Borrowing £000	
Committed Schemes												
Culture & Tourism												
Countryside Vehicles	132	455	193	219	0	867	0	0	0	0	867	867
New Archive Premises	0	4100	5699	451	0	10,250	0	0	0	0	10,250	10,250
Public Rights of Way - CMM A6 MARR	8	93	0	0	0	93	93	0	0	0	0	93
Rural & Green Section 106 Schemes	21	52	0	0	0	52	0	52	0	0	0	52
Tatton Park Investment Phase 2	264	1205	500	0	0	1,705	0	0	0	0	1,705	1,705
Total Culture & Tourism Committed Schemes	425	5,905	6,392	670	0	12,967	93	52	0	0	12,822	12,967
Economic Development												
Connecting Cheshire 2020	1,500	2,500	2,238	1,000	0	5,738	5,738	0	0	0	0	5,738
Connecting Cheshire Phase 2	0	0	0	883	0	883	0	313	0	0	570	883
Connecting Cheshire	0	0	0	595	0	595	0	48	0	0	547	595
Connecting Cheshire Phase 3	100	1,500	2,400	4,000	0	7,900	0	7,900	0	0	0	7,900
Crewe Town Centre Regeneration	14,906	15,595	0	0	1,517	17,112	0	0	0	850	16,262	17,112
Crewe Towns Fund	1,438	3,312	9,000	5,810	0	18,122	18,122	0	0	0	0	18,122
Demolition of Crewe Library Site	318	1,077	1,370	0	0	2,447	924	0	0	0	1,523	2,447
Future High Street Funding - CEC Innovation Centre	58	1,111	0	0	0	1,111	1,111	0	0	0	0	1,111
Future High Street Funding - Christ Church Innovation Centre	71	1,863	0	0	0	1,863	1,863	0	0	0	0	1,863
Handforth Heat Network	0	9,910	2,000	1,800	0	13,710	5,420	4,890	0	0	3,400	13,710
Leighton Green	1,465	331	300	0	0	631	0	0	0	0	631	631
Macclesfield Indoor Market Toilet Refurbishment	80	80	0	0	0	80	70	0	10	0	0	80
Macclesfield Town Centre	1,869	349	0	0	0	349	0	0	0	0	349	349
North Cheshire Garden Village	6,091	12,300	9,000	37,317	0	58,617	21,232	0	0	21,568	15,817	58,617
South Macclesfield Development Area	3,339	1,291	10,000	20,000	0	31,291	10,000	10,000	0	11,291	0	31,291
Total Economic Development Committed Schemes	31,235	51,220	36,307	71,404	1,517	160,449	64,480	23,151	10	33,709	39,100	160,449

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24- 2026/27												
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure					Total Forecast Budget 2023/27 £000	Forecast Funding					Total Funding £000
	Prior Years £000	Forecast Budget 2023/24 £000	Forecast Budget 2024/25 £000	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £000	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £000		Grants £000	External Contributions £000	Revenue Contributions £000	Capital Receipts £000	Prudential Borrowing £000	
Committed Schemes												
Estates												
Corporate Landlord - Land Acquisitions	0	1,336	0	0	0	1,336	0	1,336	0	0	0	1,336
Farms Strategy	8	306	306	1,090	0	1,702	0	0	0	306	1,396	1,702
Malkins Bank Landfill Site	711	649	0	0	0	649	0	0	0	0	649	649
Premises Capital (FM)	4,282	4,232	3,500	2,469	0	10,201	0	0	0	0	10,201	10,201
Public Sector Decarbonisation - 3	4,464	750	0	0	0	750	0	0	0	0	750	750
Schools Capital Maintenance	932	1,650	0	0	0	1,650	1,490	0	0	0	160	1,650
Septic Tanks	300	337	0	0	0	337	0	0	0	0	337	337
Total Estates Committed Schemes	10,696	9,260	3,806	3,559	0	16,625	1,490	1,336	0	306	13,493	16,625
Housing												
Crewe Towns Fund - Warm and Healthy Homes	26	74	0	0	0	74	74	0	0	0	0	74
Disabled Facilities Grant	3,845	2,342	2,342	2,342	2,342	9,368	9,368	0	0	0	0	9,368
Future High Street Funding - Chester Street	3	5	1,370	0	0	1,375	1,375	0	0	0	0	1,375
Future High Street Funding - Delamere Street	7	5	1,447	0	0	1,452	1,452	0	0	0	0	1,452
Gypsy and Traveller Sites	1,695	2,006	0	0	0	2,006	700	0	0	0	1,306	2,006
Home Repairs for Vulnerable People	246	200	200	200	0	600	0	0	0	0	600	600
Total Housing Committed Schemes	5,822	4,632	5,359	2,542	2,342	14,875	12,969	0	0	0	1,906	14,875
Total Economy and Growth Schemes	48,179	71,017	51,864	78,175	3,859	204,916	79,032	24,539	10	34,015	67,321	204,916

Appendix 4 – Revenue Grant Funding

Corporate Grants Register 2023-27	National Allocation 2022/23 £m	Revised Forecast 2022/23 £000	Forecast 2023/24 £000	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Treatment by CEC
SPECIFIC USE (Held within Services)							
Economy and Growth Committee							
Rough Sleeping Initiative	not available	231	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
Homelessness Prevention Grant	315.800	582	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
Housing Winter Grant	not available	90	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
Shared Prosperity Fund	2,600.000	1,226	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Core Funding	not available	375	375	0	0	0	Passported to providers
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Growth Hub Funding	not available	231	231	0	0	0	Passported to providers
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): NP (Northern Powerhouse) 11	not available	520	500	0	0	0	Passported to providers
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Skills Advisory Panel	not available	56	0	0	0	0	Passported to providers
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Local Digital Skills Partnership Catalyst grant	not available	56	0	0	0	0	Passported to providers
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Skills Bootcamp	not available	1,037	1,500	1,500	0	0	Passported to providers
Innovate UK / Adapt - brought forward	not available	102	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
First Trenitalia West Coast Rail Limited	not available	50	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
COVID-19 Welcome Back Fund (Opening High Streets) - brought forward	not available	162	0	0	0	0	Allocated direct to service
Total		4,718	2,606	1,500	0	0	
Total Economy and Growth Committee		4,718	2,606	1,500	0	0	

Appendix 5 – Earmarked Reserves

Economy and Growth Committee

Name of Reserve	Opening Balance 1st April 2022 £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves 2022/23 £000	Opening Balance 1st April 2023 £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves 2023/24 £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31st March 2024 £000	Notes
Directorate						
Place Directorate	1,684	(1,539)	145	(145)	0	To support a number of widespread projects within the Place Directorate. A significant number of these projects are expected to be fully utilised in year, with the remaining reserve to be fully used in 2023/24.
Investment (Sustainability)	680	(126)	554	(554)	0	To support investment that can increase longer term financial independence and stability of the Council. Forecasts based on timelines for individual projects making up the reserve.
Growth and Enterprise						
Legal Proceedings	285	(50)	235	(100)	135	To enable legal proceedings on land and property matters, this is the anticipated amount based on current costs.
Investment Portfolio	155	174	329	175	504	Reserve being built up to be used in the future if the site is vacated, current lease extends beyond 2026
Homelessness & Housing Options - Revenue Grants	130	(130)	0	0	0	To cover costs of purchase and refurbishment of properties to be used as temporary accommodation to house vulnerable families.
Tatton Park Trading Reserve	111	(111)	0	0	0	Service anticipating utilising some of the funds for furniture purchased for the Catering Facility at TPE Ltd costing £16k.
Royal Arcade Crewe	99	(99)	0	0	0	Full drawdown of the reserve necessary to cover the adverse position for Tatton anticipated at the end of 2022/23 Original purpose was to fund vacant possession related costs for the Royal Arcade until demolition. The balance will now be used to pay for ongoing maintenance costs for Crewe Bus station. FM pressures will mean that the reserve will be fully utilised in 2022/23.
ECONOMY AND GROWTH TOTAL	3,144	(1,881)	1,263	(624)	639	

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy & Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Visitor Economy Strategy
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director Place
Report Reference No:	EG/15/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The visitor economy strategy provides the Council, as well as the tourism and hospitality sector, with a framework for growth over the period 2023-28. It builds on the pre-pandemic success of previous strategies, and the signs of recovery that are now evident. The strategy recognises the value of the sector as part of the wider Cheshire East economy and provides a strategic framework for its continued recovery and growth.
- 1.2.** The strategy sets out an approach to growing the Cheshire East visitor economy in line with the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:
 - **Open** – Through its contribution to the economy of Cheshire East, the visitor economy supports a sustainable financial future for the council.
 - **Fair** – The economy supports the wellbeing of our communities.
 - **Green** – The visitor economy helps to create and sustain a great place for people to live, work and visit, contributing to thriving urban and rural economies, the environment, and our quality of place as well as thriving and active communities.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** The visitor economy strategy addresses future strategic direction and priorities for the period 2023-2028, with an aspiration to grow the value of the visitor economy and contribute to the borough's wider economic growth.

While many of the priorities in the previous strategy are still relevant, the strategy has been refreshed and updated to reflect the current position and provide a strategic framework for realising opportunities over the next few years. This allows the council to consider the drivers for future growth, reflect changes in the economic landscape and include new opportunities that may have presented themselves in the intervening period.

- 2.2.** The strategy identifies the issues facing the visitor economy, those aspects where Cheshire East is well positioned and the strategic priorities that can support and grow the contribution of the sector.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** To approve and adopt the Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 -2028

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** Cheshire East Council continues to play a leadership role in supporting our local visitor economy's growth potential through helping to create the conditions for it to thrive and supporting the development of a strong visitor offer. The strategy builds on the success of two previous visitor economy strategies, in 2011 and 2016 as well as a Tourism Recovery Plan approved in 2021. This will provide a strategic framework for businesses to help grow the sector in Cheshire East working with the Council and its partners. A focus by the council on these priorities will strengthen the impact that the Visitor Economy has on Cheshire East, its businesses, residents, towns & villages and green spaces.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1.** The council could proceed without a strategic framework for the continuing development of the visitor economy sector, but the council would not have a framework to realise the opportunity to influence the economic benefits of the visitor economy through its actions.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The council would not have a strategic framework to help influence economic benefits from the visitor economy.	Potential slower growth of economic benefits and lack of strategic direction for the sector.

6. Background

- 6.1. The visitor economy delivers a direct economic output from the culture, leisure and heritage offer of Cheshire East as well as its towns, villages and rural offering. It supports employment and contributes to the delivery of high-quality places that help us stand out from our competitors. As such, it is an essential part of what sustains the quality of environment and the cultural offering that are attractors to the talent required to help attract new investment and skilled workers.
- 6.2. Cheshire East has a strong tourism product. Jodrell Bank is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; Tatton Park is the 5th most visited paid-for attraction in the England (VisitEngland, 2021); there is accessible countryside from riverside walks to the Peak District fringe; market towns including Macclesfield, the gateway to the Peak District and the former home of Ian Curtis (Singer/song writer with Joy Division). This combines with high-quality accommodation, heritage attractions and historic gardens, world class events, farm-stays, health-club spas to provide a comprehensive offer for both day visitors and staying visitors alike.
- 6.3. Cheshire East is also ideally positioned in relation to the cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Chester and the Midlands. It includes part of the Peak District National Park offers access to both domestic and international markets with two international airports nearby and excellent links by road and rail from other parts of the country.
- 6.4. Our restaurants, bars, cafes, Theatres, Museums, tourist attractions and retail destinations play an important part in the life of area for residents, visitors and business. Our visitor economy brings in much-needed revenue to the borough, boosting its economy, supporting our 'Quality of Place' and helping to position the borough as part of place marketing. Cheshire East continues to work with local and national partners to develop the visitor economy to the benefit of visitors and residents.
- 6.5. Cheshire East's visitor economy was on track to be worth over £1bn by 2020, have reached a value of £994m in 2019. However, the impacts of the pandemic badly hit the sector, The value dropped to £548m in 2020, but according to the latest available figures, has started to recover, growing 34% and reaching £735m in 2021. Apart from the direct economic impacts on the sector, the visitor economy landscape has shifted since 2019. For example, visitors are more likely to leave bookings to the last minute, and there has been an increase in 'staycations' where families are discovering new areas to visit in England. There have been real issues in recruitment for hospitality businesses, fuel prices and the cost of living are impacting on visitor choices and the importance of sustainability and accessibility are more central to visitor and business choices.

- 6.6.** As a Local authority, Cheshire East has an important role in developing the visitor economy's local growth potential through playing a strong leadership role and catalyst for growth, creating the conditions for it to thrive, setting the planning context, investing in infrastructure, improving skills and incentivising inward investment. Cheshire East can also ensure there is an attractive environment and a rich cultural offer to attract visitors, pulling in visitors through the area's events, arts and heritage and helping to support both vibrant towns and the rural setting. The Council also has an important role in partnership with Marketing Cheshire, our Destination Management Organisation (DMO), in helping coordinate the activities of stakeholders across the destination and working with partners to achieve growth.
- 6.7.** The DMO is akin to a local or regional tourist board for a visitor destination and provides a link between local businesses or stakeholders and Visit England as the national tourism board. It produces a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the sub-region. This is supported and informed by Cheshire East's visitor economy strategy. Destination marketing also supports 'place marketing' as the destination image helps communicate 'quality of place', raises profile and positions the area among wider audiences including prospective residents and investors.
- 6.8.** A visitor generally takes account of natural geographies and destination attributes rather than administrative boundaries. However, as a council, Cheshire East can use its Visitor Economy Strategy to guide its plans and strategies, helping to inform its decisions on an important economic sector. The council can also communicate with its residents to reflect a pride in place, support the local market and influence visiting friends and relatives. The strategy is intended to reflect the Council's aspirations and help others to engage with it in addressing the strategic priorities. The strategy helps to articulate the aspirations and priorities of local tourism clusters, sector groups and local plans – economic, rural, cultural, transport, environmental and spatial – to make the most of available capacity and resources.
- 6.9.** Despite the impact of both the pandemic and the cost of living, there are opportunities to drive further growth through increasing productivity, getting visitors to spend more when they visit, turning day visits into overnight stays, and working in partnership to improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.
- 6.10.** The focus of the strategy is aimed at achieving a strong and resilient visitor economy that delivers for the borough's wider economy, its residents and its visitors. The strategy identifies that the area is well positioned to exploit key themes such as:
- Outdoor experiences
 - Friends and family

- Wellness
- Treats & Celebrations
- Lifestyle and culture
- Sustainable and green

6.11. The visitor economy strategy identifies a number of thematic priorities for the next period. These are strategic priorities that should be considered by the council, Destination Management Organisation and businesses to address current issues and help to position the Cheshire East visitor economy for recovery and future growth. They include:

- Positioning Cheshire East as a destination of choice for staycations – both day visits & staying visits.
- Consideration of new, emerging and changing trends in the Cheshire visitor economy
- Developing initiatives focused on sustainability & the green agenda to support business growth & extend options for consumers
- Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity are prioritised in tourism development in Cheshire East.
- Working together with business to address staff shortage, recruitment, and retention in the sector
- Evolving the Business visits and events market in Cheshire East as part of a wider place-based strategy across Cheshire and Warrington

6.12. The visitor economy is a significant contributor to the economy, communities and profile of Cheshire East. As markets recover and develop post-pandemic, there will be a continuing need to monitor, evaluate and adapt our approach to the visitor economy to maintain growth. The strategy sets out a target for the borough's visitor economy value of £1.088bn by 2028.

6.13. The council cannot deliver the growth aspirations on its own. Working in partnership with Marketing Cheshire, our Destination Management Organisation (DMO), we can build on the activities of businesses and stakeholders across the destination. Business networks can help to share, intelligence and best practice, coordinate effort and build a strong offer for visitors. The common goal is to continue to develop a successful and distinctive offer for visitors that translates into growth in our visitor economy.

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1. The strategy and the priorities for 2023 – 2028 have been developed through consultation with hospitality & tourism business in Cheshire East as well as drawing on evidence from local, regional & national tourism bodies.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report and its recommendation.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. All costs associated with the development of the visitor economy strategy will be contained within existing budgets.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. The visitor economy plays an important role in Cheshire East, contributing to economic well-being and quality of place. It provides a framework for consideration of future policy and strategic direction, set alongside a number of Council strategies and plans that can help to deliver the priorities identified, so providing a thriving and sustainable place that is a great place for people to live, work and visit.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. Given that the proposal does not represent any change of policy an EIA has not been conducted. There are no direct implications for equalities.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications arising from the report and its recommendation.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. The risk of not developing a visitor economy strategy is that other related strategies and plans are prepared without the relevant economic objectives, priorities and direction and that the Council does not have a framework to realise the opportunity to influence.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. Many of the borough's main tourism assets are in the rural area, providing employment and wider benefits to rural communities. The strategy positively addresses the rural aspects, identifying the opportunity to develop a distinctive rural offer that will generate growth in the rural economy and benefit the prosperity of Cheshire East and its Rural Communities.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. There are no direct implications for Children and Young People/Cared for Children arising from the report and its recommendation.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. There are no direct implications for Public Health arising from the report and its recommendation.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. The visitor economy strategy provides opportunities to help the Council in promoting actions related to environmental sustainability, reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles, to both businesses and visitors.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brendan Flanagan, Head of Rural and Cultural Economy Brendan.flanagan@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01625 374415 Richard Milkins, Visitor Economy Manager richard.milkins@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01625 378060
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-28
Background Papers:	Visitory-Economy-Strategy-2016-2020 (contensis.com) Tourism recovery plan. Report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

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Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-2028



Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 - 2028

Introduction

This strategy's ambition is to see the value of the Cheshire East Visitor Economy grow to being worth over £1 billion.

By 2025, VisitBritain forecast that Britain will have a tourism industry worth over £257 billion – just under 10% of UK GDP and supporting almost 3.8 million jobs, which is around 11% of the total UK number. The visitor economy not only makes a direct contribution to a local economy but also provides an invaluable indirect economic impact through supporting businesses in the supply chain. One in twelve jobs in the UK is either directly or indirectly supported by tourism. It helps to create attractive places to both live and work in addition to providing wider benefits to local communities; an increased choice of facilities such as places to eat out, local shops, events and exhibitions, as well as conservation of local heritage and the natural landscape.

Cheshire East Council has an important role in developing the visitor economy's local growth potential through strong leadership and providing the catalyst for growth; creating the conditions to thrive, setting the planning context, investing in infrastructure, improving skills and incentivising inward investment. Cheshire East Council can ensure there is a rich cultural offer to attract visitors through the area's events, arts and heritage and helping to support both vibrant towns and the rural setting. The Council also has an important role, along with the Destination Management Organisation, in helping coordinate the activities of stakeholders across the destination.

In partnership with the Council, the visitor economy in Cheshire and Warrington is supported by Marketing Cheshire, the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO), which is part of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The DMO is akin to a local or regional tourist board for a visitor destination and provides a link between local businesses or stakeholders and Visit England as the national tourism board. It produces the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the sub-region. This is supported and informed by Cheshire East's visitor economy strategy, demonstrating how we are both contributing to achieving a shared vision. Destination marketing also supports 'place marketing' as the destination image helps communicate 'quality of place', raises profile and positions the area among wider audiences including prospective residents and investors.

Visitors tend to visit based on natural geographies and destination attributes rather than administrative boundaries. However, as a council, Cheshire East can use its Visitor Economy Strategy to guide its plans and strategies, helping inform its decisions on this important economic sector. The strategy is intended to reflect the Council's aspirations and help to provide a framework for others to engage with it in addressing the strategic priorities. The strategy helps to articulate the aspirations and priorities of local tourism clusters, sector groups and local plans – economic, rural, cultural, transport, environmental and spatial – to make the most of available capacity and resources.

Cheshire East Council plays a leadership role in capitalising on our local visitor economy's growth potential by creating the conditions for it to thrive and to attract visitors. However, there are further opportunities to support growth and increase productivity through increasing opportunities for visitor spend and by turning day visits into overnight stays. Cheshire East can achieve this through giving visitors a high value offer and investing in the wider destination, helping to develop the place image and supporting brands to strengthen the pull of the area, improving access to suitable transport and working in partnership to improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.

Background

Cheshire East has an exciting and evolving tourism product. Jodrell Bank is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and opened its new visitor centre 'First Light' in 2022; Tatton Park was the 5th most visited paid-for attraction in England in a year when attractions were significantly affected by the pandemic¹. There is accessible countryside from riverside walks to the Peak District National Park and market towns including Macclesfield, Congleton, Knutsford and Nantwich. This combined with high-quality accommodation, heritage attractions and historic gardens, world class events, farm-stays and health-club spas to provide a comprehensive offer for both day visitors and staying visitors alike.

Cheshire East is also ideally positioned in relation to the cities of Manchester, Liverpool and Chester as well as the neighbouring counties of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire. Cheshire East also includes part of the Peak District National Park and offers access to both domestic and international markets with two international airports nearby and excellent links by road and rail from other parts of the country. Our restaurants, bars, cafes, theatres, museums, tourist attractions and retail destinations play an important part in the leisure experience for residents, visitors and business. Our visitor economy brings in much-needed revenue to the borough, boosting its economy, supporting our 'Quality of Place' and helping to position the borough as part of place marketing.

Since 2009 Cheshire East has worked with local and national partners to develop the visitor economy to the benefit of visitors and residents. We have seen increases in the quality of events; increases in quality accommodation; new tourist attractions and a growth in employment within the sector. Cheshire East is seen as a visitor destination for day visits and increasingly for overnight stays and is in a good position to benefit from the staycation trends.

The previous Visitor Economy Strategy (2016-2020) focused on quality of place; infrastructure; dwell time; skills and investment and pre-covid witnessed a continued growth in the economic value of the visitor economy to £994m. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted that growth with a substantial reduction in the value of the visitor economy across the UK. Cheshire East Council produced a Tourism Recovery Plan² in September 2021 which focused on measures to assist the sector to survive and recover through targeted support between 2021 -23. The aim was to ensure that we had a growing and recovering sector in the short term ahead of developing a new strategy.

A Cheshire East Business Consultation (App 1) has shown that there is an opportunity to adopt a thematic approach through the strategy delivery around promotion and product development. Apart from an excellent geographical position with good connectivity providing access to new markets, Cheshire East is well positioned to exploit key themes including:

- Outdoor experiences
- Friends and family
- Wellness
- Treats and Celebrations
- Lifestyle and culture
- Sustainable and green

¹ Visit England Annual Attractions Survey 2021

² [Cheshire East Tourism Recovery Plan](#)

Strategic Context

Quality of Place: Culture, environment, lifestyle and visitor attractors are fundamental to the wider 'quality of place' proposition and help to provide a setting of choice for people to live, work and invest in the region as well as to visit. Cheshire East boasts a very high quality of place offering that needs to be both maintained and enhanced. Cheshire East is a 'place of places' where town meets country to provide an unsurpassed quality of life and a distinctive character, there are thriving market towns and village communities, ideally positioned close to major centres of Manchester and Liverpool and within easy reach of the Midlands. It is an active place, with room to breathe, on the edge of the Peak district, yet within easy reach of nearby City centres. There is an enviable network of open spaces, countryside, cycle ways and waterways in an accessible rural landscape stretching from the Peak District to the Cheshire Plain. A focus on quality of place will benefit the visitor economy and vice versa, whilst helping to attract talent to the region. These people then become local consumers of the visitor economy. There is a need to retain the characteristics that support existing success and build on those that help attract future prosperity.

Infrastructure and connectivity: Cheshire is already well placed with two international airports close by, good access to and from cities and major road and rail links. Facilitating and enhancing connectivity will continue to be a vital contributor to the success of the visitor economy. There is still further potential with improvements planned to motorway and road access as well as the longer-term opportunities around HS2 and a Crewe hub. Links within Cheshire East are just as important in providing infrastructure that supports the visitor economy, whether road, rail, public transport, or public rights of way. A continuing roll-out of broadband to 'hard to reach' areas and improvement of mobile connectivity will produce significant benefits, particularly in these rural areas.

Skills: The development of skills, career paths, recruitment and retention were all difficult issues for the tourism and hospitality sector pre-covid. However, the difficulties experienced by businesses have been exacerbated by people leaving the sector during the pandemic, with many people finding alternative jobs and not returning. While this is not unique to tourism and hospitality, the impact has been particularly severe, affecting business costs, levels of service and ability to fully open. It is the ambition of this strategy that the council, hospitality businesses and local education providers can work together to address the skills required for hospitality in Cheshire East as well as the information and ambassadors to change perceptions of the sector long term.

Audiences and dwell time: Consultation with Cheshire East Tourism & Hospitality businesses undertaken as part of this strategy development research indicates that couples over 55+ are the current primary audience in Cheshire, followed by couples aged 24 to 44 and families and business visitors (App 2). At present visitors to Cheshire mainly come from within Cheshire and the North West. There may be further work required to understand and realise the opportunities South of Cheshire, in particular from the Midlands. Positioning Cheshire as a multi-generational location while also focussing on the 55+ market should be a priority, as well as promoting Cheshire as a family-friendly location. There is a need to promote a better understanding of the Cheshire offer, including, but not limited to, the family audience and outdoor experiences. Further promotion of Cheshire to both domestic and international staying visitors should sit alongside continued promotion of the day visit offering.

Whilst Visit Britain, Visit England and research agencies such as the Audience Agency provide national and regional data, the focus on developing and procuring data specific to Cheshire could help support priorities and develop strategies moving forward. 'Big data' has transformed the tourism industry over the last few years, helping with analysis of traveller trends and allowing development of marketing strategies specific to target audiences.

Insight gained through the strategy development research with Cheshire East businesses show that additional research on visitor behaviors, consumer trends and economic impact data would assist greatly their ability to make commercial decisions and to guide their audience development. (App 1)

A changing landscape for the Visitor Economy

While many of the thematic priorities identified in the last Visitor Economy Strategy may remain valid, there have been significant changes to the context in which these may be viewed and some fundamental shifts in the visitor market. The new strategy will need to reflect economic recovery from the pandemic, any impact of changes due to Brexit, impacts of climate change and the impact of changes in the cost of living.

Covid 19: Cheshire East's visitor economy was on track to be worth over £1bn by 2020, having reached a value of £994m in 2019. However, the impacts of the pandemic badly hit the sector, with a particular impact on the rural area where much of the tourism infrastructure is based. In actual fact, as a direct impact of the pandemic and the restrictions that applied, the visitor economy shrank to a value of £548m in 2020. Cheshire East Council supported businesses throughout the pandemic with advice, promotion, and the distribution of Government grants. There were several grant schemes specifically targeted at supporting tourism and hospitality businesses. In financial year 2020-21 the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme made payments to 1680 businesses totalling £31,506,939, the Christmas Support Payment Scheme made payments to 274 businesses totalling £274,000, in 2021-22 the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant made payments to 745 businesses totalling £2,641,462. Additionally, the Council approved a Tourism Recovery Plan in 2021 and has been instrumental in developing a programme to help address the staff and skills shortages in the sector.

Covid is still with us and although people feel the worst has passed it is believed COVID will still be around for the foreseeable future. Outdoor activities are still preferred, with walking and hiking the most preferred activity. Countryside trips are top choices (along with seaside towns) for overnight breaks, with some evidence that people are less inclined to choose crowded areas including cities.

The North-West (along with Yorkshire) is the second most popular destination after the South-West for short breaks post Covid. Cheshire East is well positioned to capitalise on people's intent to visit the North-West for overnight countryside experiences. However, as shown below, the rising cost of living is reported to be as much of a barrier to overnight trips as Covid.

Cost of Living: In March 2022, The Office for National Statistics reported 9 in 10 people highlighting that their cost of living has increased³ and among these adults, the most common reasons reported were an increase in the price of food, an increase in gas or electricity bills and an increase in the price of fuel. The most common actions in relation to the increases was through spending less on non-essentials, using less fuel and cutting back on non-essential journeys in their vehicle whilst also shopping around more.

Additionally, Visit England⁴ have reported that 75% of UK adults currently believe the worst is still to come, whilst 47% feel they have to be careful, with a further 22% saying they've already been hit hard. The research shows that the barriers to overnight UK trips include the rising cost of living,

³ The rising cost of living and its impact on individuals in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

⁴ [Domestic Sentiment Tracker | VisitBritain](#)

followed by personal finances and the cost of fuel.

The Audience Agency⁵ also confirm that the cost-of-living crisis is emerging as a predictable barrier to engagement in cultural experiences and is particularly likely to affect frequency of attendance.

Moving forward, it is clear that businesses need to offer value for money experiences. The business survey undertaken as part of the strategy research indicated that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting businesses hard, due to lower visitor numbers and increased overheads. Businesses have been using ticket deals and value for money messages to offset the impact.

Climate change: Cheshire's countryside will be even more vital to the prosperity and health of our residents and visitors and brings opportunities for tourism as well as healthier lifestyles for local people.

COVID has accelerated a trend towards greater visitor use of the countryside and the Public Rights of Way network (PROW), however this has challenged these spaces at a time when climate change is increasing vulnerability to wear and tear and damage from extreme weather events. Our changing climate is requiring us to do things differently – this means reducing use of hydrocarbons, increasing sequestration of carbon already in the atmosphere, and ensuring resilience to the impacts of climate change. The Government has set a legally binding target for the UK to reduce greenhouse gases to 'net zero' by 2050 and in October 2021 published its Net Zero Strategy⁶ setting out decarbonisation pathways and supporting policies and programmes to reduce emissions for each sector plus some cross-cutting actions.

Cheshire East Council has a target of achieving net-zero by 2025 and has joined UK100 (Countryside Climate Network) with a pledge to support the borough achieving net-zero by 2045. There are also sub-regional perspectives⁷, and there is also a need and requirement to work with visitor economy businesses to guide and inform in their quest to reduce their environmental impact.

Strategic themes and priorities

The visitor economy strategy identifies a number of thematic priorities for the next period which have featured throughout extensive consultation with Cheshire East Visitor Economy Businesses. Additionally, an in-depth desk-based analysis of national travel and tourism research was carried out (App 1). These are strategic priorities that should be considered by the Council, Destination Management Organisation and businesses to address current issues and help to position the Cheshire East visitor economy for recovery and future growth.

1. Position Cheshire East as a destination of choice for staycations – both day & staying visits.

Britain is continuing to benefit from a strong focus on domestic holidays, often referred to as a 'staycation'. 2021 was a record-breaking year for staycations companies such as Sykes Cottages saw the highest volume of bookings in their history, with a 57% increase year-on-year. According to the Sykes Cottages latest study⁸, 77% of people plan to enjoy at least one holiday at home this year – with 46% planning to choose the UK for their main summer break.

⁵ Cultural Participation Monitor Findings Spring 2022 | The Audience Agency

⁶ Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

⁷ 'Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission

⁸ Sykes Cottages Staycation Index 2022⁷⁷

The way we are holidaying has changed significantly. Last-minute breaks are more common than ever, while environmental concerns are increasingly playing into our holiday decisions.

There has been a positive increase in the average daily room rate for accommodation providers in Cheshire East, from pre-pandemic rates of £67 in June 2019 to £80 in June 2022⁹

According to the Audience Agency, the most prominent Audience Spectrum segments¹⁰ in the North-West are 'Facebook Families', 'Trips & Treats', and 'Dormitory Dependable'. 49% of the target population belong to one of these three and all three include a family unit.

The Cheshire East Business consultation indicates that 34% of those intending to visit the North-West are families and 37% are older independents¹¹. This represents an even split of families and older independents, with resilient 'empty nesters' an important demographic.

By 2026¹², almost a quarter of the UK's population will be aged 65 or over. They are also one of the most affluent demographics within society, therefore Cheshire East and its partners will include this demographic as a priority within our overall targeting.

In order to continue to attract domestic visitors, Cheshire East needs to continually develop and improve its core product. This may be by working with businesses or as part of town and community-based development plans. As part of this, it is important to grow and enhance the cultural events programme as a distinctive part of the offer, both for visitors and residents.

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

- *To position Cheshire East as a staycation destination of choice for short breaks and day trips through effective and targeted PR and marketing*
- *To define staycation propositions in Cheshire East more closely related to the target markets and to identify gaps and opportunities in the product that would further increase the attractiveness of Cheshire East as a destination*
- *To work with Destination Cheshire on defining the Cheshire 'story' and brand more clearly*
- *To identify and support existing major events in Cheshire East, and support the attraction of new events and experiences that contribute to place distinctiveness.*

2. Consideration of new, emerging and changing trends in the Cheshire visitor economy

The Visitor Economy landscape is rapidly changing and many of the emerging trends provide opportunities for Cheshire East to its share of tourism within the UK. Opportunities, such as those highlighted below, give rural and semi-rural destinations a chance to profile the area and attractions as the place to visit. Cheshire East has the potential to capitalise on a number of market trends which the area could be well positioned to exploit. For example:

⁹ STR Hotel occupancy report 2022

¹⁰ Audience Agency North-West Area Profile Report

¹¹ [Visit Britain Sentiment Tracker](#)

¹² Strutt and Parker

Continued growth in self-catering, glamping, camping and caravanning accommodation sectors

The latest STEAM¹³ figures for Cheshire East show that the non-serviced accommodation sector is currently growing quicker than the serviced sector. It shows that June – October 2021 was the highest figures recorded. Even higher than the pre-COVID records of June – October 2019.

Cheshire East has an amazing array of self-catering properties, however there is a need to increase its numbers and profile in the 'outdoor' accommodation arena with an increase in quality Glamping, Caravan & Camping sites. Consumers are looking for outdoor rural breaks rather than city Centre breaks and this is anticipated to continue at least in the medium term. Cheshire is perfectly positioned to take advantage in this staycation boom. And these visitors will assist the economy of the rural area and potentially link it with the many and varied walking and cycling trails in Cheshire East.

While demand for traditional accommodation categories shows no sign of waning, Canopy & Stars¹⁴ state that glamping is stepping out of the shade and becoming a substantial sector of the travel market. With this growth comes a move away from its glamorous camping origins, towards something more sophisticated and professional that nonetheless keeps a connection to nature at its heart. Recent global events are shaping consumer habits and driving further change but glamping, even though the word itself may soon be obsolete, still contains enormous potential for growth. This in turn brings big-budget competition, higher guest expectations and the welcome challenge of greater scrutiny on social and environmental responsibility.

Camping pods are appearing everywhere, and other types of glamping – from safari tents to yurts – are attracting media attention the world over. These developments have not only appealed to new, more affluent customers but also increased choice, making sites less dependent on the weather and a year-round season a reality.

The recent increase in staycations has also highlighted a lack of facilities for camping, caravans and motorcaravans nationwide and uncovered a long-term problem with the current UK network of Campsites. There are currently over 386,000 registered motorcaravans in the UK and over 2 million in Europe. Additionally, with the advent of BREXIT many UK motorhome owners can only spend 90 days out of 180 days in Europe. This when added to the current price of fuel means that many more are looking to explore the UK rather than mainland Europe.

As a destination, Cheshire East is under-represented in this market, with very few secure motorcaravan locations. Motorhomes & campervans (motorcaravans) can only stay if they can get access to fresh water and facilities for black water waste every few days and with little or no investment Cheshire East could provide a valuable resource to the thousands of motorhome owners whilst creating a new source of income year-round.

Whilst continuing to promote the quality hotel offer in Cheshire East, there are particular opportunities to showcase our self-catering, glamping, camping & caravanning offer as offering both value for money and quality. This can be linked with the outdoor offer including walks & cycling, along with itineraries around places to visit & places to eat & drink.

¹³ Scarborough Tourism Economic Analysis Monitor

¹⁴ [The Canopy & Stars Glamping Market Report 2022 | Canopy & Stars \(canopyandstars.co.uk\)](https://canopyandstars.co.uk/)

Consumer focus on health and wellbeing

The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness tourism as travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing. Cheshire East has an opportunity to maximise the potential of this trend for the benefit of its businesses as visitors like to take short breaks, tend to travel in the off-peak season and are usually high spending, making them a prime target for growth. Cheshire East is home to award winning spa hotels; beautiful open spaces; scores of well-maintained cycling and walking routes and many picture-perfect market towns.

Continued appeal of outdoor experiences

A greater share of the population feels comfortable visiting predominantly outdoor destinations, such as gardens, country parks and castles, than the original pre-pandemic norm. This reinforces the sense that a positive legacy of the pandemic may be a more widespread love of nature and the outdoors. Crucial to this is the family element, where visitors really value family time in rural locations¹⁵.

An increased interest in visiting gardens, the countryside and walking trails means that Cheshire East is well positioned to benefit from its wealth of historic gardens, its country parks, its canal network, the Peak district fringe and its walking routes, such as the Gritstone or Sandstone trails.

Visiting Friends & Relatives and the importance of community and reconnecting

Given the extended lockdown during the pandemic, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is now a high priority for people who haven't been in touch for a long time. The top motivations for a domestic overnight trip¹⁶ are 48% family time, 39% to get away from it all, 22% to be outdoors, 19% to spend time with friends. Travelling for people instead of places become a more important motivator for travel than pre-pandemic. It is important to emphasise human connections and shared experiences in your communications¹⁷

One of the additional positive impacts of the pandemic is that people are looking for local experiences and are spending more time with communities. They are putting the community and authenticity-in-culture activities at the heart of the travel experience.

Increase in blended travel

The advent of digital platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams has given people the ability to work from anywhere and this is enabling potential travellers to cover multiple purposes on their trips, from visiting friends and relatives (VFR) to deciding to work whilst on an extended break or holiday. This has resulted in multi-purpose or blended travel. As a result, the duration of travel and the length of stay are longer¹⁸. Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts has explored the blended travel landscape, finding that it includes travellers tagging leisure time on to work trips, spending longer in

¹⁵ [Visit Britain](#)

¹⁶ [World Economic Forum](#)

¹⁷ [Think With Google](#)

¹⁸ [World Economic Forum](#)

a holiday destination to work, or simply harnessing the benefits of advanced connectivity and desirable destinations¹⁹.

Dog ownership and the rise of 'Paw-cations'

The number of dogs kept as pets in the United Kingdom (UK) increased significantly during the first lockdowns and was estimated at 13 million in 2020/21 with 34% of households owning a pet dog. This constitutes a marked increase from a decade earlier in 2010/11, when the dog population in the UK was around 7.6 million²⁰. Sykes Cottages also report that so far in 2022, 35% of their bookings include dogs. Up year on year from 33% in 2021. Cheshire has a range of dog friendly attractions, with over 34 dog friendly attractions on the Visit Chester and Cheshire website. Cheshire is in an ideal position to promote and grow a 'dog friendly' market.

Getting ready to benefit from international travel as it recovers

For 2022, inbound visits are forecast to increase to 21.1 million, and spending to £16.9 billion. These are 52% and 59% respectively of the visits and spend levels seen in 2019²¹. This is echoed by the number of visits abroad made by UK residents increased between April 2021 and April 2022 but were still just two-thirds of the pre-pandemic number²².

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

- *To work with tourism businesses to help maintain and disseminate information on changing market trends and opportunities*
- *To incorporate changing and emerging markets into destination marketing activity, working with Destination Cheshire and key partners.*
- *To establish new travel trade propositions and work with gateway destinations to grow international visitors to Cheshire East.*
- *To build on town vitality plans and identify how Cheshire East towns and villages and rural areas can capitalise on new and changing trends.*
- *To encourage investment that helps to realise the potential of new or emerging markets that are relevant to Cheshire East.*

3. Develop initiatives focused on sustainability & the green agenda to support business growth & extend options for consumers

Covid has produced a dramatic shift in how we work, travel, holiday and socialise. While some indicators have returned to pre-pandemic levels such as cars on UK roads, others have not. Recent estimates²³ indicate a 27% reduction in the number of UK residents travelling overseas in May 2022 compared to May 2019. These behaviours are exactly what regulators were trying to nudge society towards in order for us to meet our collective net-zero targets.

Sustainability is accelerating at pace within the tourism sector. Consumers increasingly believe acting in an environmentally responsible way is the right thing to do and are actively choosing brands and

¹⁹ Crown Plaza

²⁰ Statista.

²¹ Visit Britain

²² Office for National Statistics

²³ Office of National Statistics

destinations that match their ideals. Booking.com's annual sustainable travel report²⁴ revealed that 71% of UK travellers confirm that sustainable travel is important to them (a 10% increase on 2021). A third say they have stayed in sustainable accommodation over the past year and 62% intend to do so at least once in the coming year. The research indicated an increasing desire to make more conscious choices across the entire travel experience, from transportation to accommodation. Some 23% of respondents said they chose to travel to a destination closer to home in order to reduce their carbon footprint, and 14% said they had researched public transport or options to rent a bicycle at their chosen destination.

In May 2019, Cheshire East Council committed to becoming carbon neutral as a council by 2025²⁵ and committed to raising awareness of the importance of taking action to combat climate change across the borough. In January 2022, the Council joined the UK100 network – pledging to make the borough carbon neutral by 2045. Many Cheshire East businesses already understand the importance of taking measures to reduce their impact on the climate and improve their resilience, however they require support and guidance going forward. At the recent Caterer Summit, discussions centred around how sustainability is not something any of us can ignore. Consumers are thinking planet-first, and businesses who are proactively helping to reverse the effects of climate change need to be communicating these efforts to attract and retain customers.

As a destination, Cheshire East need to ensure consumers can access tourism facilities via sustainable travel where possible & have a clear understanding of the sustainability of Cheshire East as a visitor destination. However, businesses also require information and direction around sustainability schemes, accreditation and finance. (App 2).

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

- *Cheshire East Council with support from partners will provide a central resource around case studies, training, events, certification schemes and promotion to assist Cheshire East businesses transitioning to green alternatives*
- *In partnership, Cheshire East Council will develop events, seminars and on-line communications to guide businesses in their sustainability journey*
- *In partnership, Cheshire East Council will assist businesses to market their green credentials.*

4. Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity are prioritised in tourism development in Cheshire East.

Visit Britain estimate that one in five people in the UK have an impairment, which may affect where they choose to stay or visit. There is a compelling business case for making tourism destinations, venues and experiences inclusive, and people with health conditions & impairments and their travelling companions spend around £15.3 billion on trips in England each year, taking longer trips and are anecdotally very loyal to places that meet their requirements²⁶.

²⁴ [Booking.com 2022 Sustainable Travel Report | GSTC \(gstcouncil.org\)](#)

²⁵ [Carbon Neutral Council \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁶ [Developing accessible destinations | VisitBritain](#)

Making a destination more accessible will naturally improve visitor satisfaction, encourage repeat bookings and boost positive word-of-mouth. It can also help local businesses, and the destination as a whole, maximise market opportunities and improve the quality of every visitor's experience.

Better access to attractions, website information and customers. There are plenty of ways Cheshire East can better handle the support needs of its visitors. Information is key, with research showing 83% of people who look for access information when planning a trip will use destination websites. But only 39% find this information easily.

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

- *Cheshire East Council with support from Visit Britain and partners will implement a 'Destination Audit' to provide insights into the experiences of disabled visitors to Cheshire East*
- *With partners, develop the Visit Cheshire website to provide good access information to make our destination more competitive.*
- *To provide relevant information around accessibility and inclusion to Cheshire East Visitor Economy businesses; including meeting the audience needs, myth busting, best practice and quick wins*
- *Ensure with partners that Destination Marketing ensures all customers, regardless of any access requirements or specific characteristics, feel welcomed.*

5. Working together with business to address staff shortage, recruitment, and retention in the Hospitality sector

Recent UK Hospitality and Cheshire East Council research has confirmed widespread reports of an acute staff shortage in various roles within the Hospitality sector, particularly front of house and chef roles. In many Cheshire East businesses this is preventing sites opening or forcing businesses to restrict their trading hours or the menu and service they can offer. There are a variety of reasons for the current shortage:

- Many staff who left the sector during COVID have not returned
- Perception of Hospitality as a career is poor
- A feeling that the sector is susceptible to another lockdown
- There is now a finite number of people available to work in the UK and only 1 in 5 of people in the UK would consider working in hospitality²⁷.
- 97% of school-aged children and recent school leavers across the UK have already written off working in the industry as a career option²⁸. Many hotels have had to cap occupancy and event levels because there are simply not enough staff to provide the service – a real availability frustration for event bookers.

Cheshire East Council will lead on a sub-regional approach to 'Hospitality Skills & Recruitment' that is looking to address issues around recruitment, perception, training and skills. This project will identify opportunities for 'hard to reach' potential employees to be matched with vacancies in the sector. Added to this, long-term strategies will be prepared around skills, perception, careers advice and education.

²⁷ [UK Hospitality](#)

²⁸ [caterer.com](#)

There is a real stigma surrounding hospitality careers in the UK which can be traced to an emphasis on academic over vocational training. Improving perceptions of the sector is vital and Hospitality Businesses need to play their part, including the development of transferrable skills, flexible work hours and the prospect of rapid promotion.

Business research shows that skills, salary expectations, progression and unsociable hours are listed as some of the biggest challenges in terms of recruitment and staffing. Although hospitality jobs may be seen as suiting young people in pursuit of part-time work, the strategy seeks to boost inclusivity across the age groups.

As part of the Tourism Recovery and the new Strategy a number of actions are required to assist the Hospitality sector in Cheshire East to increase the number of new recruits into their business through identified training support package.

- To ensure new recruits into the hospitality sector have basic hospitality training around COSHH, Food Safety, Natasha's Law; Relationships with Customers and Working in a team
- To assist businesses to 'upskill' current employees to cover hard to recruit vacancy areas
- To reduce unemployment within Cheshire as well as providing opportunities to 'hard to reach' groups specific to Cheshire East, widening the labour pool in Cheshire East whilst increasing the access to potential employees utilising non-traditional routes.

There will also be a focus designed to boost collaboration between the Hospitality Sector, Public Sector, schools, colleges and universities, along with broader measures to improve perceptions of the sector as an employer, introduce new qualifications and grow the pool of available workers in the economy. Attracting new people to the sector and changing the overall perception of Hospitality as a real and meaningful career in hospitality is crucial for a sustainable sector.

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

- *To develop a sub-regional approach to 'Hospitality Skills & Recruitment' before the end of 2023 to address issues around recruitment, perception, training and skills and to identify opportunities for 'hard to reach' potential employees to be matched with vacancies in the sector.*
- *From 2023, support opportunities to increase the number of new recruits into the sector through development of a training support package.*
- *Work to strengthen the appeal of tourism and hospitality as a career through collaboration between the Hospitality Sector, Public Sector, schools, colleges and universities, to help improve perceptions of the sector as an employer, develop appropriate qualifications, ambassador schemes and career development to grow the pool of available workers in the economy.*

6. Evolve the Business visits and events market in Cheshire East as part of a wider place-based strategy across Cheshire and Warrington

The impact of COVID-19 continues to impact this important market; however, there are clear signs of a steady recovery. There was increased demand from September 2021 for smaller, domestic meetings and events as well as a further upturn of larger face-to-face events taking place from the beginning of 2022. Sustainability and virtual and hybrid events impact the future shape of the industry. However, the pandemic allowed time for Cheshire East businesses to focus on their offer and the meeting product has evolved to meet future requirements.

Hoteliers and meetings and events venues made it very clear that 2021 and 2022 have seen high social event demand²⁹. This pent-up demand is not surprising considering the social impact of the pandemic. Interestingly, event agency officials also talked positively of high leisure demand because there is a demand to get back to travelling and to experiences.

The same report also identified a shift where nearly 60% of bookers would pick a more expensive venue to meet their sustainability requirements. FTSE 100 companies will have to report on their sustainability and what they are doing to drive down emissions as part of UK law, so corporates will be under pressure to ensure their events are green and don't use up all their carbon credits

Prior to COVID, there had been a focus on attracting conferences and events to Cheshire East, especially those aligned to our sector strengths, for example Life Sciences. Additionally, a new website was launched; Meet in Chester & Cheshire³⁰ focussed solely on showcasing the Cheshire offer.

The Cheshire East Business Consultation also highlighted a need to attract larger conferences to the area, including the requirement to educate conference buyers of the Cheshire East offer, including Cheshire's excellent transport links. It was felt that using strategic sites to attract travel trade should be a priority, and businesses were keen to raise awareness of Cheshire as a whole.

In Cheshire and Warrington, the Cheshire Science Corridor is a strategic opportunity to raise the profile of the sub-region as a place to invest, focused on the world leading science taking place within the sub-region alongside the high quality of life offer. This also has the potential to drive business tourism into Cheshire East as businesses can play an ambassadorial role to attract association conferences linked to their scientific field.

In summary to address this priority the key objectives are:

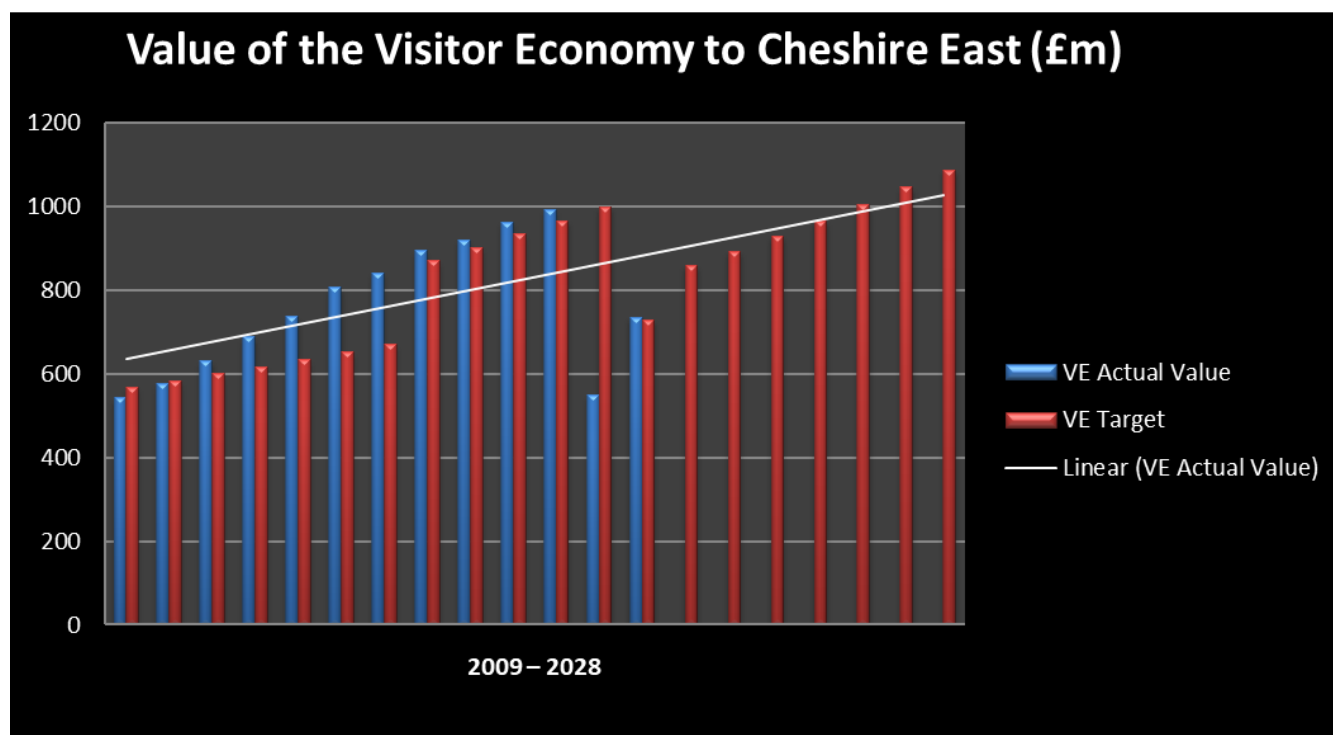
- *To work with partners to provide business with case studies, products, services and information relating to sustainability for the meetings and events industry.*
- *To participate in the development of the Cheshire Science Corridor as a means to attract science-based association conferences*
- *To raise the profile of the Cheshire East offer to regional, national and International Conference buyers of the Cheshire East offer.*

Monitoring and evaluation

We will also continue to provide annual data around the value and importance of the visitor economy in Cheshire East through the STEAM Data and monitor trends on hotel occupancy and performance. Cheshire East will additionally seek ways to collect data on the self-catering sector to ensure, along with hotel data, we understand the current position of the market and can inform future strategy. Other business data, town centre footfall, attractions data, consumer sentiment and feedback will be collected where available to inform plans and the development of future strategy.

²⁹ [BVA/BDRC Meeting and Events State of the Nation](#)

³⁰ [Meetings, Conferences and Events in Chester and Cheshire - Cheshire and Warrington](#)



Targets

YEAR	VALUE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY IN CHESHIRE EAST
2022	£860m
2023	£894m
2024	£930m
2025	£967m
2026	£1.006bn
2027	£1.046bn
2028	£1.088bn

Working together for Cheshire East's visitor economy

This strategy provides a strategic framework for Cheshire East Council, Tourism and Hospitality businesses, Visitor Economy partner organisations, Cheshire East Town & Parish Councils and other stakeholders to work together to grow and develop Cheshire East's visitor economy. Each has a role to play to generate the benefits that the visitor economy can bring, supporting a thriving and sustainable place that is a great place for people to live, work and visit. It addresses the future strategic direction and priorities for the period 2023-2028, with an aspiration to grow the value of the visitor economy and contribute to the borough's wider economic growth.

Cheshire East Council continues to play a leadership role in supporting our local visitor economy's growth potential. However, the council cannot deliver the growth aspirations on its own. Working in partnership with Marketing Cheshire, our Destination Management Organisation (DMO), we can build on the activities of businesses and stakeholders across the destination. Business networks such as Destination Cheshire can help to share, intelligence and best practice, coordinate effort and build a strong offer for visitors. Our common goal is to continue to develop a successful and distinctive offer for visitors that translates into growth in our visitor economy.

Appendix 1 - Consultation

Over 20 Cheshire East Tourism and Hospitality businesses were interviewed regarding the strategic priorities. Discussions centered around:

- Business type and location
- Themes to attract visitors to the area
- Visitor profiles
- Priority markets for Cheshire
- Destination data to help guide businesses decisions
- Sustainability and the green agenda
- Recruitment and staffing challenges
- Business visits, conferencing and events
- Strategic sites and the travel trade market
- Impact of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis
- Other priorities and observations

Desk Based Research Study - Insight gained included:

- **Staycations** are here to stay, with outdoor experiences a key beneficiary of the pandemic.
- **Visiting friends & relatives** is still a top priority, with visitors prioritising people as well as places.
- **Families are a prominent audience** in Cheshire along with the resilient & affluent 55+ market.
- **Community-based tourism** is at the heart of the travel experience & the sharing of local experiences is now even more important.
- **Wellness is top of mind** for travelers since the pandemic, with the rural environment being key to promoting good mental health & physical wellbeing.
- **Inclusive marketing** - 1 in 5 people are disabled & the accessible tourism market in England is worth c£15 billion. Providing detailed, accurate accessibility information is essential.
- **Blended travel** (combining travel & work) means people are staying longer, with multi-purpose visits combining leisure & business.
- **Rise in dog ownership** - 34% of households own a pet dog & are looking for pet friendly accommodation & activities.
- **Staff shortages are a major concern**, with competitive salaries, mentoring, tackling immigration & changing perceptions seen as potential solutions.
- **Business meetings & events have been forced to evolve**, with businesses keen to get back to face-to-face events that are easy to book.
- **People are eager to get back together at cultural events** but are more likely to stay local & attend fewer due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- **International travel remains down from pre-pandemic levels &** is unlikely to recover until 2025, but some travelers are staying longer, upgrading & treating themselves.
- **Investment in quality data, in particular 'big data'**, could help identify & capitalise on future tourism trends & opportunities for Cheshire.
- **Sustainability & the green agenda is an emerging driver of importance**, especially to the younger traveler.
- **The cost-of-living crisis means people are cutting back & shopping around**, meaning businesses need to focus on value-for-money experiences.
- **Covid is still affecting our attitudes to travel** with people favouring outdoor & countryside experiences, making Cheshire East is a top choice for short breaks.

Websites used during the research

1. [Audience Agency Audience Spectrum](#)
2. [Alva](#)
3. [Bain Air Travel Forecast](#)
4. [BVA-BDRC](#)
5. [Clearsight](#)
6. [Crown Plaza Blended Travel](#)
7. [Caterer.com](#)
8. [Event Bright](#)
9. [Meetings and Events State of the Nation](#)
10. [National Workforce Strategy](#)
11. [Office for National Statistics](#)
12. [Strutt and Parker Consumer Trends](#)
13. [SNAPTRIP](#)
14. [Sykes Cottages Staycation Index 2022](#)
15. [Statista Pet Ownership](#)
16. [The Tourism Society](#)
17. [Think with Google](#)
18. [Travel Trade Consultancy](#)
19. [UK Hospitality](#)
20. [Visit Britain - Engaging and retaining new customers](#)
21. [Visit Britain Sentiment Tracker](#)
22. [Visit Britain Visitor Segmentation](#)
23. [Visit Britain Inclusive Marketing](#)
24. [World Economic Forum](#)
25. [World Tourism Organisation World Tourism Barometer](#)

Documents used during the research

1. Marketing Cheshire Destination Management Plan
2. Cheshire East Tourism Recovery Plan
3. Cheshire East Visitor Economy Session 29 June
4. Marketing Cheshire Members Insights
5. Visit England Domestic Sentiment Tracker
6. Visit England Covid 19 Consumer Sentiment Tracker April 2022
7. Meetings and Events State of the Nation
8. Clearsight Domestic and International Travel Recovery
9. Audience Agency Northwest Visitor Profiles
10. Staffordshire Draft Visitor Economy Action Plan
11. STR comparison data 2019 v 2022
12. Cheshire East 2015 Visitor Economy Strategy



Discussion Groups

Two discussion groups took place with a variety of Cheshire East Business & stakeholders. These discussions gave an opportunity for feedback & contributions from participants on the priorities set out in the current & draft new Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy. The latter of the two groups had an emphasis on views from the accommodation sector. Discussion centered around:

- Celebrating CE Strengths and Achievements
- Staycations
- Leisure versus Corporate
- Sustainability, Inclusivity and Positive Messaging
- Sharing Data and Insights
- Staff Retention, training & Skills
- Cost of Living
- National Connectivity
- Rural Connectivity & Accessibility

Public Consultation (Including Town & Parish Councils)

Priority 1: Position Cheshire East as a destination of choice for staycations – both day visits & staying visits The rationale Huge growth in domestic travel in 2021. Cheshire East is ideally positioned to take advantage of some of the key thematic trends post-Covid. Apart from an excellent geographical position with good connectivity providing access to new markets, the area is well positioned to exploit key themes such as: Outdoor experiences Friends & family Wellness Lifestyle & culture Sustainable & green In 2022 we are starting to see the return of outbound travel & we need to work hard to position Cheshire East for additional domestic trips. We need to understand & showcase our accommodation offer including self-catering, glamping, camping & caravanning offer as these are often perceived as value for money. We can tie that into walks & cycling along with itineraries around places to visit & places to eat & drink How important do you think priority 1 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only




Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		87.50%	7
2	Fairly important		0.00%	0
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 1? Please write in below

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
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Do you have any comments to make about priority 1? Please write in below			
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	1
1	Cheshire East has a wealth of assets to build the visitor economy. The Council needs to work with partners to harness these and help them contribute to messaging		
		answered	1
		skipped	7

Priority 2: Enhance our data & analysis to enable better understanding of trends, & facilitate a more effective marketing strategy for the destination The rationale With the majority of visitor booking & searches on-line it is imperative destinations harness the power of data to target their limited resources. Technology & Big Data will allow Cheshire East to better understand our audience, visitors & preferences to deliver effective marketing whilst identifying gaps & opportunities. It also offers the opportunity to better understand how destination experience in Cheshire matches consumer expectations & trends. Cheshire East needs to work with local tourism & hospitality partners to capture relevant & timely audience & trend data for the benefit of targeted & cost-effective decision making. How important do you think priority 2 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		75.00%	6
2	Fairly important		12.50%	1
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 2? Please write in below		
Answer Choices	Response Percent	Response Total




Do you have any comments to make about priority 2? Please write in below			
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
1	Without clarity on visitor trends, offers cannot be shaped. It's vital to have good data.		
2	most people are already experienced in on-line searches.		
		answered	2
		skipped	6

Priority 3: Develop initiatives focused on sustainability & the green agenda to support business growth & extend options for consumers The rationale Consumer awareness of the impact of climate change is now much greater & is influencing decision making in respect to visits & overnight stays. Cheshire East businesses require support in their quest to become sustainable. As a destination we need to ensure consumers can access tourism facilities via sustainable travel where possible & have a clear understanding of the sustainability of Cheshire East as a visitor destination. How important do you think priority 3 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		50.00%	4
2	Fairly important		25.00%	2
3	Not very important		25.00%	2
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 3? Please write in below		
Answer Choices	Response Percent	Response Total





Do you have any comments to make about priority 3? Please write in below			
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	1
1	Not attainable until public transport is taken into the hands of the government of county council. private firms will not service unprofitable routes.		
		answered	1
		skipped	7

Priority 4: Work with local & national bodies to strengthen the appeal of tourism & hospitality jobs & careers in Cheshire East The rationale Cheshire East's Tourism & Hospitality businesses continue to struggle with recruitment. People do not see Hospitality as a career. Perceptions need to change & this will assist Cheshire East Businesses attract & retain talent allowing them to provide for visitors & locals alike. Cheshire East will work in partnership with Department of Work & Pensions & local Colleges to provide initial training programmes allowing progress into the sector. Added to this, a programme aimed at those in secondary school education will be launched to change perceptions of Hospitality as a career. How important do you think priority 4 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only



Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		50.00%	4
2	Fairly important		25.00%	2
3	Not very important		25.00%	2
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 4? Please write in below		
Answer Choices	Response Percent	Response Total

Do you have any comments to make about priority 4? Please write in below			
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
1	The opportunities in the heritage and museum sector can assist with this. The need to diversify the workforce is a key agenda at the moment		
2	A fair salary and reasonable hours of work are required first.		
		answered	2
		skipped	6




<p>Priority 5: Proactively encourage business visits & events to Cheshire East, whether by using Cheshire & Warrington's sector strengths or working with towns & venues to attract an increase in innovative & unique events & festivals The rationale Cheshire & Warrington has significant strengths in green energy & life sciences & these sectors can form part of our positioning around Cheshire & Warrington as a place to host conferences & events. Cheshire East's rural venues, from Tatton Park to Cholmondeley Castle host a wide range of events throughout the year which drive visitors into the destination. We need to understand the potential for growth and what kind of events help make our place distinctive. Proactively work to attract events and promote current Cheshire East events widely. How important do you think priority 5 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only</p>				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		50.00%	4
2	Fairly important		25.00%	2
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		12.50%	1
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 5? Please write in below			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
	1 Focus on HS2 and connectivity of Crewe/south incl available spaces for overnight stays and conference facilities		
	2 It is important all areas are considered. Smaller areas such as Sandbach and Nantwich, make a bigger offer when combined with Crewe and Macclesfield, yet these areas on their own may not draw a visitor economy.		
		answered	2
		skipped	6

<p>Priority 6: Support for improved Rural Connectivity The rationale Many rural attractions rely on car arrivals & the lack of public transport will increasingly be seen as a barrier to growth. There are also issues around infrastructure investments including installing electric car charging points. Additionally broadband/WI-FI connectivity are still issues in rural areas. For Cheshire East we are seeing connectivity impacting staff recruitment & increasingly we are seeing the importance of rural connectivity & ease of tourism mobility as key for international visitors who wish not to drive once in the UK. The strategy will prioritise working with partners to raise the issues highlighted & encourage investment in rural infrastructure. How important do you think priority 6 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only</p>				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		87.50%	7
2	Fairly important		0.00%	0
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 6? Please write in below			
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	3
1	Its a key component for access. Car is king, until there is a convenient reliable cheap alternative		
2	Fibre to premises costs have to be cut if there is to be a level playing field for Rural destinations. We are being crippled by slow internet		
3	The rural infrastructure definitely needs improvement, assisting visitors coming into airports and railway stations. Taxi ranks charge extortionate fees to transport visitors where there's little or no public transport		
		answered	3
		skipped	5

Priority 7: Accessible & Inclusive Tourism to Cheshire East The rationale Accessible & inclusive marketing needs to be at the heart of all communications. Inclusive marketing ensures all customers, regardless of any access requirements or specific characteristics, feel welcomed to a particular business. In this country 1 in 5 people are disabled (DWP). Impairments such as hearing loss, arthritis, epilepsy & autism are not visible & some customers won't disclose these on booking. The accessible tourism market in England is worth around £15 billion & demand for accessible accommodation & activities outstrips the current supply. Disabled travellers tend to be loyal as, with fewer businesses catering to their requirements, they often return to places that do. The strategy intends to place a greater focus on accessible & inclusive tourism & work with businesses to provide for & welcome this audience. Cheshire East will position itself as an inclusive & accessible destination. How important do you think priority 7 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		50.00%	4
2	Fairly important		37.50%	3
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8

Priority 7: Accessible & Inclusive Tourism to Cheshire East The rationale Accessible & inclusive marketing needs to be at the heart of all communications. Inclusive marketing ensures all customers, regardless of any access requirements or specific characteristics, feel welcomed to a particular business. In this country 1 in 5 people are disabled (DWP). Impairments such as hearing loss, arthritis, epilepsy & autism are not visible & some customers won't disclose these on booking. The accessible tourism market in England is worth around £15 billion & demand for accessible accommodation & activities outstrips the current supply. Disabled travellers tend to be loyal as, with fewer businesses catering to their requirements, they often return to places that do. The strategy intends to place a greater focus on accessible & inclusive tourism & work with businesses to provide for & welcome this audience. Cheshire East will position itself as an inclusive & accessible destination. How important do you think priority 7 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only




skipped

0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 7? Please write in below

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	3
1	Accessibility for people with additional needs benefits everyone.		
2	Priority 6 must be in first		
3	I feel strongly about assisting disabled traveler's.		
		answered	3
		skipped	5

Priority 8: Use Cheshire East's strategic sites & unique stories to encourage domestic & International Travel Trade Visits The rationale Cheshire East has nationally & internationally recognised attractions & some special stories to tell. Jodrell Bank has recently been designated a World Heritage Site & there is an ambition to capitalised on its International appeal & the links to the rest of the Cheshire East Visitor Economy. The UK currently has 33 World Heritage Sites, with more in the offering. It is intended to utilise the interest in World Heritage Tours to raise the profile of Cheshire East as a visitor destination & profile Jodrell Bank at the heart of this. Tatton Park is one of the most visited attractions in the England, helping to showcase the historic houses, gardens & unique event venues of the area. The variety & quality of our historic estates & their appeal to a wide range of audiences provide another strong & complementary heritage offer that help position the Cheshire East offer to key audiences. Unique stories, including the silk or music heritage of Macclesfield, a secret nuclear bunker, gin-making on the fringes of the Peak District or film & literary connections, can help to generate interest & character that can be targeted for specific audiences or at particular time, adding value & colour to the wider offer. How important do you think priority 8 is for strengthening Cheshire East's visitor economy? Tick one box only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very important		75.00%	6
2	Fairly important		12.50%	1
3	Not very important		12.50%	1
4	Not at all important		0.00%	0
5	Don't know / Not sure		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0

Do you have any comments to make about priority 8? Please write in below

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	4
1	The need for a coherent narrative about Cheshire's offer is key to being successful within this strategy			
2	the best of Cheshire East and its potential are key. The examples given will attract an audience of middle aged middle class visitors. This is key group with disposable income but something for younger people too.			

Do you have any comments to make about priority 8? Please write in below

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Any marketing Cheshire East can provide to help generate interest is good |
| 4 | I think there's an huge opportunity to link smaller creative businesses with the major leaders in our county. In turn smaller visitor attractions will promote our halls, parks and major places of interest |

	answered	4
	skipped	4

Final questions Are there any other priorities that you think should be included in the strategy? Please write in below

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	6
1	Facilitate event organisers to make putting on events more straight forward		
2	Opportunities for accommodation providers to experience and network with tourism providers. This will help visibility of the area		
3	Put on events, be ambitious. More Festivals.		
4	Urgent attention needs to be given to providing affordable fibre connections to rural businesses and cultural destinations		
5	Improving promotion for all visitor attractions across the county, more social media promotion and also collaborative incentives		
6	No the planned focus is right		
		answered	6
		skipped	2

Is there anything that worked well in the previous strategy that you want to see retained? Please write in below

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	4

Is there anything that worked well in the previous strategy that you want to see retained? Please write in below

1	not really
2	I'm not aware of the previous strategy
3	A video was made promoting Macclesfield with all sorts of activities and fun activities included. More of this needed that can be searched on line
4	teams meetings and networking opportunities - sharing of experience between partners is of value.

	answered	4
	skipped	4

What key strengths should be front & centre for Cheshire East's Visitor Economy Strategy? Please write in below

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	5
1	Commercial and business visits		
2	The uniqueness of Cheshire's offer: High quality programming in both rural and urban settings. There is something for everyone so segment targeted marketing is important. There is also a need to join up agencies so all are using the same unique narratives.		
3	the rural beauty, its accessibility by road, rail and air. close to Manchester and Liverpool		
4	A map of Cheshire attractions for visitors could be useful. More presence on television		
5	Focus on what makes CEC special and attractive to audiences identified and then communicate this in a cost-effective way to those same audiences.		
		answered	5
		skipped	3

What is there about Cheshire East that helps sell it locally, nationally & internationally? Please write in below

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	5
1	Connectivity. HS2		
2	It's easy to get to from anywhere via Crewe & the M6 plus Manchester Airport. It's a mix of offers from independent retail to rural escape to industrial heritage		
3	better to focus on domestic tourism, developing active holiday ideas. Fun things. walking trails, cycling trails, festivals, markets, cafes culture, a good central venue for concerts, comedians, arts, decent cinemas, we have to leave Cheshire East to access many of these things. Be ambitious with public transport. Ask yourself when you were last on a bus and why? Widen roads and get cycling lanes in. Make it easier to do these things.		
4	There are some fantastic historic and cultural destinations which are accessible and unique		
5	Countryside, halls, markets, places of interest and rural crafts		
		answered	5
		skipped	3

What are the perceived limitations & barriers for success – ideas on how the strategy can overcome these? Please write in below





Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	4
1	Spell "centre" correctly. Not enough in Cheshire to have a thriving tourism economy. lots in Cheshire to promote for business travel and activity which will deliver local spend and investment		
2	The regeneration in some of the town centres is ongoing and may not quite be ready to compete with some of the rural offerings. It's a difficult messaging.		
3	its a conservative county, a perception that most people with influence are okay, so this makes change difficult to achieve.		
4	LACK OF RELIABLE INTERNET CONSTANT POWER CUTS AND SURGES IS costing Rural destinations in time and preventing people coming back to work in the office and making people nervous about staying in our accommodation without reliable internet		
		answered	4

What are the perceived limitations & barriers for success – ideas on how the strategy can overcome these? Please write in below

skipped

4

About you Which of the following best describes how you are you responding to this survey: Please select one box only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	On behalf of a group, organisation or club		25.00%	2
2	On behalf of a local business		25.00%	2
3	As an individual (e.g. local resident)		25.00%	2
4	As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor		0.00%	0
5	As a council employee / A professional		25.00%	2
6	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0
			answered	8
			skipped	0
Other (please specify): (0)				
No answers found.				

If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation, club, Ward or Parish / Town Council area please state the name and postcode in the box below (you do not need to complete the rest of the 'About you' section). Please write in below



Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Name of group, organisation, club, Ward or Parish / Town Council:	100.00%	1
1	Clonter Opera Theatre		
2	Postcode:	100.00%	1

If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation, club, Ward or Parish / Town Council area please state the name and postcode in the box below (you do not need to complete the rest of the 'About you' section). Please write in below



1 CW12 2LT


answered	1
skipped	7


What is your gender identity? Please select one option only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		42.86%	3
2	Female		57.14%	4
3	Prefer not to say		0.00%	0
4	Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below):		0.00%	0
			answered	7
			skipped	1
Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below): (0)				
No answers found.				

What age group do you belong to? Please select one option only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	16-24		0.00%	0
2	25-34		0.00%	0
3	35-44		14.29%	1
4	45-54		28.57%	2



What age group do you belong to? Please select one option only				
5	55-64		57.14%	4
6	65-74		0.00%	0
7	75-84		0.00%	0
8	85 and over		0.00%	0
9	Prefer not to say		0.00%	0
			answered	7
			skipped	1

What is your ethnic origin? Please write in below				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish		100.00%	7
2	Any other White background		0.00%	0
3	Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian		0.00%	0
4	Asian / Asian British		0.00%	0
5	Black African / Caribbean / Black British		0.00%	0
6	Prefer not to say		0.00%	0
7	Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below):		0.00%	0
			answered	7
			skipped	1
Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below): (0)				

What is your ethnic origin? Please write in below

No answers found.

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. Please select one option only

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		14.29%	1
2	No		85.71%	6
3	Prefer not to say		0.00%	0
			answered	7
			skipped	1

Appendix 2

[The Green Accreditation Webinar \(thecaterersummits.com\)](https://thecaterersummits.com)

Visit Britain - [‘Making your business sustainable’](#)

Visit Britain - [market and communicate your green credentials.](#)

[Green Tourism](#) - Award-winning certification programme.

[Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency](#)

[Tourism Consultants Network event March 29th 2022 – Responding to sustainability - The Tourism Society](#)

Relevant Strategies

Cheshire East Rural Action Plan -

<https://modern.gov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s97674/Rural%20Action%20Plan%202022.pdf>

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Town Centre Vitality Plans
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director - Place
Report Reference no:	EG/02/2022-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval of Town Centre Vitality Plans for Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.
- 1.2. Each Town Centre Vitality Plan sets out priorities for supporting the vitality and viability of specific town centres as and when funding opportunities arise.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Corporate Plan states that ensuring Cheshire East is a thriving and sustainable place is a corporate priority. In pursuit of this aim it states that the Council will work with partners and key stakeholders to understand what is important to our towns and produce town centre recovery plans for key centres, other than Crewe and Macclesfield which already have town centre regeneration strategies in place.
- 2.2. Officers have progressed this workstream, commissioning the development of Town Centre Vitality Plans for the borough's nine key service centres as identified in the Local Plan. With input from Town Councils, draft plans have been produced and the public subsequently consulted on those draft plans.
- 2.3. The Town Centre Vitality Plans identify projects and initiatives which should be the subject of focus as and when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.

- 2.4. Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objective before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.5. This report and associated appendices give an overview of the public consultation and the feedback received and set out recommended final TCVP for formal approval.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Committee approve the Town Centre Vitality Plans set out in Appendix A, endorsing the priorities they identify to be taken forward to support town centre health as and when suitable funding opportunities arise, and resources allow.
- 3.2. That Committee endorse Town Councils being requested to also approve the plans with a view to establishing a joint set of agreed priorities.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Council is committed to supporting successful town centres in the borough's key towns as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 4.2. Research is clear that having a clear vision and strategy to facilitate collaboration is key to driving forward positive change in town centres.
- 4.3. Additionally, when town centre funding opportunities arise, it is often a critical requirement that funding bids demonstrate a clear strategy and rationale for projects put forward. Demonstrating community support for those plans is also often key to securing funding.
- 4.4. The Council has enabled the development of Town Centre Vitality Plans, with input from Town Councils, with a view to identifying priority projects and initiatives for supporting town centre vitality.
- 4.5. The draft plans have been the subject of a six-week public consultation. All representations have been considered by the consultant team with amendments made to the plans as considered appropriate, as detailed in Appendix B to this report.
- 4.6. The plans are now considered by officers to be suitable for approval and adoption by the Council.

5. Other Options Considered

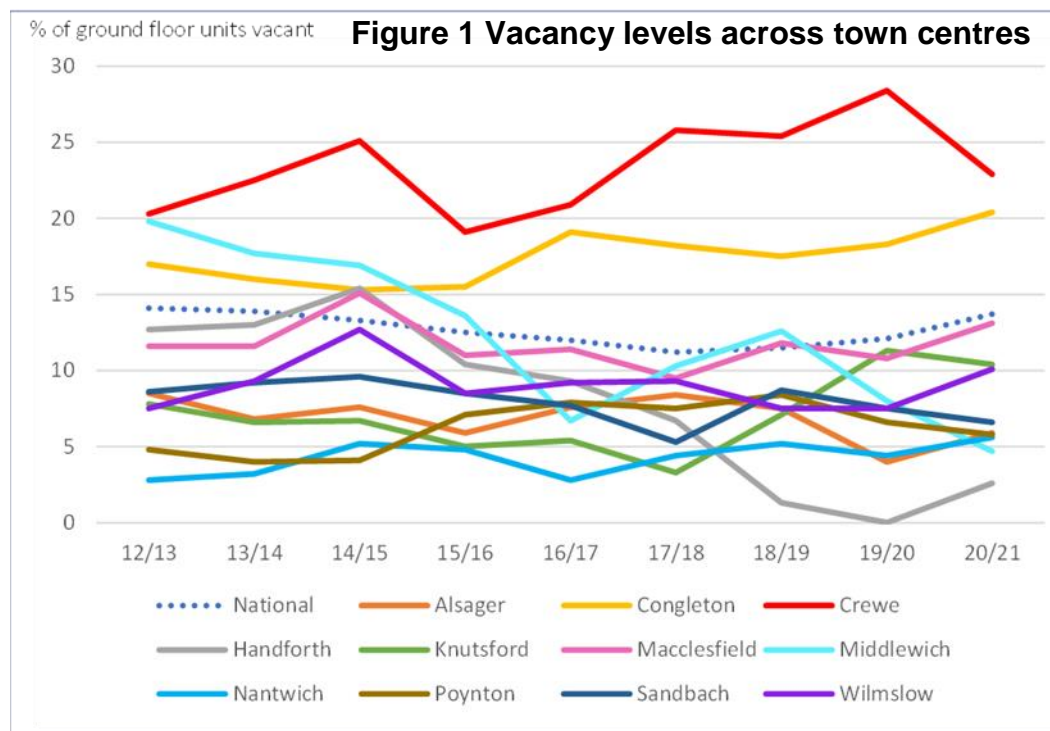
- 5.1. Not approving the Town Centre Vitality Plans is the clear alternative option. Revising the plans with further rounds of consultation would be another.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	Not approving the Town Centre Vitality Plans would leave the Council without specific approved proposals for supporting the town centres of key towns and continued lack of clarity over which actions should be taken forward (as resources allow) to support town centre health.	Reducing the likely success of any future funding bids. Resources diverted responding to ad hoc requests to support various uncoordinated town centre projects which may conflict Failure to deliver actions identified in Corporate Plan
Further consultation and refinement	Delays and additional costs	Missed opportunities to ensure funding such as Shared Prosperity Fund is aligned to agreed town centre priorities Resources diverted from delivery of regeneration projects

6. Background

- 6.1** The Council is committed to supporting the health of town centres as indicated in the Corporate Plan and recognises that every town centre across the borough is an important hub for the residents and businesses in its catchment.
- 6.2** However, with challenges around funding and resources, the Council has to prioritise where it focuses that support. Areas of focus are influenced by a variety of factors.
- 6.3** Town centre health is of course key, but this needs to be measured on an objective basis to enable fair comparisons. There are many indicators recognised as being potentially relevant in assessing town centre health with 13 different indicators identified in national planning guidance. Every 5 years the Council commissions an assessment of town centre health, the latest published in June 2020 as part of the Cheshire East Retail Study Partial Update. Aside from these 5 yearly health checks, until 2020 the Council had limited current data to help it understand the vitality and viability of town centres. Whilst annual ground floor vacancy surveys have been carried out for many years, reported as part of the Council's annual Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), these are only a single indicator, and the headline figures can be misleading. For example, considering **Figure 1** which identifies the vacancy levels in town centres since 2013, Congleton has recorded vacancy levels in excess of 20%. On face value, this could be taken as an indication

that the health of Congleton Town Centre is weak, but analysis of the data reveals that a large proportion of vacancies are clustered in two private developments (Capital Walk and Bridestone development) which have been closed and not actively marketed for a number of years, distorting the true health of the letting market in Congleton.



6.4 As the borough's largest town, with the greatest levels of deprivation, the most significant allocation for new homes in the Local Plan Strategy, and with national funding opportunities associated with HS2, Crewe has been the obvious focus for town centre regeneration activity in recent years. The Council commissioned a Regeneration Delivery Framework for Crewe town centre, completed back in 2015, and has been able to make a strong case for Government funding for the town centre linked to the opportunities around HS2. Consequently, Crewe has an ambitious town centre regeneration programme.

6.5 The importance of Macclesfield town, with the highest number of retail/service units of any town in the borough as well as the highest recorded town centre footfall, has also been recognised for some time. In October 2019 the Council approved the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) to set a clear strategy for its revitalisation as and when resources allow. This has facilitated the Council in putting forward bids for funding when opportunities have arisen such as Levelling up Fund bids. Unfortunately, in the highly competitive environment for central Levelling Up Funding, it has been extremely challenging to secure funds for Macclesfield, which does not have the same demonstrable level of need or opportunity as Crewe. Nevertheless, having a clear strategy for the town centre remains important as a tool for focusing what resources do become

available and the SRF has been useful in enabling officers to collaborate with other key stakeholders such as the Town Council, to take forward incremental town centre projects in the knowledge they will complement longer term plans. It has also proven to be useful in responding to private developer's enquiries, giving clarity over the types of private town centre development that should be encouraged and supported.

- 6.6** More recently, the Council included in its Corporate Plan the intention to consider how best to support the centre of other towns via the development of town centre focused plans for the borough's other key towns. With the rise of internet retailing, banking etc. all town centres are in a period of transition during which they may need support. Recognising that all towns are individual and there is no recognised single strategy which will suit all, in 2020 the Council commissioned the development of Town Centre Vitality Plans for the borough's nine 'Key Service Centres' as defined in the Local Plan.
- 6.7** Additionally, recognising the need for additional data to inform thinking on town centres, initially utilising government funding made available via the Reopening High Street Safely Fund and Welcome Back Fund, and subsequently utilising the Economic Development Service budget, the Council also commissioned the collection of footfall/visitor information across the borough's two principal towns and nine key service centres up to September 2026. This data enables comparison of activity levels across eleven town centres, using data collected in a consistent manner. This data has enabled the Council to understand the comparable impacts of Covid 19 on town centre footfall in different towns and, it is clear, that impacts have varied from town to town.
- 6.8** This data has been used to help inform the development of the Town Centre Vitality Plans, together with a variety of other data collected from secondary sources as well as from site visits and local workshops held with town councils and in some cases other key local stakeholders.
- 6.9** On 30 November 2021 Economy and Growth Committee considered a Town Centre Regeneration Update, noting the progress made in developing Town Centre Vitality Plans and agreeing that the draft reports should be issued for public consultation in early 2022, with a further report to committee post that consultation.
- 6.10** That public consultation has now been undertaken as set out in more detail in the following sections.

7 Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1** Two rounds of workshops with individual town councils have been undertaken to ensure local knowledge and views were embedded into the

draft Town Centre Vitality Plans. Attendance at the workshops has varied from town to town. The first round of workshops focused on SWOT analysis of the town centres to both inform the baseline position and to start to identify potential areas of focus. The output from those workshops was then considered alongside a wide range of additional baseline data collected from secondary sources and site visits to identify potential areas for focus in each town. Tentative suggestions as to areas for focus were then discussed in a second round of workshops, before draft Town Centre Vitality Plans were produced.

- 7.2** Following the production of draft plans officers held a total of eighteen briefing sessions, one for the local ward members of each town, and one for each town council. This was followed by a six week online public consultation to enable the public to put forward comments and suggestions whilst the plans were still at a formative stage. Further details of the consultation, including both an overview of the process and feedback received in response, is set out in the Report of Consultation at Appendix B.

8 Implications

8.1 Legal

- 8.1.1** Town Centre Vitality Plans do not negate the need for further action to be taken where appropriate and necessary, e.g., submission of a Planning Application for any development or change of use. The TCVP do not have any formal status within the Council's Local Plan.

8.2 Finance

- 8.2.1** The Town Centre Vitality Plans identify projects and initiatives which should be the subject of focus as and when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.
- 8.2.2** Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objective before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8.3 Policy

- 8.3.1** The Corporate Plan recognises that successful town centres are vital to ensuring thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all, but town centre projects and initiatives can support more than a thriving economy. If designed and delivered with holistic thinking, town centre revitalisation and regeneration projects can help support numerous Council policies, for example by: enabling and encouraging a sense of community and combating isolation by better utilising public spaces providing new opportunities for people to come together and socialise; improving health and reducing carbon emissions by reducing car dominance and facilitating and encouraging cycling and walking

into and within town centres; and highlighting heritage assets thereby supporting their appreciation and conservation.

8.4 Equality

8.4.1 Public authorities have a legal responsibility to assess their activities, and to set out how they will protect people from discrimination on the basis of their 'protected characteristics'. An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken prior to the development of Town Centre Vitality Plans. This raised no specific implications for equality stemming from the plans. The EIA was reviewed following consideration of representations submitted at public consultation stage and has been developed into nine individual EIA. These indicate that for all towns the recommended actions within the TCVP have the potential to impact differently on people with protected characteristics dependant on the detail of any projects taken forward. To ensure equality impacts are properly considered it will therefore be appropriate to undertake specific, focused EIAs as and projects are taken forward aligned to recommended actions in the TCVP.

8.5 Human Resources

8.5.1 There are considered to be no direct implications for human resources stemming from this update report.

8.6 Risk Management

8.6.1 When approving any strategy or plan seeking to improve any aspect of the borough of interests to residents and the business community, there is a risk that expectations will be raised unrealistically. This can be mitigated by clear communication on the Council's website that Town Centre Vitality Plans are not a commitment to delivering the projects and initiatives they identify as desirable but rather a tool to support the Council and others in seeking funding and driving forward initiatives and proposals as and when resources allow.

8.7 Rural Communities

8.7.1 As Town Centre Vitality Plans are focused on town centres there are considered to be no specific implications for rural communities. However, it should be recognised that many residents of rural areas will visit town centres and may also be impacted by any future proposals brought forward aligned to the Town Centre Vitality Plans.

8.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1 Town centres offer facilities and spaces which can be used by residents of all ages. Key to successful town centres is recognising that younger people may look to town centres to provide activities and opportunities in a different way to older generations. For example, whilst since 2010 the percentage of adults holding a driving licence has increased overall, the percentage in the 17-20 year age groups has significantly reduced, suggesting that younger adults are less likely to have independent use of a car and thus perhaps more likely to

appreciate town centres which support walking and cycling and place less priority on catering for motor vehicles.

8.9 Public Health

8.9.1 The quality of the built environment is a determining factor for mental and physical health. Noise, pollution, access to safe spaces to cycle and walk, quality of open space, opportunities for people to meet and socialise, access to services and appearance can all play a part. Therefore, town centre strategies and projects can have an impact on mental and physical health and creating accessible, inclusive town centres that enable everyone to play an equal role in society is important in protecting and enhancing well-being and health.

8.10 Climate Change

8.10.1 The Town Centre Vitality Plans recognise the pressing need to reduce carbon emissions and tackle the climate emergency. The plans incorporate several suggestions aimed at facilitating and encouraging increased walking and cycling to and within centres and reducing the priority and dominance of motorised vehicles. As any individual projects are brought forward further opportunities can be explored on other specific measures to reduce carbon may be embedded.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Jo Wise, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager Jo.wise@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07939 508547
Appendices:	A: Recommended Final Town Centre Vitality Plans B. Report on Consultation
Background Papers:	HSUK2020-End-of-Project-Reportcompressed.pdf (placemanagement.org) Equality Impact Assessment



Working for a brighter future together

Economy & Growth Committee

Date of Meeting: 17 January 2023

Report Title: Repurposing Our High Streets (Crewe) Grant Scheme

Report of: Jayne Traverse, Executive Director - Place

Report Reference No: EG/30/22-23

Ward(s) Affected: Crewe Central ward

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** To obtain approval for the design and delivery of a new grant scheme aimed at improving occupancy of vacant commercial premises in Crewe town centre.
- 1.2.** This report relates to the Council's Corporate Plan priority "a thriving and sustainable place", specifically:
- a) a great place for people to live, work and visit;
 - b) welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods;
 - c) thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** Following the identification of Crewe, in late 2020, as one of the towns eligible for the Government's 'Towns Fund' programme, in January 2021, Crewe Town Board submitted a Town Investment Plan identifying those projects it intended to support. This included a project to promote the repurposing of vacant town centre premises to increase activity and improve perceptions.
- 2.2.** Until August 2021 the intention was that Crewe Town Council would lead on a project which involved direct acquisition, refurbishment, and disposal. At that point the Town Council withdrew its proposal and Cheshire East Council agreed to take forward proposals for a variation of their project which avoids property transactions and is focused on providing financial support through a grant

scheme to businesses taking leases for occupation of vacant premises in Crewe town centre.

- 2.3.** The Council led on the development of the business case for this project, taking into account the experience of similar grant schemes operated by other local authorities and a national expert in this field, as well as local stakeholders. The business case was independently appraised and subsequently approved by Crewe Town Board and Government (Department for Levelling Up, Homes & Communities, DLUHC).

3. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 3.1.** Approve the allocation of £1.45m Towns Fund grant to be used in the operation of the 'Repurposing Our High Streets' (ROHS) project to be spent over the period from January 2023 up to 31 March 2026.
- 3.2.** Delegates authority to the Executive Director (Place) to make any final amendments to the draft policy (Appendix 1), operate the scheme and enter into any associated legal agreements.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** The proposed Repurposing Our High Streets (ROHS) project will form a key part of a comprehensive programme of regeneration already underway in Crewe town centre, building on initial investment by the council in 2015 and including funding secured as a result of successful bids for Government funds. It will draw on an allocation made more recently through the Towns Fund (and approved by Crewe Town Board and DLUHC), which is the main source of funding for this project, with the balance of £159,450 resulting from co-funding from successful applicants (not passing through the Council). The proposal is summarised in the Logic Chain Model in Appendix 2, which formed part of the appraised and approved business case.
- 4.2.** The ROHS project will respond to a perceived 'market failure'. i.e. the high proportion of vacant commercial premises in Crewe town centre, resulting from a number of factors including:
- Increased competitive advantage of online channels related to retailing and home deliveries;
 - Increased competitive advantage of out-of-town retail, leisure and office centres; and
 - The legacy impact of the Covid 19 pandemic that has materially disadvantaged town centres.
- 4.3.** The ROHS project is expected to:

- Support 53 businesses with grants and business support
- Help repurpose 2,950 sq. m floorspace including 2,500 sq. m retail, leisure or food & beverage space and 450 sq. m office space
- Create 60.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent jobs
- Safeguard 13.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent jobs

4.4. Full Council approval is already in place for “Delegation of authority to the Executive Director – Place to approve Supplementary Capital and Revenue Estimates up to the value of the Towns Fund grant award, and further delegates authority to incur expenditure in line with the conditions of the Fund. (Full Council, 22 June 2021). This relates to the overall £22.9m Towns Fund programme, which includes the ROHS project.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. In relation to the briefing elements of this report:

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The project and grant scheme would be unlikely to be administered by any other party.	The expected outcomes of the scheme would not be realised and the £1.45m Towns Fund grant ‘underspend’ would need to be raised with DLUHC, and potentially be withdrawn from Crewe’s grant allocation.
Develop an alternative programme that does not include the proposed form of business grants.	Alternative schemes have been considered, but these would be difficult to deliver due to issues such as: a) acquiring / holding / refurbishing / disposing of premises; or b) providing larger financial subsidies to property owners.	a) Risk to Council in increasing/managing a challenging property portfolio; or b) risk of breaching subsidy control regulations to property owners

6. Background

6.1. The Repurposing Our High Streets (ROHS) project will be a new scheme that is being established to address high levels of vacancy of commercial premises in Crewe town centre, supporting businesses to take leases by contributing towards the initial costs of occupying and operating from vacant premises.

6.2. The project will complement a wider programme of projects, initiatives, and activities already underway, or planned, in other parts of the town centre, and is intended to:

- a) Increase occupancy levels of vacant commercial premises
- b) Increase activity in and around Crewe town centre (both commercial activity and footfall)
- c) Diversify/strengthen the mix of town centre business uses
- d) Create employment opportunities
- e) Improve perceptions and confidence with local residents, visitors, businesses and investors.

6.3. The project will provide support comprising:

- a) Capital grants of up to £30,000* for businesses taking leases on vacant town premises, supporting their costs in improving the property for their occupation including fit-out costs, as well as other capital equipment purchased. (* The amount of grant will depend on the type of property and the length of lease taken. For example, shorter-term 'meanwhile use' businesses would receive a smaller grant than those businesses committing to a five-year lease. In exceptional circumstances, some premises may be eligible for a grant of up to £50,000).
- b) Business support for grant recipients to help them start/grow their business.
- c) Short-term visual 'shop window' improvements in vacant premises, in the form of vinyls or similar displays.

6.4. Eligible applicants will include:

- a) Businesses (including sole traders, community enterprises and charities) taking on new leases of commercial premises in Crewe town centre. This includes premises on upper floors as well as the ground floor.
- b) Landlords are only eligible for support for 'shop window' vinyls/displays.
- c) Other funding conditions will apply to ensure that the funding is used for legitimate business activity, represents good value-for-money, and is compliant with legislation (planning, building control, environmental health, subsidy control, etc.) and meet the scheme's objectives.

6.5. The scheme will, initially at least, be administered by the Council, although some elements of the scheme (e.g., marketing, grant application administration and business support) may be delivered through an appropriately procured third party.

- 6.6.** Information on the scheme, including detailed criteria and conditions, will be made available through the Council's website and promoted appropriately through third parties, media releases and social media activity.
- 6.7.** Applications will be subject to review and recommendation by a grant administrator to a Council officer who will take a decision on the award of the grant.
- 6.8.** Approval of grants and the award of payments will be subject to a number of factors including consideration of:
- a) whether the applicant is eligible;
 - b) the financial status of the applicant(s), including whether they are in arrears for Council Tax, business rates, etc;
 - c) whether the application demonstrates value-for-money;
 - d) whether the proposed business activity is suitable for the identified premises/location;
 - e) address legislative requirements or controls, including subsidy control, planning, building regulations, licensing, etc.
- 6.9.** As appropriate, subject to full consideration and mitigation of risks, the Council may:
- a) apply conditions to grant payments;
 - b) make advance payments of small grants to enable cash-flow of small/start-up businesses;
 - c) make more than one award to any business during the lifetime of the scheme, e.g., where a business is expanding into larger premises;
 - d) terminate a grant award and seek to recover any grant payment that has not been used in the approved manner.
- 6.10.** The Council will monitor the scheme, including individual business performance, and review the scheme regularly to inform any necessary changes. It will actively engage with successful applicants to develop case studies to inform future business grant schemes. Upon completion of the scheme, the Council will undertake an evaluation.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** Consultation and stakeholder engagement has been undertaken throughout the development and delivery of this project, including input from local property owners and agents, as well as specialist expertise from an independent expert in tackling the issue of vacant shops. It has also involved input from other local authorities that run similar schemes.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.2.** The Council's Constitution (April 2022, updated 6/9/22) Chapter 3, Part 4 Section 4 refers to support to other organisations.
- 8.3.** Committee approval is being sought for the overall scheme and application of the budget to this scheme. Individual grants of up to £50,000 can be approved by an Officer under the existing delegations within the Finance Procedure Rules.
- 8.4.** The Grant Funding Protocol sets out further guidance on grant funding, consideration of state aid implications, the process for allocation and any conditions that should apply to any grant funding. The ROHS scheme should be developed and implemented in accordance with this Protocol.
- 8.5.** In addition, external subsidy control advice has been provided which advises that each grant application should be considered in the light of:
- a) the basis by which compliance with small subsidy thresholds will be ensured should be confirmed, particularly in cases where landlords with multiple properties may be deemed as receiving subsidy, and
 - b) the basis for determining when landlords are considered to benefit from subsidy should be set out and confirmed with appropriate CEC officers.

8.6. Finance

- 8.7.** The Crewe Towns Fund budget was approved in full in the 2022-26 MTFS as a block allocation. Therefore, no further budget approvals are required for the grant scheme.
- 8.8.** All applications for the grants and the subsequent approval of the grants should adhere to the relevant sections of the Council's Constitution and the Corporate Grants Policy.
- 8.9.** The grants are for up to £50,000 and therefore the decision to award lies with Officers as per 6.27 of the Constitution (Chapter 3; Part 4, Section 4).

8.10. Policy

- 8.11.** This project aligns with the priorities of the Council's existing Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework and Local Plan, as well as Crewe Town Board's Town Investment Plan.

8.12. Equality

- 8.13.** There are no direct equality implications related to the recommendations in this report, but an equality impact assessment will be undertaken prior to the finalisation of the grant scheme criteria. As part of the scheme criteria, the contribution that an applicant business/organisation makes to social value will be considered.

8.14. Human Resources

- 8.15.** There are no direct implications; the Towns Fund capital grant award of £1.45m provides sufficient funding to support Council staff costs in administering the project and grant scheme.

8.16. Risk Management

- 8.17.** Given the nature of the proposals and the limited interdependencies, there are limited major risks associated with this

- 8.18.** The primary risks in delivery and operation considered in the Risk Register include:

- a) Timescales for necessary grant approvals impacting on delivery

Mitigated through a delegated approval process.

- b) Vacant premises require more funding to be a state suitable for a commercial occupation.

Mitigation: pro-active identification of most suitable premises for available grants; collaboration with landlords and businesses to broker lease deals that include appropriate landlord contributions.

Contingency: potential scheme revision to refocus on larger value grants and/or more strategic interventions.

- c) Grant scheme attracts those making fraudulent applications and/or submission of costs, although, relative to larger business grant scheme (such as those in place during the Covid pandemic), this scheme will be small scale, with greater opportunity for scrutiny on individual applications.

Mitigation: financial checks on individuals associated with application; requirement for applications to provide documentary evidence; checks on grant claims received including stated supplier; In-person checks on premises.

Contingency: enhanced checks and validation of applications if considered appropriate/proportionate.

- 8.19.** Whilst there will be specific criteria for the grant scheme, there will be regular review points to allow sufficient flexibility to reprofile and allocate grant funding based on demand and the arising needs of businesses.

- 8.20.** Inflationary risk has also been considered. As funding will be provide to businesses as a grant, identified works will be limited by the available level of funding. The allocation of funding will be dependent on the business providing competitive quotes (for costs above £500) which will ensure that works undertaken are within grant threshold limits and that further inflationary risk sits with the business applicant.

8.21. Rural Communities

8.22. There are no direct implications for rural communities related to the recommendations in this report, although the benefits of regeneration in Crewe town centre extend beyond the communities of Crewe into other the town's wider hinterland.

8.23. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.24. There are no direct implications for children, young people and cared for children related to the recommendations in this report.

8.25. Public Health

8.26. There are no direct public health implications related to the recommendations in this report. As part of the scheme criteria, the contribution that an applicant business/organisation makes to social value will be considered.

8.27. Climate Change

8.28. There are no direct climate change implications related to the recommendations in this report. It is expected that some of the grant funding will be invested in such a way that it will have positive benefits in terms of carbon reduction.

8.29.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Jez Goodman jez.goodman@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 685906
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Grant Scheme Policy (Draft) Appendix 2: Logic Chain Model
Background Papers:	None

Economy & Growth Committee 17 January 2023

Appendix 1: Grant Scheme Policy (DRAFT)

Crewe's Repurposing Our High Streets Grant Scheme

Policy and Guidance

Section 1 - Introduction

This policy and guidance have been created to help you understand the aims of this grant before you make an application for funding to Cheshire East Council. Please read the notes carefully and ensure you've understood them before starting to write an application form.

Applicants should be either sole traders, or the owner or main director of a small or micro business, charity or CIC and have full control over all business decisions.

Franchise holders are not eligible to receive this funding. Applicants can designate someone to speak on their behalf if this forms part of a necessary reasonable adjustment.

If you would like support to help you understand the guidance notes or complete the application form, please email the ROHS scheme advisor ROHS@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

You can also email the Grant Advisor for help if:

- You would find it easier to speak about this grant over the phone. (Please tell us this in your email and include your telephone number).
- You require a reasonable adjustment to make your application. (Please tell us a bit more about this in your email. We will support you if we judge that we are able to).
- You would like someone else to speak with us about this grant on your behalf. (Please tell us a bit more about the situation in your email).

Cheshire East Council welcomes applications from people of all levels of ability. We are committed to supporting all eligible organisations through the application process.

Grant awards are paid in arrears. If your application is successful, you must be able to spend a minimum of £3,000 and wait up to six weeks to receive your award payments.

We will continue to work with successful applicants to monitor how the grant has been spent and offer further support to their organisations for up to three years from the date of their grant offer letter.

Section 2 – Why are the Council offering this grant funding?

Cheshire East Council wants to reduce the number of vacant commercial properties in Crewe town centre. We will achieve this by funding businesses, sole traders, charities, CIC's, creative and cultural activities, and community groups who can strengthen and diversify these areas, boost footfall, and create new jobs.

The grant is funded by the Government's Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities through its Towns Fund, and supported by Crewe Town Board and managed by Cheshire East Council.

Section 3 - What kind of organisations are eligible to apply?

This grant can support either established organisations, or those who have just started up or are about to start up.

All types of organisations can apply for this funding, including Businesses, Charities, CIC's Community & Voluntary Groups, Social Enterprises, and Sole Traders.

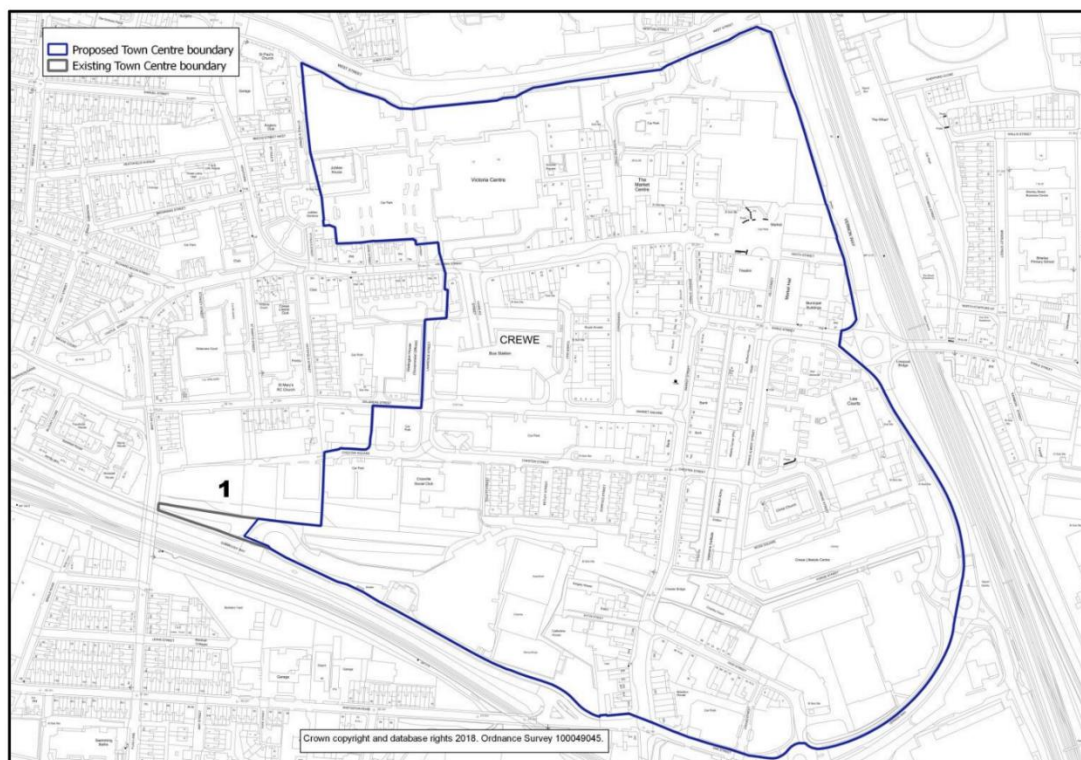
To be eligible your organisation should meet ALL THREE (3) of the following employment & financial criteria:

- Employ less than 50 people
- Have a turnover of £10.2million or less
- Have £5.1million or less on your balance sheet

To be eligible your organisation must meet ONE (1) of the below property criteria:

- be wishing to lease or rent an eligible, previously vacant commercial property
- have signed a lease or rental agreement for an eligible property within the 12 weeks prior to submitting your application, and not yet have started to trade from the property.

Eligible properties are those that are located with the Crewe Town Centre boundary, as defined in the Cheshire East Local Plan SPD



Map Crewe 10: Existing and proposed town centre boundary

You can check if a property is an eligible area by contacting the ROHS scheme advisor ROHS@cheshireeast.gov.uk

At our discretion we may decide that a property slightly outside of this boundary is eligible. All types of commercial properties can be considered eligible to receive funding for renovation and/or equipment, including retail, leisure, hospitality, offices and in some cases industrial or warehousing premises. Properties do not need to have traditional shop frontages or be on a ground floor to be considered eligible for this funding.

All eligible properties will have their own Business Rates Assessment, and the applying organisation will be the sole party named on the lease or rental agreement. The grant cannot be used to fund the use of part of a property or a lease with one single business rates assessment etc, unless a business rates reassessment relating to a sub-division of a premises has been applied for.

If you are unsure whether a property could be considered eligible, please email the ROHS scheme advisor ROHS@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

To be eligible your business/organisation must meet ONE (1) of the below trading criteria:

a) New to Crewe town centre – You have never leased or rented any property in one of this grant scheme's eligible locations. You are creating new jobs with fixed contracted hours.

(b) Returning to Crewe town centre - You previously leased or rented a property in one of this grant scheme's eligible locations. Your contract on the previous property ended at least 6 months before you signed/intend to sign the lease on your new property or the reason you terminated your previous contract meets criteria (d) below. You are creating new jobs with fixed contracted hours.

(c) Maintaining a second property in Crewe town centre – You have a current lease or rental agreement for a second property in one of this grant scheme's eligible locations. You are creating new jobs with fixed contracted hours. You will continue to trade from this property for at least 1 year after you start trading from your new property. If you stop trading from your second property within this period, you will be in breach of the terms of agreement for this grant scheme.

(d) Expanding and creating new jobs – You have a current lease or rental agreement or had one that ended within the last 6 months for a property in one of this grant scheme's eligible locations. Your business is growing, and your new property will allow you to expand the services your business offers or increase the volume of people you serve AND you will create new jobs with fixed contracted hours as a direct result of upgrading to your new property.

Some types of organisations would not normally be eligible to receive funding, including:

Any organisation subject to a franchise agreement that gives control over business decisions to a franchisor, betting shops, pawn brokers, tanning salons, amusement or gaming arcades, tobacconists, vape shops, shisha bars, most fast-food outlets, shops or venues wholly or mainly offering material of an adult or sexual nature, businesses or activities for political purposes or gain, for activities promoting religious beliefs or to proscribed organisations or organisations that support radicalisation or terrorism. This is not an exhaustive list. We retain the right to add to it at any time.

Organisations who apply also need to be in good standing with the council, including being fully paid up on any money owed to the council, such as business rates. Applicants or organisations that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made are not eligible for the grant.

Organisations who apply must send us a copy of a financial statement proving they are able to match the funding they are requesting by 20%.

Section 4 - How much funding is available and what can it be used for?

The council has allocated £1.3million to this grant scheme.

The maximum grant award amounts usually range from £3,000 to £30,000.

The amount you can apply for depends on the length of your lease or rental agreement:

Length of lease or rental agreement Maximum grant amount

28 days to 12 months £3,000

12-24 months £7,500

24-36 months £12,000

36-48 months £20,000

48 months or longer £30,000

In certain strategically located properties, the Council may agree to grants of up to £50,000.

This grant can be used to fund structural works to a property and/or equipment your business needs to provide services and trade from the property (Capital Expenditure).

Applicants must be able to explain how each item of works or equipment they are requesting supports their organisation to trade and provide services. Equipment can be either new or second hand/refurbished.

Applicants must confirm whether any of the works they are requesting funding for require planning permission. If they do, we will need to see proof permission has been sought and will not make any payments until we receive proof permission has been granted.

You must not start any works or purchase any requested equipment until you have received and signed your grant offer letter. We are not able to pay for any works already started or equipment already purchased before our grant offer is confirmed.

The council, as a public authority, is subject to the UK State Subsidy scheme, which applies limits on the level of funding a recipient can receive. When completing the Grant Application Form, applicants will be asked to list the sources and amounts of funding they have received.

Here are some examples of costs that are eligible:

- The extension, improvement, or modification of commercial/retail buildings.
- Works including replacing shop fronts, new roofs, windows, doors, rendering, stone/brick cleaning, electrical works, floors and ceilings, etc.
- New equipment/shop fittings such as: shelving, racks, storage and display units; food/refrigeration storage; food preparation equipment (ovens etc.)
- New equipment specific to your business/industry that is integral to your business providing services. (Examples include crockery for restaurants, hairdryers for salons)

Here are some examples of costs that are not eligible:

- Stock
- Rental or lease deposit or costs
- Business rates
- Staffing costs
- Insurance costs

- Promotional and marketing materials or activities
- New equipment that is not integral to your business providing services at the property (such as day-to-day consumables, staff room equipment, computers used off-site etc.)

If you are unsure if your requested works or equipment are eligible, please email the ROHS scheme advisor ROHS@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

Section 5 - Do my requested works require Planning Permission?

Planning permission is required for works that involve a material change to the external appearance of a building. Examples of this are alterations to the fascia, the windows or the doorway, changes to the type of material used or the installation of awnings, blinds or security shutters. Advertisement consent is required for the display of certain types of signs. You may also require planning permission for change of use to the property. If you are unsure whether your works require planning permission, you should seek further guidance on planning implications. Please see the contact details below if you'd like to speak to the relevant team within the council for further advice:

Email - tbc

Telephone - tbc

Website - tbc

Section 6 - How does the Council decide whether to award this grant?

Applications are assessed by the Grant Advisor, who will work directly with applicants and make an initial decision on eligibility based on your completed Grant Application Form and information you provide via email, over the telephone, or in face-to-face meetings.

If any information you provide leads the Grant Advisor to believe your organisation is not eligible to receive funding from this grant for your chosen property your application will not progress further. You will be given an explanation on why your application has been rejected.

If the Grant Advisor believes your organisation is eligible based on your Grant Application Form and supporting information, they will make a case to the grant decision panel. The panel is made up of representatives from relevant Council teams. Decisions made by the panel are final. There is no appeals process.

Grants are discretionary, merit-based, and subject to the availability of funds. There is no automatic entitlement to funding based solely on the location of a property.

The council reserves the right to change the terms, conditions, and nature of the Repurposing Our High Streets Grant Scheme at any time without notice.

Section 7 - What happens if I am successful in my application?

If your grant application is successful, you will enter into a formal grant agreement which will set out specific and general terms and conditions relating to this Grant Award.

This agreement will be between you, the applicant, and Cheshire East Council. There is no possibility of an applicant negotiating or changing the terms of the grant agreement.

A grant award offer can be made once you have secured a property. In some cases, the Grant Decision Panel can approve your application before you secure a property and extend an offer in principle if required.

Confirmed offers on Secured Properties:

The lease or rental agreement must have been signed no more than 12 weeks prior to us receiving your completed application form. You must not have already commenced trading or running any aspect of your business from this property.

Offers in Principle:

We can confirm in writing if signing a lease or rental agreement on an eligible property would make you eligible for a grant award. Once you can provide proof of a signed lease or rental agreement, we can then confirm our offer with a formal Grant Offer Letter.

Offers in principle secure the agreed amount of funding to your application for a maximum of 90 days from the date on our Letter of Offer in Principle. If you are unable to provide all necessary information within this period, we may withdraw our offer at our discretion and reallocate the agreed funding to other applicants.

Section 8 - If my application is successful what happens after I accept my grant award?

Once you sign a formal grant agreement you will be required to keep in touch with the Grant Advisor, providing monthly progress reports until you start trading from the property.

Once you start trading from your new property the Grant Advisor will visit you within 1 month to speak with you about your business, your new property and the impact receiving this grant has had for you.

With your permission we will take photographs and record the audio of an informal interview with the Grant Advisor. We may choose to produce a case study to be made publicly available on the council's website, as well as licenced to you for your own promotion.

If you do not want to be photographed or be the subject of a case study, please make the Grant Advisor aware of this.

The informal interview with you will cover the following questions about how you have used your grant award to improve Crewe town centre and the local area:

- How has your business brought something new to the local area?
- What sustainability commitments has your business made in response to the climate emergency?
- How has receiving grant funding helped you to trade and achieve your goals?
- How does your business make Crewe a better place to live for our residents?

The Grant Advisor will also work with you to decide on further questions specific to you and your business that highlight your passions and promote the message you want to share.

The Grant Advisor will talk to you about your business in general and ask if you have any needs that they are able to support you with, either 1-1 or by referring you to third party providers of professional business support.

You will be required to complete impact monitoring forms every six months for the duration of your lease or rental agreement, up to a maximum of three years.

Impact Monitoring Forms will ask for you to provide the following financial and employment information:

- Your businesses turnover for the previous six months.
- The amount of money you've invested in the new property in the previous six months.
- The number of paid employees, volunteers, and apprentices you've hired in the previous six months, their average working hours, and if they are Crewe residents.
- The number of jobs you've 'protected' in the last six months that were at risk of becoming redundant if you hadn't have started trading from your new property.
- Whether your business is currently an accredited Living Wage employer.
- Your total number of paid employees, volunteers, and apprentices, their average working hours, and if they are Crewe residents.
- The social value that your business/organisation will generate, such as employment and training opportunities for local people, public health benefits, support for local voluntary and community sector organisations.

Section 9 - How is the grant paid to successful applicants?

This grant is paid in arrears, either in full, or in instalments, within six weeks of us receiving an eligible invoice or batch of invoices. Invoices must clearly relate to item(s) detailed in the agreed item list outlined in our grant offer letter.

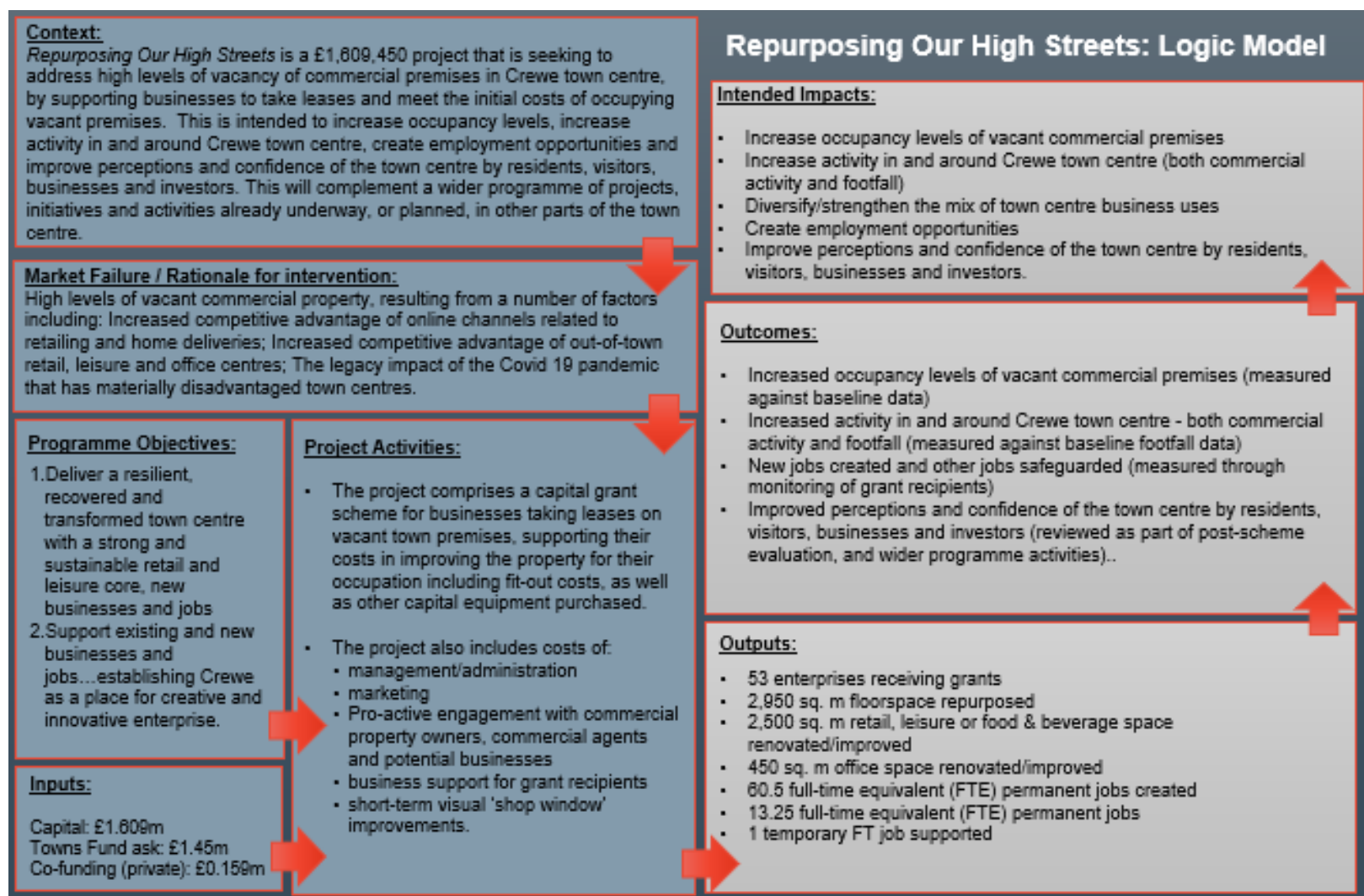
The minimum amount we will process against any one invoice is £500. If you send us an invoice detailing eligible costs of less than £500, we will not authorise the payment of this invoice. It costs the council money to process invoices. We have set these thresholds based on our assessment of the costs it is reasonable for the council to incur, and our judgement that viable organisations should generally have a minimum of £2,500 available cash flow at any given time.

If you believe your organisation has a viable model but you are unable to guarantee short term cashflow please contact the ROHS scheme advisor
ROHS@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

We expect to receive invoices for all requested items within 90 days of issuing a formal grant agreement. If you experience delays with contractors or purchases that mean you will not be able to submit all invoices within 90 days, please make the Grant Advisor aware of this.

The council reserves the right to withhold grant payments if works or equipment are not purchased or completed within the agreed timeframe, and to recover financial assistance in full or in part if the grant agreement conditions are breached.

Appendix 2: Logic Chain Model





Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 th January 2023
Report Title:	Notice of Motion – Public Arts Consultations
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director Place
Report Reference No:	EG/25/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. A Notice of Motion – Public Art Consultations was received by Full Council on 19th October 2022. Council deferred the matter to the Economy and Growth Committee.

This report is presented to the Committee for consideration.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the current processes in place for consultation on public art and goes on to explain the review which is currently underway of the Council's Cultural Framework. The report further sets out the context for consideration of the Notice of Motion as part of the Cultural Framework and recommends that full consideration of this matter is dealt with as part of the same.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The report recommends that full consideration of the Notice of Motion be given at the March meeting of the Economy and Growth Committee in the context of a report on the Council's Cultural Framework.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. A report on the Council's Cultural Framework is scheduled to be received by Members at the March Committee. The Cultural Framework will include full details of commissioning of art and cultural activity and as such will address the issues raised in the Notice of Motion in its full context.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. This section is not applicable.

6. Background

6.1 A Notice of Motion – Public Art Consultations, was presented to Full Council on 19th October 2022 and deferred to the Economy and Growth Committee for consideration.

6.2 The Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor A Gage and seconded by Councillor S Edgar, reads as follows:

“This Council resolves that all works of public art undertaken by the council or works of public art to be undertaken by third parties on council owned land or assets should be subject to a public consultation of residents within the affected settlement area.

Where singular or multiple artwork option(s) are proposed the consultation should provide the consultees with the option to oppose the proposed artwork.

The consultation should last no less than 21 days and all results should be made readily available to the Cheshire East public before a final decision is made. The consultation will act in an informative and advisory capacity with all final decisions on the commissioning of public art to be decided by the relevant body of democratically elected members as defined by the council's constitution.”

6.3 Commissioning of Artworks

6.3.1 Commissioning of artworks by Cheshire East Council falls within the remit of the Cultural Economy Service.

In 2017 the Council approved a Cultural Framework which sets out the Council's priorities for Culture and mechanisms for commissioning. This framework runs until 2022 and as such is currently under review with a revised framework due to go to Committee in March of 2023, in order to be operational from April.

The framework was developed following a period of consultation with cultural organisations, key stakeholders and funding bodies such as Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Cheshire East Council's goal for Culture is to **transform lives and places through access to great culture**. Our role is to enable the economy, communities and places of Cheshire East to benefit from engagement with culture.

The Council's cultural priorities under the framework are attached at Appendix A.

In addition to mechanisms set out under the Framework, the Council may also commission artworks in direct response to planning conditions, regeneration

plans or may also provide advice to partner organisations on commissioning processes.

6.3.2 Commissioning Mechanisms

The current Cultural Framework sets out three key mechanisms for the commissioning of cultural activity which includes artworks.

a) Restricted Funding– Cultural Organisations

These commissions may last between 1 and 4 years and are likely to be strategic in nature and part of a wider cultural economy, supported by Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery programmes and will form part of an ongoing strategic conversation with these bodies.

b) Strategic Commissioning

The service will, from time to time, as appropriate to need and available budgets, issue invitations for tenders for specific interventions or programmes of work.

c) Co-commissioning

From time to time there may be opportunities for the Cultural Economy team to partner with other commissioning services, either within the Council or external, in order to maximise available budgets and meet a wider identified need.

6.3.3 Commissioning of Artworks

In line with the Council's Cultural Priorities, the Cultural Economy Service actively seek out and advocate for artworks to be included within the public realm.

Such artworks can increase a sense of belonging, a sense of pride in one's community or place, they can inform, educate or celebrate the heritage of a place, in addition to enhancing quality of design and uniqueness of our towns and villages.

The opportunity to commission and fund such artworks arises in a variety of ways, this is described in the table below.

Type of Commission	Funding	Likelihood
Direct by the CE service in response to an identified need or request from the community	Funded in its entirety by CEC	Rare
Commissioning of artworks as part of a wider scheme or programme of works. Multiple partners and funders.	Generally from external sources but may include elements of Council funding	Typical

Commissioning on behalf of another organisation, Council will act as an agent on their behalf.	Entirely by external organisation	Very Rare
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6.3.4 Processes

The Council advocates for a best practice process in the commissioning of artworks to be placed in the public realm, in order to achieve high quality, value for money, engagement with residents and businesses.

The process generally follows the pattern below, however, dependant on requirements of funders, particulars of a scheme (including site location, partners involved and role of Council), the emphasis given to each of these stages may vary between different commissions.

Step 1 - Need or opportunity and desired outcomes are identified. Funding is either identified or a fundraising strategy is put in place. Often this will involve making application to funders and can be a lengthy process.

Step 2 – Engagement strategy is agreed. Best practice advocated for always includes public engagement. The extent to which this takes place and methods used, will vary according to the scale, profile and impact of each commission and whether the Council is commissioning directly or in rare circumstances, acting as an agent.

Step 4 – Commissioning method is agreed. This is most usually through an open call to artists, however in some circumstances this may be limited to artists from the local area. The method used will be in accordance with CEC procurement rules. A brief is developed to articulate the requirements of the commission. Depending on the agreed engagement strategy, consultation may take place at this stage.

Step 5 – The brief is published, artists are invited to respond. Artists are shortlisted and invited for interview. Depending on the agreed engagement strategy, at this stage artists may be asked to undertake public presentation of their response to the brief. A stakeholder panel will be established to select the artist.

Step 6 – Design process undertaken. Public engagement is encouraged at this stage however, the extent of this will be in accordance with the agreed engagement strategy.

Step 7 – Final design is selected and artist is instructed accordingly. This will be undertaken by the stakeholder panel in accordance with the engagement strategy.

6.3.5 Planning Consent

Some, but not all public artworks will require planning consent. This is dependant on whether they are temporary or permanent, their location and ownership of the site. Those which are part of a larger scheme will be incorporated into planning applications related to that scheme. In some situations other licences may be required such as third party permissions.

7. Consultation and Engagement

8. The matter under consideration will be addressed by the review of the Cultural Framework. As such, consultation will be carried out as part of the review process. This will include Members, cultural partners and stakeholders such as Town and Parish Councils.

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. There are no direct Legal implications of this report.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. There are no direct policy implications of this report.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. There are no equality implications of this report and its recommendations/decisions.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. There are no direct human resource implications of this report.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. There are no risk management implications of this report.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. This report has no direct implications on rural communities.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. This report has no direct implications for children and young people, and cared for children.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. This report has no direct implications on public health.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. This report has no direct implications on climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Helen Paton Helen.paton@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07824 301369
Appendices:	CEC Cultural Framework 2017 - 2022
Background Papers:	There are no background papers to this report.

Cheshire East Council Cultural Framework 2017 – 2022



Cheshire East Council Cultural Framework

1. Who is the Cultural Framework for?

Cheshire East Council's goal for Culture is to **transform lives and places through access to great culture**. Our role is to enable the economy, communities and places of Cheshire East to benefit from engagement with culture, contributing to wellbeing, quality of place, creative skills and prosperity. This is achieved through the provision and commissioning of arts, heritage, museums, creative media, festivals and events. (CEC's Strategic Priorities for Culture - See appendix A).

The Cultural Framework is designed to be widely used in Cheshire East by Cheshire East Council, the Council's partners, national agencies and stakeholders, the voluntary sector, faith sector, commissioners of public services for the people of Cheshire East, and cultural organisations and individuals in the cultural sector.

Culture can empower and influence in various ways that help to shape:

- Relationships between individuals and groups
- Shared memories, experience and identity
- Diverse cultural, faith and historic backgrounds
- Social standards, values and norms
- What we consider valuable to pass on to our children

These effects have individual, economic and social dimensions that can be fleeting, life-changing or affect successive generations, and which we are mainly interested in when we commission culture for outcomes. We believe that culture has a significant role to play in bringing these benefits to the people of Cheshire East.

2. What We Mean by Culture

For the purpose of the Cultural Framework, culture will address: arts, public art, heritage, museums, festivals & events, creative media, creative and digital industries. This relates to activity delivered by or through the Council, and the activity delivered by or through other individuals or organisations including arts, heritage and museum bodies, businesses, charities, community organisations and faith groups to name a few.

While not an exclusive definition, this is intended to closely align with the functions covered nationally by the DCMS (excluding sport) and also the priorities of Arts Council England.

3. Quality of Place

Quality of Place is a strategic priority for the Council and recognised as a key economic driver by the Local Strategic Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The cultural offer, quality of our natural & built environment, vitality of our towns and reputation for business, creativity, educational standards, lifestyle and wellbeing all contribute to Quality of Place. Distinctiveness of identity influences perceptions and supports place marketing opportunities. As well as supporting the prosperity of its residents and businesses, 'quality of place' can help create and communicate the 'identity' of a place.

Culture has a pivotal role in contributing to or achieving each of these elements of Quality of Place.



Achieving Quality of Place

4. The Framework

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- a) Inform a cohesive approach across the Council to engage with the cultural sector to ensure delivery of Quality of Place.
- b) Develop a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of engaging with the Cultural sector across public sector commissioners and Council services.
- c) Develop a cohesive approach across the Council, to engage with the cultural sector to ensure high quality outcomes for specific programmes of work.
- d) Support the Cultural sector to engage with Public Sector commissioners and Council services.
- e) Facilitate closer relationships with the Cultural sector to maximise opportunities for investment in cultural activity in Cheshire East.

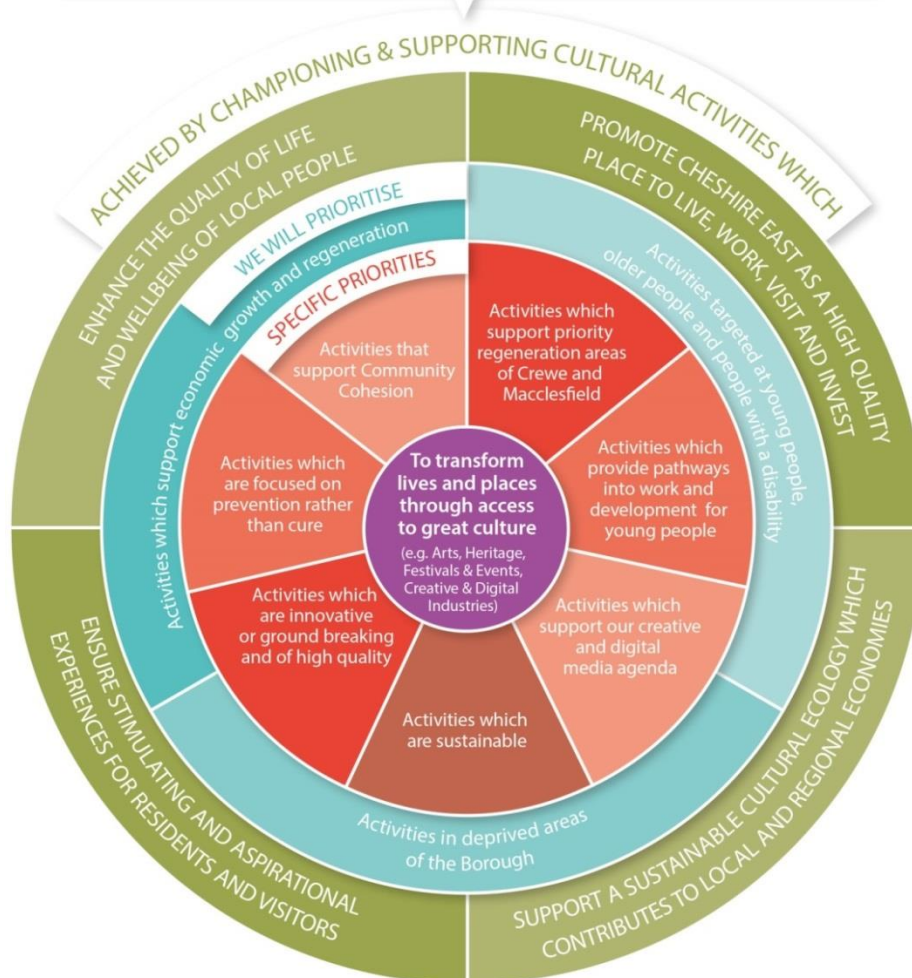
4.2 How it will be used

This framework is intended as a guide for Council services in delivering Quality of Place through Cultural interventions and the Council's priorities for Culture. It is designed to inform how the Cultural sector can be engaged by different service areas, to deliver specific objectives and in particular to inform the work of the Council's Cultural Economy Service in delivery of the Council's outcomes.

4.3 Council Priorities for Culture

The Council has adopted a set of priorities to inform the commissioning of cultural provision and services. These are set out at appendix A. These priorities are intended to inform all instances where the Council will commission or directly provide cultural activity in order to deliver Quality of Place.

Enabling the economy, communities and places of Cheshire East to benefit from engagement with culture, contributing to lifestyle, wellbeing, quality of place, creative skills and prosperity



Cultural Priorities

4.4 The approach

To help achieve its goal for Culture, **‘to transform lives and places through access to great culture’**, the Council can enable engagement with culture that contributes to wellbeing, quality of place, creative skills and prosperity. Cultural activity, engagement and interventions should:

- **Help to achieve the Council’s stated goal and priorities for culture**
- **Be delivered by appropriate, quality providers in an efficient, effective way that delivers for our residents.**
- **Seek opportunities to add value, capacity or resource.**
- **Maintain and conserve quality and standards and seeking betterment where possible.**
- **Be outcome focused, supporting the quality of place agenda and the Council’s outcomes**

This can be achieved in a number of ways through direct engagement by the Council, through partnerships or through commissioning and other delivery mechanisms. To maintain quality and ensure that the Council is best advised on appropriate mechanisms and providers, the Cultural economy Service will support services in delivering against this framework as well as its own direct service provision.

5. Delivering the Framework

5.1 Role of the Cultural Economy Service

This describes how the Cultural Economy Service will use core budget to commission cultural services in line with the Council's priorities for Cultural provision. In addition, the Cultural Economy Team will be involved in the design of all tenders that potentially involve cultural activity, and in the ensuing processes of selection, appointment and evaluation.

The responsibilities of the Cultural Economy Team as sponsors of the Framework are threefold; to monitor, evaluate and report on progress towards the Framework objectives; to work collaboratively with commissioners and commissioning bodies including through cross-sector working groups; and to develop the capacity of the cultural sector to take up the additional opportunities for funding with the Framework.

5.2 What We Mean by Commissioning

Bringing about development and change in communities is often a slow process and it may involve testing different approaches and evaluating their impact. The outcome we want to achieve may only come about as the result of a number of initiatives being commissioned over quite a long period of time. When we talk about 'commissioning for outcomes' we are drawing attention to the impact of the activity on those it is intended to benefit. Commissioning therefore always involves those who are receiving the service, or engaging in the activity, in helping to shape it. Within the context of the cultural development framework we define commissioning as, the provision of a quality service/s for individuals and communities to address needs and inequalities within the resources available.

Having decided the best way to achieve outcomes, the council will then contract with an individual or organisation to provide the service. Contracts for cultural activity may be issued by any of the commissioning bodies referred to in the Framework. The Cultural Economy Team should be involved in the design of all specifications that potentially involve cultural activity, in order to ensure quality as part of the selection, appointment and evaluation processes.

5.3 Delivery Mechanisms

a) Restricted Funding– Cultural Organisations

The Cultural Economy service is keen to support development of a vibrant and sustainable cultural economy in the Borough. To this end, and in line with Council priorities, we will commission a number of Cultural organisations to deliver a range of

services or programmes of work. These commissions may last between 1 and 4 years and are likely to be strategic in nature and part of a wider cultural economy, supported by Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery programmes and will form part of an ongoing strategic conversation with these bodies. Invitations to submit proposals for this commissioning strand will be issued on an annual basis. Organisations may only have one restricted funding operating at any given time.

b) Strategic Commissioning

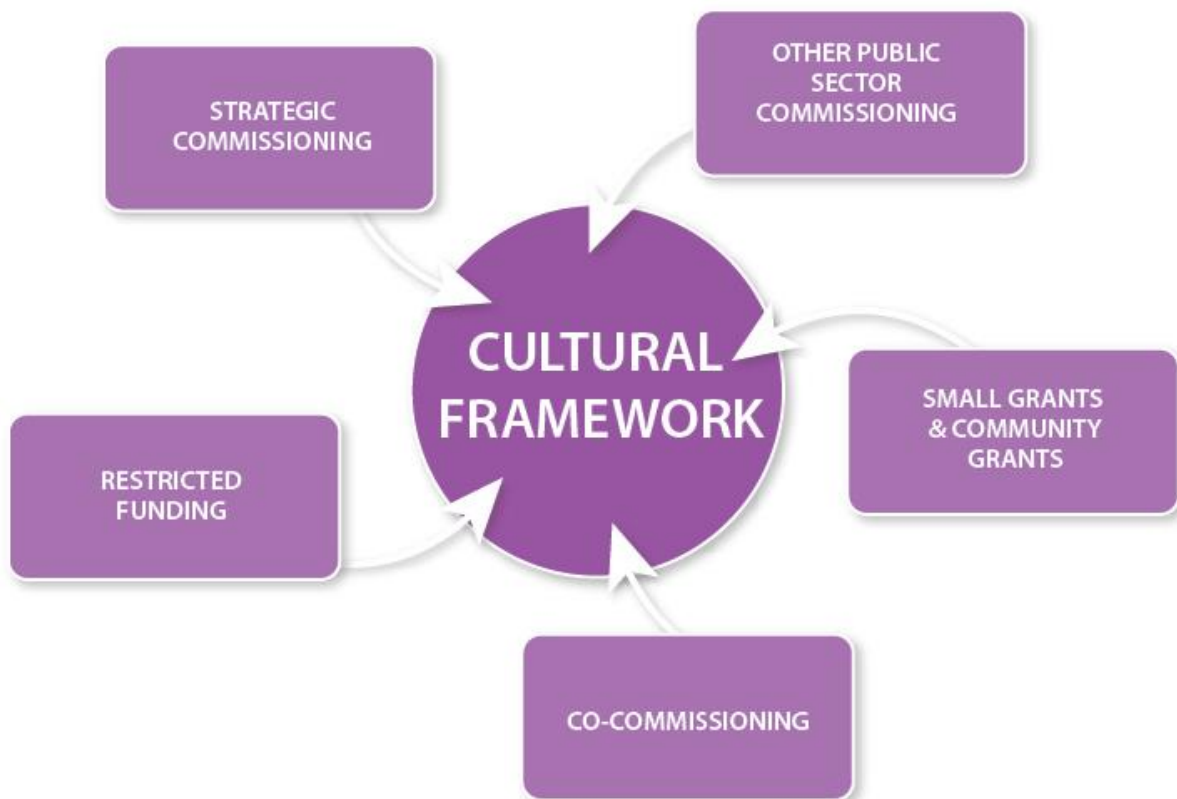
The service will, from time to time, as appropriate to need and available budgets, issue invitations for tenders for specific interventions or programmes of work. These will be in response to an identified strategic need, again, in line with service and Council priorities. Invitations to submit tenders for these contracts will be issued on the basis of need.

c) Small Cultural Grants

Smaller grants may be issued to Cultural organisations or other, constituted, not-for-profit organisations wishing to undertake a cultural activity. This is likely to be conducted through the Council's existing Community Grants programme although at times, and where specific need is demonstrated, it may be undertaken by the Cultural Economy Service in line with published priorities. When these opportunities are available they will be published and open applications will be invited.

d) Co-commissioning

From time to time there may be opportunities for the Cultural Economy team to partner with other commissioning services, either within the Council or external, in order to maximise available budgets and meet a wider identified need. We will actively seek out these opportunities and will publish as and when they are available.



Delivering the Framework

5.4 Use of the Framework by Other Services

Any service intending to commission or contract cultural provision should refer to the Council's priorities for Culture (Appendix A) to use as a guide to what should be prioritised. The framework and its priorities may also be of value as a guide for other commissioning bodies. The Council's Cultural Economy Service is able to support engagement with the Cultural sector and to provide help and assistance to ensure that appropriate specifications, tender documents, selection and evaluation criteria are in place.

5.5 Monitoring and Measuring Success

Depending on its complexity, the evaluation of the resulting contract should take account of the outcome, the benefit that is conferred on residents, visitors, businesses, and other target groups. When asking how successful a commission has been we may, for instance, not just want to know about the number of people taking part, but how they or their community were affected as a result. This would enable the services that are provided to be placed in the wider strategic context of Cheshire East.

Striving for the highest quality in everything we commission, or provide, is of the utmost importance in achieving outcomes. The Quality Benchmark we will use draws on Arts Council England's guidance on the subject. They offer areas to consider throughout

the life of projects, from planning to evaluation, and ensure that the voice of communities remains firmly at the heart of activities.

When evaluating bids we will expect applicants to explain how they address the following aspects of quality where they are relevant to the nature and size of the commissioned service or project.

- Striving for excellence
- Emphasising authenticity
- Being inspiring, and engaging
- Ensuring a positive audience experience
- Actively involving people
- Providing a sense of personal progression
- Developing a sense of ownership and belonging

Detailed evaluation criteria will be made available along with tenders or funding opportunities and requirement will be scaled appropriately according to size of investment.

6. Sector Support

Cheshire East Cultural Forum

For the Framework to succeed, cultural organisations will require the capacity to engage with partners and with commissioners. Building their capacity includes creating the structures and systems, identifying the right people and embedding skills so that they are better able to meet their objectives and engage in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises.

In the first instance this will be delivered through the establishment of a Cultural Forum. The Cultural Economy Team will provide support and co-ordination for this forum in the early stages. Following the first year, the group will determine the best way to proceed.

The functions of the Forum will be to:

- Evolve a collective voice for culture in Cheshire East
- Discover and share commissioning opportunities
- Identify partners to collaborate with
- Share and develop best practice
- Work together to lever in funding for Cultural activity
-

The Cultural Economy team will also work with the forum in its early stages to identify training needs of the sector in relation to commissioning and responding to tenders and to introduce the Framework.

7. Resources

The Framework is designed to encourage flexible and adaptable use of available resources. Wherever possible, opportunities to lever in additional funding from external sources will be pursued. Partnership working and collaborative commissioning will also be explored fully and put into place wherever possible in order

to maximise available resources. In this way the Framework will seek to ensure value for money.

Appendices

Appendix A – Cheshire East Council Cultural Priorities

Appendix B - Other Public Sector Commissioning Priorities

Appendices

Appendix A – Cheshire East Council Cultural Priorities

Purpose:

To transform lives and places through access to great culture ¹.

Enabling the economy, communities and places of Cheshire East to benefit from engagement with culture, contributing to lifestyle, wellbeing, quality of place, creative skills and prosperity.

Achieved by: *Championing and supporting cultural activities which;*

- Promote Cheshire East as a high quality place to live, work, visit and invest
- Support a sustainable cultural ecology which contributes to local and regional economies
- Ensure stimulating and aspirational experiences for residents and visitors
- Enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of local people

We Will Prioritise: *(Overarching)*

- Activities targeted at young people, older people and people with a disability
- Activities in deprived areas of the Borough
- Activities which support economic growth and regeneration

(Specific)

- Activities which support priority regeneration areas of Crewe and Macclesfield
- Activities which provide pathways into work and development for young people
- Activities which support our creative and digital media agenda
- Activities which are sustainable
- Activities which are innovative or ground breaking and of high quality
- Activities which are focused on prevention rather than cure
- Activities that support Community Cohesion

Nb ¹ Culture: arts, heritage, museums, festivals & events, creative media, Creative and digital industries

Appendix B - Other Public Sector Commissioning Priorities

As part of the consultation process in 2015 the cultural economy team and its consultants met the members of the Joint Commissioning Forum and invited the commissioning managers to describe their current priorities. Every public service commissioner produces a detailed strategy document that would normally be the basis for discussion when a service is designed or redesigned. These are the principal commissioning bodies and their priorities that were described at the time:

Adult Social Care: The emphasis is on helping people over 18 to live well for longer. As the population includes a substantial number of older people this means a focus on independent living, helping people to stay active and to avoid loneliness. Service delivery is increasingly likely to be through personalised budgets.

Public Health: In April 2013, responsibility for local public health functions transferred to Cheshire East Council. Alongside mandatory responsibilities such as providing public health advice to local NHS commissioners and information and advice to address health protection threats, responsibility for the commissioning of a number of public health services was also transferred. Public Health has commissioned an Integrated Wellness and Lifestyle Support System (Passport 2 Health), assessing individual need for access to primary prevention, lifestyle services, information and advice. Other preventative services such as the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme, Substance Misuse Services and Infection Control services are also commissioned.

Children and Young People: The emphasis is on respecting the voice of the child in planning and delivery stages of service provision. Services provided are often statutory, but communication and advocacy are important factors in successful implementation.

Police and Crime: The emphasis is on helping people to feel safer, addressing re-offending rates and undertaking early intervention through engagement with schools.

Partnerships and Communities: The emphasis is working on inequalities in wards of Cheshire East through community hubs that provide access to a wide range of services e.g. community grants, improving disaster resilience and empowerment.

Regeneration: The emphasis is on place shaping as an approach with the aim of increasing footfall in town centres through the strategic use of assets. Eventual outcomes include increased and better quality employment in e.g. science, rail and creative industries. Geographical regeneration priorities for the Council are Macclesfield and Crewe.

Visitor Economy: The emphasis is on developing the distinct identity of Cheshire East for the visitor, building on local assets and addressing skills weaknesses in the hospitality sector. Festivals are seen as an important tool in engaging communities, creative practitioners, volunteers and visitors in raising the profile of the area.



Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director Place
Report Reference No:	EG/27/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to update the Economy and Growth Committee on the work of the Cheshire and Warrington (C&W) Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (SIGC) in response to the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Q Abel and seconded by Councillor M Houston at the full Council Meeting of 14th December 2022.
- 1.2.** The report recommends that the Economy and Growth Committee endorses the final report of the SIGC and the key priorities and acknowledges the actions set out within it for delivery by various stakeholders, funding permitting.
- 1.3.** The actions within the SIGC final report support the Corporate Plan priority outcomes of both Fair and Green as defined in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** The C&W SIGC was set up by the C&W Sub-regional Leaders' Board in November 2020. The purpose of the SIGC is "to act as a catalyst for and provide advice on the delivery of a programme that will realise C&W's ambition of becoming the most sustainable and most inclusive sub-region in the UK".

- 2.2.** In September 2022 the SIGC released its final report 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' setting out its conclusions on the key priorities and actions needed to support the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive C&W economy. The report summary is in Appendix 1 and a link to the full report and additional information is included in background papers.
- 2.3.** In response to the report, the C&W Leaders' Board requested that an early-stage delivery plan be drafted setting out what could potentially be achieved in the short to medium term.
- 2.4.** This plan was presented to Leaders' Board on 30 September where a recommendation was approved to progress the actions as set out in the plan and for officers to progress the production of a more detailed delivery plan addressing the remaining SIGC's recommendations. A summary analysis of the actions in this early-stage delivery plan is in Appendix 2.
- 2.5.** The meeting of full Council on 14 December 2022 referred a Notice of Motion to the Economy and Growth Committee. The Motion proposed that:
1. Cheshire East Council notes and acknowledges the report and recommendations of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission.
 2. That the Council's Economy and Growth Committee be asked to consider the report and to determine the Council's response to the recommendations.
- 2.6.** The final report presented by the SIGC provides an important and independent insight into the issues across the subregion, noting areas of good practice and gaps in activity and the projects and initiatives identified should be the subject of focus. However, action can only be taken when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.
- 2.7.** The resultant recommendations coming out of this study are wide ranging, significant in number, in some instances aspirational, requiring further investment in feasibility or business cases, either in kind or funded, to attract both central government funds and private sector investment.
- 2.8.** Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objective before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.9.** The C&W LEP provides the secretariat for the SIGC and it is expected that the LEP will continue to be the lead organisation coordinating delivery. However, it is recognised that delivery of these recommendations will take co-operation across all stakeholders within the sub-region including the C&W LEP, the 3 LAs, Town Councils, business leaders, third sector partners and

residents. Where there are existing sub-regional groups and structures, these groups may be tasked with the strategic leadership of the key priorities where they cover the same areas.

- 2.10.** If any of the proposals are to be built into Cheshire East Council priorities, they would need to be further developed and worked up into business cases to consider both the environmental benefits and the financial implications, along with a set of metrics that would allow effective management and measurement of success. We would need to understand more about how these ideas could be funded, what may be the processes of bidding for or raising the required financial resources and what financial governance and assurance requirements would be put in place regarding decision making and delivery prior to any further commitment.
- 2.11.** Sub regional officer groups are being set up to look at delivery of the early-stage delivery plan, considering resourcing, implementation and monitoring of progress. Beyond this, there will need to be further review of the remaining recommendations and the Leaders' Board has requested that the officer group should produce a detailed delivery plan considering these actions. There is an expectation that the delivery plan will be an organic document that will evolve and change in line with need.
- 2.12.** Officers continue to work with partner organisations and other stakeholders to explore opportunities to secure external funding and take these recommended actions forward.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** That the Economy and Growth Committee endorses the final report of the SIGC 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington', noting the priorities identified to be taken forward as and when suitable funding opportunities arise, and resources allow.
- 3.2.** That Committee endorse Town Councils being requested to consider the SIGC findings and recommendations, with a view to supporting any actions which they can help to implement.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** Cheshire East Council recognises the need for sub-regional and national co-operation in challenging areas such as net zero and levelling up.
- 4.2.** Cheshire East Council supports the aims of the commission, for Cheshire and Warrington to be the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK to help address inequality and climate change.
- 4.3.** Cheshire East Council supports the implementation of challenging targets to encourage momentum.
- 4.4.** The report provides good intelligence to support future funding, investment and bidding opportunities

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The Economy and Growth Committee could choose not to accept the report and its recommendations.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	<p>Cheshire East Council would be out of step with the remainder of the sub-region.</p> <p>Failing to address issues such as inequality and climate change would have a detrimental effect on the residents of Cheshire East.</p>	<p>This presents a reputational risk to the council.</p> <p>This presents a risk to the councils core objectives to be open, fair and green.</p>

6. Background

- 6.1. The SIGC was set up as a task and finish group to run for 2 years with the aim of providing an entirely independent view and taking evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including residents, businesses, academics, interest groups and young people.
- 6.2. Secretariat is drawn from the C&W Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with support from the 3 Local Authorities (LAs) within the C&W sub-region. It is chaired jointly by Cllr Sam Corcoran, Leader of Cheshire East Council, and Robert Davis, Chief Executive of EA Technology.
- 6.3. The work of the SIGC is split into 4 key themes which are reflected in the report: Inclusive Economy, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Land Use, and Net Zero. For each of these themes, the SIGC has developed an evidence base for C&W's current position, a vision representing where the Commission believes the sub-region should aim to be and a set of recommended actions needed to realise the vision it has set out. (Further information is available via a link in the background information).
- 6.4. The C&W LEP has developed an early-stage delivery plan for the C&W Leaders' Board. A small number of actions have been selected for the plan following a review exercise undertaken by the C&W LEP which looked at what recommendations LAs and C&W LEP are already delivering or planning, and which ones have potential funding opportunities.
- 6.5. Appendix 2 provides a short summary and analysis of SIGC Early Stage Delivery Plan 2022-24. The delivery plan includes 5 projects which the Leaders' Board considers to be 'eye-catching' and should be prioritised with

a further 4 actions included to help demonstrate progress. The 5 projects to be championed by the Leaders' Board initially are:

- 6.5.1** Progressing towards the development of a Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter
 - 6.5.2** A feasibility study into pan Cheshire farms anaerobic digestion investment project to further the decarbonisation of dairy
 - 6.5.3** Facilitating investment to improve the natural environment for biodiversity, health, and climate
 - 6.5.4** Delivering skills for the green economy
 - 6.5.5** Formal inclusivity assessment to be piloted on Shared Prosperity Fund projects
- 6.6.** Leaders' Board is looking to LA officers to support sub-regional discussion on the potential resourcing and implementation of these actions and more comprehensive analysis of when and how SIGC's other recommendations can be taken forward.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** The SIGC has undertaken a wide consultation process, socialising the recommendations with local stakeholders through a combination of face to face and virtual channels and a targeted online survey.
- 7.2.** The final report, taking account of the consultation process has been completed and presented to Leaders' Board.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1** If the Committee is happy to endorse the recommendations and the priorities and actions contained within the report; this will perhaps have implications for commissioning which may then feed through into how projects and contracts are shaped. Apart from this, it is felt that there are no other implications that require comment.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1** The SIGC Final report identifies projects and initiatives which should be the subject of focus as and when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.

- 8.2.2** Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objectives before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.2.3** It is noted that some of the recommendations within the report are already in train and fully funded and can therefore be promoted as 'quick- wins'.
- 8.2.4** However, in the main, the recommendations relate to initiatives that are currently unfunded, with implications on partners for delivery, particularly on the Local Authorities within the sub-region. Councils are already stretched in terms of revenue and capital resources, and consequently any proposals would need to demonstrate their benefits, before commitments are made and projects are formally approved in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.2.5** If any of the proposals are to be built into Council's priorities and financial plans, they would need to be further developed and worked up into business cases to consider both the environmental benefits and the financial implications, along with a set of metrics that would allow effective management and measurement of success.
- 8.2.6** It will be important to understand how the initiatives can be funded, what are the processes of bidding for or raising the required financial resources, and what financial governance and assurance requirements would be put in place regarding decision making and delivery.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1** Cheshire East Council already has commitments to be carbon neutral for its own operations by 2025 and for the borough by 2045.
- 8.3.2** The theme and priority areas of the report are a close match to the ambition of Cheshire East Council and can be folded into policy as it is developed in the future.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1** The report champions equality and inclusion and provides tools that will be piloted by the LEP or other C&W LAs and may then be adopted by Cheshire East Council.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1** There are no human resource implications anticipated as a result of the recommendations within the report at this time.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1 There are no implications to the Council's risk management or risk register as a result of these recommendations.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1 Sustainable land use is a key theme of the report.

8.7.2 The priorities listed in the report include unlocking the economic potential of rural areas and helping farms to decarbonise.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1 Enabling equal access to opportunities and more inclusive approaches should have a positive impact on young people, particularly those leaving care.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1 Sustainable and inclusive growth and a commitment to net zero policies will have a positive impact on public health within the borough and the subregion.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1 One of the themes within the report is net zero. Support for the priorities within the report will have a positive impact on the carbon emissions of the borough and therefore climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officers:	Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services Ralph.kemp@cheshireeast.gov.uk Tel 07789 271280 Carol Young, Policy & Partnerships Officer Carol.young@cheshireeast.gov.uk Tel 07968 217206
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' Report Summary Appendix 2 – Summary and analysis of SIGC Early Stage Delivery Plan 2022-24
Background Papers:	'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' further information and full report: Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission - Cheshire and Warrington

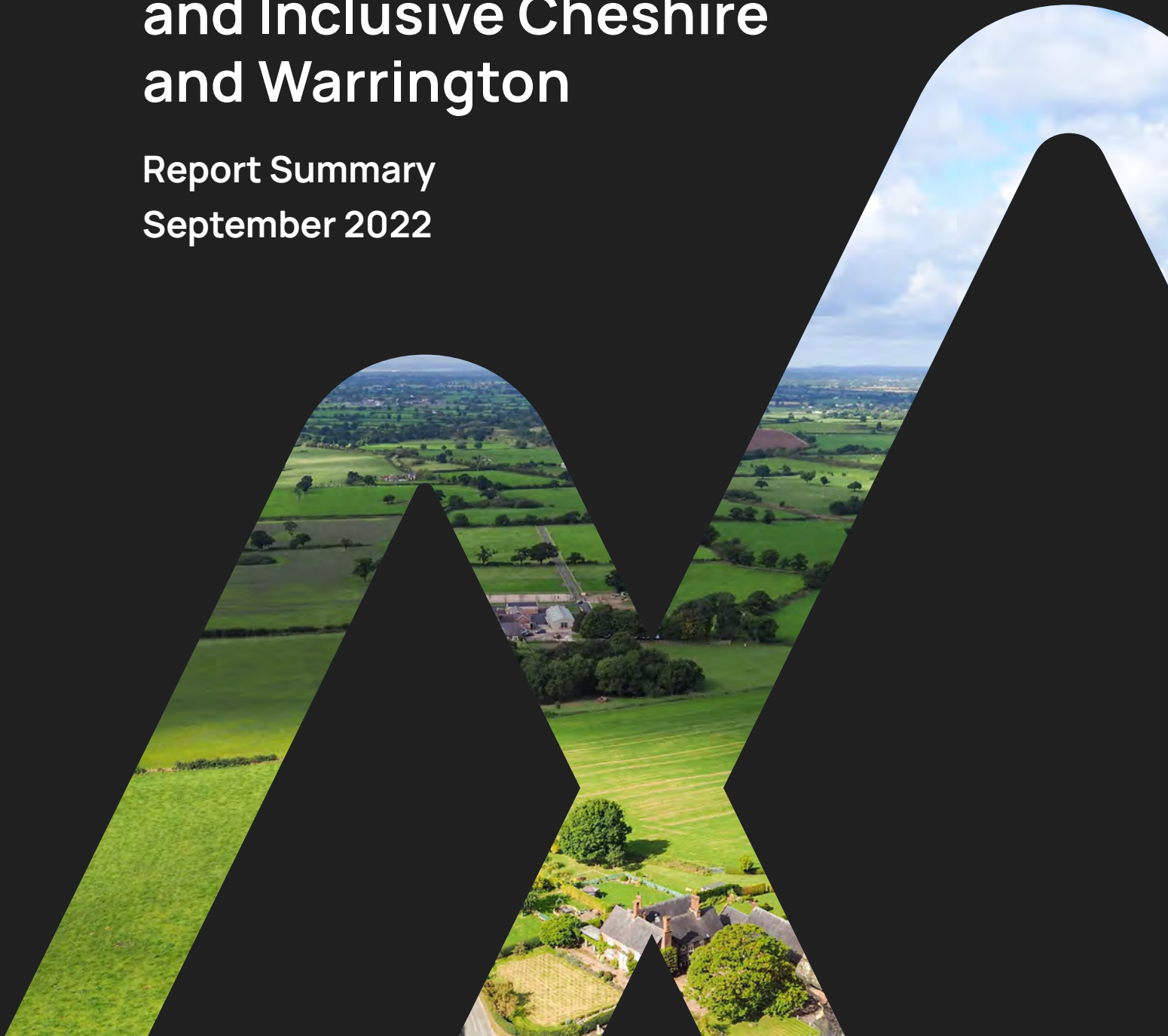
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Cheshire and Warrington
**Sustainable and Inclusive
Growth Commission**

Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington

Report Summary
September 2022





The Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission¹ was set up by the Subregional Leaders' Board² in November 2020, with the aim of moving further and faster towards realising Cheshire and Warrington's ambition of becoming the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK, to help address inequality and climate change building on the firm progress made by partners in Cheshire and Warrington to date

Overview

This document is a summary of the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission's findings, which have tackled the following themes:

- How to improve the inclusiveness of our economy (Inclusive Economy)
- How to decarbonise local transport (Sustainable Transport)
- How to use land sustainably, tackling climate change and decarbonising agriculture (Sustainable Land Use and Climate Change)
- How to get to net zero, with decarbonisation of housing, industry and green jobs (Net Zero)

For each theme the Commission has developed an evidence base, a vision and a set of recommendations. The key messages for all the themes are outlined in our drawing on [page 4](#).

In addition, each theme used an inclusivity assessment to ensure that projects or initiatives were designed to consider the needs of targeted types of individuals or groups who may experience disadvantage³.

The Commission consulted on an initial version of the report through online and in-person events and an online survey and engaged with over 120 individuals including many stakeholders who were representing their organisations across different sectors. The feedback from the consultation has been used to update the final report and to create a shortlist of key priorities to take forward.

Some key feedback included the need for co-creation and collaboration, not just technical solutions; the need to win hearts and minds to effect change; the need to understand the barriers and risks towards delivering the visions and priorities. This feedback and other points have and will be addressed as the priority recommendations move into deliverable projects.

What happens next?

The Commission is currently in a Promotion Phase where it will move the key priorities forward and work with others to plan for implementation in a collaborative way. We invite you to engage with us through an initial event in the autumn and to get in touch if you can offer support with delivery of the priorities/recommendations via:

SIGCommission@cheshireandwarrington.com

The Themes

Summarised below are the vision statements and key priorities for each of the themes from the commission's Final Report.

To read the evidence that led to the vision statements, the longer list of recommendations and more information about the Commission please see the main report: [Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission - Cheshire and Warrington](#).

¹ The independent Commission includes representatives from carbon intensive industries and agriculture, finance and investment, energy, and experts from civil society including university, housing and local nature sectors, alongside local authorities and the local enterprise partnership. ² The Subregional Leaders' Board is a collaborative partnership which brings together key public and private sector partner organisations from across the Sub-region. ³ The assessment considered socio-economic deprivation, rural areas and deprivation, and those with 'protected characteristics'. The Equality Act 2010 identified 9 protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Inclusive Economy

This theme looked at both (a) how we can ensure that an inclusive approach is central to our environmental sustainability work and (b) how to improve the inclusiveness of the economy more generally with a focus on reducing inequalities in work, education and skills.

Vision

Our goal is to encourage sustainable economic growth that increases prosperity combined with greater equality and opportunities for all. We propose this will be delivered by:

- Ensuring that all projects promoted by the commission have undergone an inclusivity assessment, to ensure that projects consider the needs of disadvantaged types of individuals and groups.
- Having a joined-up approach to inclusive economy across the subregion, using shared initiatives such as a Fair Employment Charter, inclusive skills and employment programmes, digital inclusion, and positive action policies.
- Using data effectively across the area and engaging with those with lived experience to target initiatives to the disadvantaged groups and individuals that need them.

Key Priorities Following Consultation

1. Adopting inclusivity assessment for projects promoted by the SIGC – starting with the 'Shared Prosperity Fund'⁴.
2. Delivering social value, through a new fair/good employment charter for the subregion
3. Ensuring digital inclusion is a core part of digital and infrastructure strategies in the subregion
4. Ensuring that information, advice, guidance and support on skills and employment is targeted to where it is needed for 'levelling up'⁵.

In addition, it will be important to engage with the community and voluntary sector on the above, and to ensure there is provision of good quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) to all who need it (including households, businesses, schools and their pupils etc) on decarbonisation opportunities and challenges.

Sustainable Transport

Vision

The Commission proposes that the subregion should aim for full decarbonisation of all transport in Cheshire and Warrington by 2035, to be delivered in an inclusive way through three priority activities:

- By creating a public transport system which is affordable, zero carbon, accessible and integrated across the subregion making bus use and other forms of transport sharing a first choice for residents, shoppers, commuters and visitors by 2030. Whilst recognised that this will be challenging, the Commission's view is that the target timescale will be vital;
- By making the use of electric or zero emission (rather than petrol or diesel) cars and other vehicles the most cost effective and accessible means of transport by 2030 where public transport is not appropriate or available;
- By making active travel, on bikes and walking, an easy, clean, safe, and healthy option for all our residents, employees and visitors, fully integrating it with other forms of travel.

Key Priorities Following Consultation

1. The public sector role in supporting electric vehicle rollout, through the roll out of public charging stations.
2. Establishment of a transport system at major interchanges that connects all forms of public transport with accessible active travel routes.
3. Decarbonisation of public transport, including fully decarbonised buses as well as a series of other possible options including 'on demand' transport.

⁴ A £2.6bn government fund for local investment that is part of the government's levelling up agenda.

⁵ to individuals with protected characteristics and to those with socio-economic deprivation such as the long-term unemployed, those in areas of deprivation, those on free school meals etc

Sustainable Land Use

Vision

Our overall ambition is to make current land use net zero and unlock the economic potential of the rural area:

- By releasing the potential of the land use sector, and supporting agriculture to become regenerative (e.g. using less chemicals, more manures, generating energy from waste, and helping nature and biodiversity)
- By reversing the decline of Cheshire's natural environment and biodiversity and enhancing climate resilience, and improving access for all people to nature as part of a 'natural health service'.
- By supporting producers, landowners and local authorities to increase the amount of accessible, fresh, low carbon, locally produced food available to people within the subregion, and to use this to help address food poverty.

Key Priorities Following Consultation

1. Ensure Cheshire and Warrington's food supply chain continues moving towards zero carbon via regenerative agriculture and anaerobic digestion including establishing a network of demonstration farms to share best practice and increase take up
2. Encourage food security via local food production using vertical farming, partnering with industry where relevant, and with a focus on innovation.
3. Addressing the nature crisis (covering species, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and people's access to nature) by going further than national targets, working effectively with the Local Nature Partnership and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
4. Encourage local authorities to run a pilot looking at diet, health and behavioural change building on the National Food Strategy and Sustainable Local Food Place Award.

We also agree that it is important to prioritise work looking at the green skills that overlap all four of the above key priority projects.

Net Zero

Vision

Our overall ambition is to support and develop carbon reduction projects across Cheshire and Warrington while creating employment in a way that generates opportunities for all, via:

Housing (and building) decarbonisation and retrofit: By speeding up decarbonisation and retrofitting of the existing housing stock and new builds using e.g. insulation, clean energy, with a particular focus on social housing and disadvantaged households. This will require workers with new sets of green skills to be trained.

Industrial decarbonisation: By building the UK's first net zero industrial cluster which can act as a blueprint for industrial decarbonisation, enabling us to export our skills and expertise around the world. Supporting our industry to move away from fossil fuels and adopt renewable energy and sustainable processes will make a significant contribution to lowering emissions, safeguard existing jobs and create new green jobs for all.

Circular economy: By developing a whole system circular approach to resource management including design, production, waste collection, disposal and recycling, energy distribution, energy from waste, and reducing domestic energy consumption and demand and where products can be repaired, reused and recycled.

Key Priorities Following Consultation

1. Retrofitting insulation and clean energy to housing, particularly for disadvantaged households. Lobby government for consistent longer-term funding for housing retrofit schemes; complete a piece of work to understand the barriers to housing retrofit and produce a roadmap to increase delivery.
2. On green skills:
 - A. Work with industry and education providers to ensure that there are appropriate education and training programmes in place to support an industrial decarbonisation workforce.

- B. Work with the LEP to develop the skills needed for building retrofit and decarbonization across social and private housing, commercial and industrial sectors
 - C. Include easy entry and progression routes to ensure people from all backgrounds can benefit, targeting support where needed.
- 3. Building the UK's first net zero industrial cluster around the area's large hydrogen and net zero projects (e.g. HyNet and Cadent's Hydrogen Village), supporting industry to be successful by e.g. identifying/removing barriers and influencing government on support. The cluster can act as a blueprint for industrial decarbonisation, enabling us to export our skills and expertise around the world.
- 4. Work with business, public sector and agriculture to speed up the transition to a circular economy (including the use of farm waste and slurry in anaerobic digestion).



For more information about the
Commission and next steps see

cheshireandwarrington.com/sigc

Cheshire And Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership
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0922/02

Appendix 2

Summary and analysis of SIGC Early Stage Delivery Plan 2022-24

KEY

ACTION & REF	PRIORITY AREA	RECOMMENDATION	SIGC PRIORITY?
Progressing towards the development of a Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter – Ref IE1	Inclusive Economy - Delivering Social Value	Commit to establish & adopt a Fair Employment Charter which SR organisations could sign up to with commitments to fair employment principles eg paying a living wage & embedding equality and diversity which can help with issues such as addressing in-work poverty, improving physical and mental health in the workplace, & accessibility to jobs for disadvantaged groups	YES - Priority Action Area 2 in Final Report & Project REF IE1 in Delivery plan - 1/5 Eye catching projects
Piloting a formal inclusivity assessment for Shared Prosperity Fund projects roll out – Ref IE2	Inclusive Economy - Ensuring inclusivity assessment informs decision making in the subregion	Adopt a formal inclusivity assessment for projects promoted by SIGC as an integral part of decision making and delivery to show what impact projects have on inclusivity - would require bidders to complete an assessment to show what impact its project would have on inclusion which would be considered on bid assessment and award	YES - Priority Action Area 1 in Final Report & Project REF IE2 in Delivery Plan - 2/5 Eye catching projects
Decarbonisation of Dairy: Feasibility study into pan Cheshire farms Anaerobic Digestion investment project – LU1	Sustainable Land Use - Agriculture	Undertake a feasibility study to support anaerobic digestion (AD) investment projects within the subregion (could create a pan-farm AD facility) to support the shift towards AD & regenerative agriculture, establishing a network of demonstration farms & likeminded farmers to share best practice & help ensure that SR food supply chain continues to move towards carbon zero	YES - Priority Action Area 1 in Final Report & Project REF LU1 in Delivery Plan - 3/5 Eye catching projects

Facilitating investment to improve natural environment for biodiversity, health, climate: Natural capital mapping portal – Ref LU2	Sustainable Land Use - Insetting-Offsetting/Natural Capital	Work together to host a SR natural capital evidence base on a shared service GIS based system/portal to provide access to natural capital audit data layers to facilitate natural capital investment in the SR for public sector and partners - Phase 2 would aim to provide paid for service to provide natural capital information to support biodiversity net gain implementation via developers	Project REF LU2 in Delivery Plan - 4/5 Eye catching projects
Delivering skills for the green economy: Rolling out green skills bootcamps – Ref NZ1	Net Zero Road Map - Green Skills	LEP Employers Skills and Education Board to review SIGC recommendations within the Skills Education Plan and to deliver green skills via the bootcamps programme to help ensure that there are appropriate education & training programmes in place to support an industrial decarbonisation workforce including skills escalators to ensure all people can benefit	YES - Strategic Project Area 2 & Project REF NZ1 in Delivery plan - 5/5 Eye catching projects
Lobbying & support for low carbon industry development - REF NZ2	Net Zero Road Map - Delivering Zero Carbon Energy	Build the UK's first net zero industrial cluster around the area's large hydrogen & net zero projects e.g. HyNet Phase 2 & Cadent's Hydrogen Village supporting industry to be successful e.g. identifying/removing barriers & influencing/lobbying government on support	YES - Strategic Project Area 3 & Project REF NZ2 in Delivery plan
Transport Strategy Refresh - REF ST1	Sustainable Transport - Strategic Planning	Refresh the SR Transport Strategy post Covid & considering Climate Change Act, Net Zero Strategy & subsequent policy	Project REF ST1 in Delivery Plan
EV Rollout: Market Development - REF ST2	Sustainable Transport - Encouraging zero-emission vehicles	Support EV rollout through market development bringing LEP, EA Technology, SPEN & potential market entrants together to brief on LA activity	Project REF ST2 in Delivery Plan
Cross Cutting Priority - REF CC1	Cross Cutting Priority	Promotion of SIGC recommendations on LEP/central website targeted to SR organisations & communities to inspire action with diverse stakeholders & communities	Project REF CC1 in Delivery Plan

1/5 eye catching projects

other actions in early stage delivery plan

LEAD BODY	RESOURCE	COMMENTS	DOING THIS ALREADY?
C&W Leaders Board to appoint lead organisation	No resource - SR steering group to scope out resource and costs	<i>This work is being led by the LEP with support from CW&C and a SR steering group is being set up - CEC HR has fed back into the process that there are limited implications on CEC with respect to implementing the proposed Employment Charter</i>	Some commitment to develop Fair Employment Charter for C&W - LEP is working with CW&C and consulting with GM & LCR
C&W Leaders Board to appoint lead organisation - expectation on x3 LAs to pilot	No resource - expectation on x3 LAs to pilot this approach resourced in-kind	<i>The 3 LAs are generally supportive of a sub-regional approach - there are early stages of a possible model - proposing to pilot in year 2 of commissioning & procurement</i>	SPF year 1 already in train so would have revenue impact to re-scope these using the tool
LEP Net Zero Hub & expctation on x 3 LA Estates/Cheshire Farms Service to support	Proposed study is estimated at £50k requirement - £25k bid into NW Net Zero Hub fund	<i>Facilitation role for the Council via conversations with estates, skills providers - note small unit size of Council owned farms may restrict the ability to support recommendations</i>	Recently formed Estates Group led by LEP and supported by officers at CEC and CW&C is looking at external funding opportunities which includes £25k bid into NW Net Zero Hub Fund.

CW&C leading associated to Local Nature Recovery Strategy	No resources - expectation on x3 LA GIS mapping support initially - ongoing resource implication for hosts including GIS expert to manage the system & carry out updates every say 3-5 years	<i>Natural Capital Plan due to be hosted by CEC/CW&C - resource implications in completing a data sharing protocol, setting up a mapping service & updating evidence periodically to enable change to be tracked compared to the baseline to support the rollout of biodiversity net gain</i>	Natural Capital layers in process of being transferred via Cheshire internal GIS - considering software options
C&W LEP Skills & Education Board working with industry and education providers	Skills Boot Camp funding secured & commissioning underway - no current resource implications on LAs	<i>Will require significant funding - LEP is leading on this – green skills development is included in the existing government funded ‘Boot Camp’ scheme being managed by the LEP - opportunity for LAs to feed in local requirements to the programme</i>	Green skills included in skills bootcamp programme
C&W LEP & expectation on support from x3 LAs	Proposal to apply for £25k Net Zero Hub feasibility funding	<i>Generally supportive of sub-regional approach - most of these large projects are not within Cheshire East</i>	CW&C has working group with Hynet
Expectation on x3 LA s with support from C&W LEP secretariat	Expectation on SR Transport Group (C&W LEP & x3 LAs) to pick up in kind/within existing budgets	<i>Revised recommendation in final report - to consider request where funding allows, strategy to include additional work on the SIGC transport priorities e.g. charging strategy/integrated transport, share good practice from the ZEBRA project</i>	
C&W LEP & SIGC secretariat	Expectation on SR Transport Group (LEP & x3 LAs) to pick up in kind/within existing budgets	<i>Revised recommendation in final report - requested by SIGC Sustainable Transport Group</i>	
C&W LEP & Marketing Cheshire	Expectation on C&W LEP to pick up in kind/within existing budgets	<i>Revised recommendation in final report - expectation that this will be picked up at least initially by Marketing Cheshire on existing C&W LEP website with no resource requirement</i>	

EARLY WIN 2022-23	2023-24	LONGER TERM
Delivery Plan proposes setting up a steering group to review costs & agree delivery model	Aim for partner organisations to adopt New Fair Employment Charter	Want to promote adoptions of New Fair Employment Charter within the private sector
Delivery Plan proposes 1 or more LAs pilot inclusion of Inclusivity Assessment Toolkit in roll out of SPF	Aim to pilot in year 2 of SPF	In the longer term develop a version that includes sustainability and wellbeing assessment
Delivery Plan proposes progressing this feasibility study including pan Cheshire farms AD facility to take farm waste and carbon, returning biomethane to the grid	Encourage Council owned farms & rural colleges to join demonstration network	Support network of demonstration farms/promotion of regenerative agriculture and AD with Council owned farms, and colleges

Delivery Plan proposes developing shared service portal	Provide access to natural capital audit layers for public sector & partners	Phase 2 to aim to provide paid for service for developers
Delivery Plan proposes that LEP maps provision from Local Skills Improvement Plans & deliver green skills bootcamps	CEC & Reaseheath College conference on skills & carbon planned	
Delivery plan proposes promotion of industrial decarbonisation cluster plan investment case with government	Commission consultancy for barriers & investment opportunity study	Industrial decarbonisation cluster plan to include £615k programme of work packages
Delivery Plan proposes Transport Strategy refresh as first step to support Priority Action Areas		
Delivery Plan proposes setting up this meeting		
Delivery Plan proposes creation of material linked to COP 26 case studies		



Working for a brighter future together

Economy & Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 th January 2023
Report Title:	Mid-Year Performance Review 2022/23 – Growth and Enterprise
Report of:	Peter Skates Director of Growth & Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/11/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with a review of the performance of the Growth & Enterprise department for the first two quarters of 2022-23 .

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report gives an update on performance across Growth & Enterprise department for the year 2022- 2023 to date.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Committee note the performance of the department;

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Economy & Growth Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Growth & Enterprise department.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Background

- 6.1.** The Cheshire East's vision to be open, fairer, and greener is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, with three broad aims to be an open and enabling organisation; a council which empowers and cares about people, and a thriving and sustainable place. The Growth & Enterprise department contributes to a number of the priorities under the aim of a thriving and sustainable place:
- A great place for people to live, work and visit
 - Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
 - Thriving urban and Rural economies with opportunities for all
 - To be carbon neutral by 2025
- 6.2.** Housing and Economic Development are vital elements of developing the 'sense of place'. The Growth & Enterprise Department seeks to enhance these elements but also promoting the contribution of our Countryside and Rural Communities. Our cultural, rural and visitor economies support our environment, heritage, culture and visitor offer and supplement Cheshire East's character. All of our aims and objectives are advanced through working with local and national partners.
- 6.3.** Our property portfolio and property disposal programme is managed to ensure best use and value of the Council's assets while contributing to the strategic aims of the Council, and the Corporate Plan.
- 6.4.** The delivery of PLACE related projects and schemes are under significant challenge in the residual impact of the pandemic, but also the substantive impact of construction inflation, general inflation and interest rates. The Growth & Enterprise Department has been heavily involved in supporting our towns, and also going forward will be progressing Growth Strategies, Recovery Plans and Actions.

7. Housing

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
A great place for people to live, work and visit	<p>Enable access to well designed, affordable and safe homes for all our residents</p> <p>To reduce the number of long-term empty dwellings</p> <p>To make best use of our surplus buildings and assets to support the borough and our partners</p>
Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	Crime and anti-social activity and anti-social behaviour to be reduced

	Victims of crime and exploitation to be supported effectively by the council and partners through collaboration
Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	Thriving and active rural communities
To be carbon neutral by 2025	To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council

Key Performance Indicators	2021/22 Outturn	Mid-year (21/22)	Mid-year (22/23)	Target 2022/23
Home adaptations for older and/or disabled residents	362	199	207	500
Increase the supply of new affordable housing	640	306	274	355
Maintain the number of long-term empty homes in Cheshire East to less than 1%	0.95%	End of year target	End of year target	<1%
Increase number of preventative and relief actions taken in order to reduce levels of homelessness in Cheshire East	1117	480	680	1000
Households helped to achieve affordable warmth	691	288	289	500
Households are helped to improve their living conditions	386	145	187	200

- 7.1.** Housing staff have continued to work hard to provide effective, customer focused frontline services to ensure that our residents are prevented from becoming homeless or are relieved from homelessness. This has also included developing our services for rough sleepers and we have successfully secured further Rough Sleepers Initiative funding which has enabled us to secure 3 years funding to develop a multi-disciplinary team to support rough sleepers with complex needs.
- 7.2.** In June 2022, the Housing Options Team achieved Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which is a scheme open to Housing

Associations, Local Authority Housing Teams and Homelessness Providers across the UK to help improve their response to domestic abuse.

- 7.3.** We are continuing to experience issues with contractors and supply chains for materials, due to the challenging economic climate, which has impacted on our ability to undertake adaptation works as quickly as we would like. The team however undertook the required procurement to secure a new framework contractor and have worked to try and manage customer expectations
- 7.4.** Improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing fuel poverty has continued to be a priority within the team and the Housing Standards Team successfully secured £4,853,676 of Government funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes. Having been successful in securing funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 for our housing partners, the Registered Housing Providers are building on that experience for a Wave 2 funding application, and we are using our experience of delivering the various Green Homes Grant and Home Upgrade Grant programmes in a bid to the Government for Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 funding.
- 7.5.** Ensuring we continue to increase the number of affordable homes across the authority is a priority set out within both the Corporate Plan, Local Plan and Housing Strategy. Following the establishment of the Council's Housing Development Framework, we are continuing to progress the mini competitions.
- 7.6.** Providing a safe place to stay for the transient Gypsy and Traveller community and dealing effectively with unauthorised encampments, recognising the impact on our settled communities continues to be a priority, and having secured planning permission, we have now secured Homes England grant funding, which will contribute towards the development costs of the scheme. We are now in the process of tendering the works packages..
- 7.7.** We are continuing to support the Government's Refugee programmes and have a dedicated officer, whose role is to support and provide housing advice.

8. Estates

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
A financially sustainable council which has increased levels of reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Facilities Management team implement a series of projects and measures to reduce the running cost of the CEC estate The Property Services and Farms teams have a Disposal Programme that aims to deliver capital receipts for the Council. The Property Services and Farms teams manage leases on behalf of the Council and has an annual income target that offsets some costs of the service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Estates Service completes the implementation and development of its asset management system (Concerto) and corresponding service delivery process adjustments • The Estates Service successfully implements a new asset management plan • The Property Projects Team have successfully procured a new Construction Services Consultancy Framework to ensure professional and technical support is available to develop and deliver the programme of capital construction projects.
To make best use of our surplus buildings and assets to support the borough and our partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the community asset transfer policy and provide a clear framework to support effective transfer and further explore 'shared' use with our partners of town centre assets • Deliver Disposal Programme, support other Council initiatives, for example Housing Development Framework.
To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver actions in the Cheshire East Council Carbon Action Plan, including the adoption of the Low Carbon Build Standard. • Support where appropriate the Introduction of green vehicles across the fleet (including waste and highways) • Reduce use of Gas by decarbonising sources of heating for our buildings • Promote carbon neutrality and carbon zero development across Cheshire East, providing information, advice and guidance for householders and businesses to reduce their carbon use

- 8.1.** Since the last update to Committee the UK's Economy has sought to recover from the pandemic and also deal with multiple national and international challenges. This has generated instability in the property and construction markets. These factors are outside the Council's control but their implications have the potential to impact the Council and its Estates activities. The main issues for the Council as a land owner are general inflation, continued fluctuations and uncertainty in energy costs and continued challenges in and around cost and supply of workforce and materials in the construction sector. The Estates service continues to monitor these issues very closely seeking to deliver a fiscally balanced end of year out turn.
- 8.2.** Following recovery from the pandemic the service has not been significantly engaged in Covid 19 issues, and it has progressed with returning to 'business as usual' activity, although currently there are a high volume activity within the service.
- 8.3.** The service continues to be heavily involved in the delivery of the Council's policy to deliver a carbon neutral Council by 2025. It has been successful in obtaining £6.7m of decarbonisation grants, which has delivered air source heat pumps, Photovoltaic Panels, LED lighting and insulation to a number of buildings, with many of the Council's estate having benefitted. The Council has also been active in tree planting and the service has assisted this by identifying and making land available for this activity. It has developed the

standard that will be required to be met when delivering construction projects in the future.

- 8.4.** The Estates Service has a Capital programme of construction projects valued at £102m underway on the Council's assets. In year £22m of projects have been completed and handed over to end users including nine school expansion projects and the refurbishment of Nantwich Leisure Centre. Ongoing work includes remediation, refurbishment, construction and regeneration projects.
- 8.5.** The Council has a Capital Receipts target (from the disposal of property) of £4m over 4 years set out in the MTFs and has achieved £1.3m in the last Financial Year. Good progress has also been made in the current year against this target. These are minimum targets and disposal is predicated on a best effort basis to maximise capital receipts in any one year. Although Cheshire East has a robust Capital Programme, given the economic headwind in the economy and in particular the Property and Construction sectors this is a prudent approach. The Council through its existing processes identifies surplus assets and in turn places these in the disposal programme.

Key Performance indicator	2021/22 Out Turn	2022/23 Target	30 Nov 22 Out Turn
Capital Receipts (Disposals)	£1.3m	£1m	£273k*

*Currently the Council has in progress a number of sales, but these are subject to purchaser completion and are anticipated in year. £273,500 represents completed sales to date.

The service also is active in different ways to dispose of assets. The Council has also adopted a Housing Delivery Framework, which disposes of assets for housing. The service has supported the development and implementation of this policy.

- 8.6.** In year, the Committee has considered and approved the Community Asset Transfer Framework and the service is currently implementing the use of this policy progressing live cases through the Framework.
- 8.7.** The Council manages a portfolio of land and property that it leases to third parties. There have been impacts arising from the pandemic and lockdowns with some tenants, but the Estates service has ensured, where possible, that issues are carefully managed, with appropriate advice and direction to support given. Anecdotally a consequence of the pandemic and subsequent cost inflation appears to have delayed (or accelerated) changes in certain categories of organisation.
- 8.8.** The service is successfully implementing a new property information system. Its commencement of implementation is a key achievement for the service in 2021 and 2022. The service has also enabled its contractor Equans to

access the system simplifying the handling of data and improve real time reporting. Further work is ongoing to develop the system to improve the way the service deals with enquiries and develop appropriate workflows to manage more effective management of cases.

- 8.9.** The service has also successfully completed the procurement of a new Construction Related Consultancy Services Framework, which, in line with Government construction best practice, enables the Council to efficiently access professional and technical support to continue with the development and delivery of its capital construction projects. The framework is also available for use to all of the Council's community related partners, including academy trusts and Town Councils.
- 8.10.** The service was, due to the pandemic, delayed in developing a Corporate Asset Management Plan, however a policy principles report has been considered by the Committee earlier in the year and following this a draft Corporate Asset Management Plan has been developed for consultation with members and is due to be presented to Committee. Further policy activity will follow on from the adoption of the plan, for the Committee to consider.
- 8.11.** The service continues to deliver statutory compliance which is a critical activity to the Council and underpins all its other activity. It continues to be key to engage a wide range of stakeholders and have the appropriate attention for example through the Corporate Health and Safety forum and relevant upward reporting. The Facilities Management Team ensure the Council meet its statutory requirements, not only within our buildings, both other assets that the Council has a responsibility for.
- 8.12.** Looking forward the most significant challenge faced by the service is the fiscal challenge of operating in an inflationary economy. This is outside the control of the service and will have a material impact on the way the service has to operate. This issue is closely monitored by the service.

9. Rural & Cultural Economy

- 9.1.** The Rural and Cultural Economy Service seeks to grow the contribution of countryside, cultural and visitor economy assets or opportunities to the Cheshire East economy helping it to be a thriving and sustainable place. The Service recognises the importance of our environment, heritage, culture and visitor offer to the area's character, economy, quality of place and wellbeing.
- 9.2.** The Public Rights of Way (PROW) team has once again delivered a very high standard of service to the public despite the high demands and some capacity issues. The Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee has oversight of this statutory service.

Key Performance Indicators	2021/22 Outturn	Mid-year (21/22)	Mid-year (22/23)	Target 2022/23
Ease of use of Public Rights of Way network (Reported with kind permission of volunteer user groups East Cheshire Ramblers and Peak and Northern Footpath Society)	94%	n/a	n/a	85%
Audience figures for Lyceum Theatre	39,881	0	41,962	85,000 now revised to 75,000.
Tatton Park visitor numbers	615,000	410,000	405,000	700,000
Tatton Park net budget	£633,371	£743,914	£903,781	£849,781
Value of the Visitor economy (annual retrospective STEAM measure)	2021 £735m	n/a	n/a	Annual figure due Sept 2023
% Carbon emissions being offset by the Council	32.9%	n/a	33.5%	40%

- 9.3.** In the first 2 quarters of 2022-23, the PROW team responded to more than 231 new issue reports about path furniture, signposting, surface and bridges, replacing and repairing where necessary and resolving over 180 issues through work allocated to contractors or completed by landowners. Whilst public expectations of the standard of the network appear to have increased, user group volunteer surveys (with thanks to the East Cheshire Ramblers and the Peak and Northern Footpath Society) have returned a result of 94% of the network being classed as good/acceptable. Other work includes path diversion cases, many of which proved to be complex in nature due to developments going through the planning system, claims for routes, and enquiries from landowners and users in order to protect and maintain the network for all.
- 9.4.** Capacity is stretched across the full work of the team, including on the legal orders work, where work progresses through waiting lists, dealing with new diversion application requests, temporary closure requests and 170 planning application consultations, in addition to other functions and enquiries. The waiting list of applications for 'claims' for paths has been proactively addressed this year following allocation of additional resource.

- 9.5.** The Countryside Ranger Service is responsible for Cheshire East Councils Country Parks, Nature Reserves and Linear Trails, which together attract over 1,000,000 visits each year.
- 9.6.** In 2022/23, the Ranger Service received Green Flag awards at Teggs Nose Country Park, Brereton Heath Local Nature Reserve and Riverside Park. This is a first time for Macclesfield Riverside Park local nature reserve in the Bollin Valley, where former farmland has been transformed into wildflower rich grassland. From spring through to autumn, the Bollin Valley's rare breed of Longhorn cattle graze here.
- 9.7.** The Countryside Ranger Service works closely with the PROW team to improve access to the wider countryside, and the teams are often work. The Service was supported by volunteers who help maintain the country parks and trails.
- 9.8.** The Visitor Economy team supports an important sector for Cheshire East that because of the pandemic fell in economic value from nearly £1bn in 2019 to £548m in 2020. The data is always retrospective and 2021 shows some recovery in the sector with it growing again to £735m. However, it should be noted that the cost of living is impacting across the country on both visitor numbers and visitor spend in 2022 and it is expected that progress will slow down.
- 9.9.** The Visitor Economy team has worked with Marketing Cheshire on promotional campaigns to position Cheshire as a Family Destination and is supporting a 'Destination Cheshire' network of non-Chester based tourism businesses and attractions. This ensures communication of best-practice, coordination of marketing activity, peer support and provides an ability to consult businesses directly on strategy going forward.
- 9.10.** Since the pandemic, hospitality businesses have had real issues around recruitment, to the point where this is hampering their ability to trade in a way that ensures their survival. The Visitor Economy team have been working in partnership with DWP & Springboard (National Hospitality Training Agency) to develop a bespoke approach to the significant issues of recruitment, retention, and skills since 2021 and this is starting to see results, giving some local people new career opportunities and helping local businesses access potential employees to cover their vacancies. The project is fully funded through a partnership with Job Centre Plus & Springboard.
- 9.11.** Consultation with businesses and local organisations on the priorities that need to be addressed in a new Visitor Economy Strategy. This strategy is due to come before Committee in January 2022.
- 9.12.** Plans for the History Centre in Crewe continue to progress as part of the larger Cheshire Archives project. Following a successful National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) mid-point review in December 2021, scheme development continued including building design to RIBA stage 3, activity

planning, interpretation, business planning, consultation, and engagement. A stage 2 funding bid for the delivery phase was successfully submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- 9.13.** The Cultural Economy Team continue to support the Regeneration team on the art and cultural elements of the LY2 project and the 'heritage wall' as part of the bus station development.
- 9.14.** Work continued at pace on 'Powerhouse' in Crewe (a new commercial music venue and creative skills development hub) as part of the Towns Fund proposals. RIBA3 designs were completed, and a full business case submitted in June 2022.
- 9.15.** Following the successful commissioning of a mural of Ian Curtis in Macclesfield, the Cultural Economy Team were able to commission a further mural to adorn one of the lift shafts at Macclesfield station. Funded by Avanti, supported by Network Rail, commissioned and produced by CEC, the mural by Peachzz depicted Swifts by Charles Tunnicliffe, a reputed wildlife artist born in 1901 in Langley, Macclesfield. Both murals have been attracting a lot of attention for the town and generating a significant amount of positive social media for Macclesfield and Cheshire East.
- 9.16.** Tatton Park, which received 'Green flag' and 'Green Heritage site' awards once again, continues to be an important environmental and community resource as a driver of the local visitor economy. While visitor numbers to the park, garden and farm attractions recovered well following the removal of Government restrictions at the end of June 2021, like other attractions across the country the cost of living is impacting on both visitor numbers and visitor spend, with reductions of up to 20% not being uncommon.
- 9.17.** Measures have been taken to try and stimulate demand and the 3rd quarter trends show better weekend performance compared to mid-week. Catering and retail have similarly improved at weekends, while park entries are not too far off target.
- 9.18.** Events are an important area of activity to Tatton's finances, and despite the loss of a few events from the calendar due to pandemic impacts, Tatton was able to host much of its usual programme, including the RHS Flower show which welcomed nearly 64,000 visitors in July 2022.
- 9.19.** The service is also leading the Natural Capital workstream (including nature-based offsetting) as part of the Council's Carbon Action Plan. The programme, which includes tree planting and peatland restoration, has continued as part of its Carbon Action Plan commitments to help be carbon neutral by 2025. The programme has been developed in partnership with Mersey Forest and in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust. It has included new planting in parks and open spaces, in school grounds, at Tatton Park and in Countryside sites.

- 9.20.** Members of the team are also developing a catchment-wide approach to the Bollin Valley with a range of partners as well as developing proposals to improve the Crewe Valley Brook corridor and supporting the Local Nature Partnership.

10. Economic Development

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities			
Priority: Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Crewe • Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Macclesfield • Successful town centres in our other key towns • Maximise the commercial and regeneration opportunities associated with HS2 for the whole borough • Thriving and active rural communities 		
Priority: To be carbon neutral by 2025	To have delivered the milestones in becoming a carbon neutral council		
Key Performance Indicators	2020/21 Outturn	Year end (21/22)	Target 2021/22
Delivery of capital programmes and projects on time and to budget	New measure	100% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crewe Market Hall • Castle St, Macclesfield 	100%
Town Centre Footfall	Total footfall between August 2019 and July 2022 across all 11 service centres and towns combined has increased by 4% to 8.083m		10% increase on 20/21 figures
Deliver Business Growth Support	Distributing Additional Restrictions Grant	All funding in rounds 1 and 2 allocated and distributed in accordance to the Council's Policy	100% COMPLETED

- 10.1.** The Economic Development service has been delivering its priorities against the corporate and the strategic priorities set out in the strategic regeneration plans for Crewe and Macclesfield, and the Corporate Digital Strategy.

- 10.2.** At the November 2022 committee, members received an extensive report considered the progress that has been made in the regeneration of Crewe. This report provided an update on the £14.1m Future High Street Fund programme and the £23.1m Towns Fund Programme.
- 10.3.** The team responsible for delivering and overseeing the regeneration of Crewe town centre are continuing to progress all projects despite the significant and persistent cost inflation in the construction sector which represents a major risk to all capital projects.
- 10.4.** Ten projects under the Future High Street Fund have already been mobilised while the ten projects under the Towns Fund have addressed funding conditions to advance and in October were submitted to the next key government gateway. The development of detailed business cases using HM Treasury's five case business case model have been successfully completed and all were signed off by the Government in September 2022.
- 10.5.** Due to the cost inflation pressures the Town Board and this Committee made the difficult decision in November 2022, to withdraw the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the Towns Fund programme, and request that the Government reallocate the remaining unspent grant relating to this project be to other Towns Fund projects/activities that are experiencing cost pressures as a result of construction cost inflation. Officers have been in discussions with officials who have now shared the process and paperwork to move forward with this decision.
- 10.6.** In November, the Economic Development Team working in conjunction with the Culture Team, successfully submitted two planning applications associated with the new History centre. These are, the Dismantling of old library and development of a new court entrance, car park and enhanced public realm, and the Construction of History Centre. Both projects utilise a cocktail of funding including Towns Fund, Future High St Fund, National Heritage Lottery Fund and council funding.
- 10.7.** The Accelerated Towns Fund project utilizing £0.75m government grant has been used to develop designs and costings for Ly2 project and a planning permission has been granted and contracts were signed with the construction contractor in October 2022. Work is expected to start on the former carpark to develop an outdoor entertainment space, with stage, digital screen and new artworks in January 2023 to be completed during quarter 2 of 2023-24.
- 10.8.** Royal Arcade Phase 1: This is progressing to the timetable confirmed in spring 2022, with the interim bus station expected to be operational from January to December 2023, at which point the new permanent bus station will become operational. The new multi-storey car park is expected to be completed at the same time, and will free-up capacity at other town centre car parks, enabling other regeneration projects to proceed.
- 10.9.** The newly refurbished Market Hall successfully opened in May 2021 and the data shows that it is becoming an anchor retail, leisure, and entertainment venue in the town.

- 10.10.** A consultation process for the nine Town Centre Vitality Plans covering Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow was successfully completed in November 2022. Each Town Centre Vitality Plan sets out priorities for supporting the vitality and viability of specific town centres as and when funding opportunities arise. These plans are expected to be discussed by the Economy and Growth Committee at its January 2023 meeting.
- 10.11.** The Regeneration and Development team also focus on the maximising the vitality of our other nine towns (listed below), addressing another of the key priorities in the corporate plan. Unsurprisingly, Covid has impacted these centres as can be seen by the footfall data below April 2021 and August 2021:-

Table 1: Foot Fall data by towns August 2019 compared to July 2022

	Aug-19	Jul-22	% Change	Change
Alsager	308,768	392,446	27%	83,678
Congleton	857,664	817,060	-5%	-40,604
Crewe	1,136,167	1,264,693	11%	128,526
Handforth	288,912	385,228	33%	96,316
Knutsford	837,650	812,308	-3%	-253,42
Macclesfield	1,564,718	1,421,964	-9%	-142,754
Middlewich	227,975	345,379	51%	117,404
Nantwich	483,632	548,544	13%	64,912
Poynton	403,086	420,439	4%	17,353
Sandbach	582,484	681,279	17%	98,795
Wilmslow	1,074,848	994,355	-7%	-80,493
Total	7,765,904	8,083,695	4%	31,7791

- 10.12.** Footfall data once more shows that some of the small areas continue to attract local people. However, those larger areas such as Macclesfield and Congleton which have a larger pull factor are not performing as strongly as others when comparing pre-covid to post covid. The market hall effect is still positively impacting on footfall in Crewe, with increases of 11% compared to August 2019.
- 10.13.** The analysing of statistics can be subject to interpretation when trends are identified in a single table. Other monthly factors, such as weather, cost of living, changes towards hybrid working can also impact. The Council has published all the monthly detail for each town and this can be sourced via the following link

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major_regeneration_projects/town-centre-footfall.aspx

- 10.14.** A significant work programme for the Council being taken forward by Economic Development Service between April 2022 and November 2023 has been the writing of bids and investment proposals in response to central government funding calls. This work has included:
- 10.15.** UK Shared Prosperity Fund: an allocation of £11.5 million core UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), £1.5 million for Multiply to support adult numeracy, and an anticipated additional £827,000 Rural Fund allocation for supporting rural businesses and rural community infrastructure. The UKSPF has three thematic areas: Communities and place, supporting local business and People and skills. The funding is for three years, year 1 is 2022-23 and ends 31 March 2025. The fund was launched by the government on 13 April 2022 and investment plans had to be submitted to the Government by 1 August 2022. The government signed off on Cheshire East's plan on the 6 December 2022.
- 10.16.** Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bids were submitted in July 2022 (outcome to be determined by Central Government):
- 10.16.1. The Macclesfield Regeneration team led on a bid to make significant improvements to public space in Macclesfield town centre, taking in Chestergate, Market Place, Exchange Street and Mill Street. The project – supported by MP David Rutley, Macclesfield Town Council, Grosvenor Centre owners Eskmuir and Make It Macclesfield – would transform the look of the area and focus on the pedestrian, rather than the vehicle. It would see pavements widened to create more scope for existing and new cafes, bars and restaurants to have al fresco seating areas, encourage more people to cycle into the town centre, and include adding more greenery and improving street furniture.
- 10.16.2. The Crewe regeneration team supported officers in the Highway and Transport teams to develop two bids relating to a pedestrian and cycle schemes around Crewe station.
- 10.17.** Great British Rail HQ at Crewe: The Business and Growth Team led on and developed the inward investment proposal for locating Great British Rail HQ in Crewe. GB Rail is the planned state-owned public body that will oversee rail transportation in Great Britain from 2024. Forty-two towns submitted expressions of interest and Crewe was shortlisted alongside five other railway towns and cities for the public vote and final ministerial selection. As part of this process the team also organised and hosted a ministerial visit from the Rail Minister. There were four key stages in the process:
- Stage 1 Deadline for expression of interests from potential bidders put in by March 16.

- Stage 2 Shortlists announced in May.
- Stage 3 Following shortlisting, ministers will visit the shortlisted towns and a public vote will be held.
- Stage 4 The location for the new HQ will be announced in the summer.
- The final decision on the location of GB Rail has yet to be determined. The Transport Secretary announced on 19 October 2022 that the Transport Bill which would have set up GBR would not go ahead in the current parliamentary session.

- 10.18.** Investment Zone Bids, on the 9 October 2022, the ED service led on and submitted business cases for six investment zones in-line with the Government's growth priorities set out in the mini-budget dated 23 September 2022. The development of these proposals was an intensive two-week process to provide detailed economic analysis for each zone. All six were submitted by the 12 noon deadline on the 7 October 2022.
- 10.19.** Subsequently, in the Autumn Statement on the 17 November 2022 the Chancellor announced a change of approach and that expressions of interest would not now be taken forward. The government announced it will now use this investment zone programme to catalyse a limited number of the highest potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters, including through leveraging local research strengths.
- 10.20.** Officers are continuing to work with officials from the department and local stakeholders to promote the opportunities in Cheshire East .
- 10.21.** The Cheshire East Council's Connecting Cheshire initiative 'Digital Cheshire' has enabled an additional 3,000 full fibre connections across the Cheshire. The initiative - in partnership with broadband provider Airband – allows additional properties which were once deemed unviable, to connect to commercial providers and access ultrafast broadband speeds. Digital Cheshire is already seeing residents and businesses benefiting from the newly-installed ultrafast broadband across Cheshire, as broadband speeds and bandwidth demands continue to increase. Malpas, Hampton Heath, Wrenbury and Ridley are just some of the towns and villages to benefit from the full fibre technology.
- 10.22.** A further 42 premises have successfully made use of the Connecting Cheshire top-up voucher programme to enable connectivity with a non-contacted internet service provider.

11. Implications

11.1. Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11.2. Finance

The financial implications of changes in performance requirements or responding to current performance levels will be included in the financial review report.

11.3. Policy

The report sets out how the department is contributing to the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 in the first 6-9 months of the financial year..

11.4. Equality

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

11.5. Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

11.6. Risk Management

The performance reporting process provides opportunities for the Council to identify and focus on areas for improvement to support achievement of its strategic ambitions. Timely performance reporting mitigates risk of the Council not achieving its outcomes by providing the opportunity to review outputs, identify trends and areas for improvement, and introduce corrective and/or preventative actions wherever necessary to address areas of poor - or under – performance.

11.7. Rural Communities

There are no implications for rural communities arising from this performance report.

11.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

There are no implications for children and young people arising from this performance report.

11.9. Public Health

There are no implications for public health arising from this performance report.

11.10. Climate Change

The performance report highlights key initiatives and schemes which support and benefit the Councils aims and objectives to reduce impact on climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth & Enterprise peter.skates@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None

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Work Programme – Economy and Growth Committee – 2022/23

A Report title in Bold indicates that this is a significant decision

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/18/22-23	10 Feb 2023	Handforth Garden Village - Delivery Strategy	To seek approval for the funding and delivery strategy to safeguard, stabilise and ultimately restore the derelict buildings at Dairy House Farm and the procurement of the Pre-Construction works at the Garden Village.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	Yes	Fair; Green; Open	Yes - 3
EG/28/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy Update	To receive an update on the current position in relation to homelessness and progress against the action plan.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Green	
EG/29/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Leasehold Properties	To provide an update on the current position on leasehold properties and the survey undertaken by the Housing Teams to establish what local developers and registered housing providers intentions were in relation to leasehold properties.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Green	
EG/26/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Cultural Framework 2023 - 2028	To approve a refreshed CEC Cultural Framework for 2023 - 2028.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		yes	yes	Fair; Green; Open	
EG/09/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Second Financial Review Report	To receive an update on the financial position for 2022/23. To note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)		No	Yes	Open	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/24/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Carbon Update	To provide an update on the progress of the carbon programme and to seek from the committee such decisions as shall be necessary in order to further the programme to its agreed conclusion.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		Yes	Yes	Green	
EG/31/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Cheshire Archives Delivery Phase	To seek authority to accept a grant from NLHF and seek confirmation of delivery mechanisms and governance for the delivery phase of Cheshire Archives - A Story Shared project.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	Yes	Fair; Green; Open	
EG/31/22-33	14 Mar 2023	Cheshire Homechoice Partnership	To receive an update on the Cheshire Homechoice Partnership, its aims and to reaffirm the governance arrangements.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	Yes	Green	Yes - 3
EG/32/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Notice of Motion: Quality Council Homes for Cheshire East	To consider the Notice of Motion, referred to the Committee by Council on 14 December 2022.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		tbc	tbc	Fair; Green	
EG/27/22-23	June 2023	Housing Strategy 2023-2026	Approval is sought to go out to consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2023-2026.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		Yes	No	Green	No
EG/04/22-23		Supported Employment Strategy	This report sets out the recommendations for a strategic approach to supported employment relating to adult social care customers with complex needs and support into work.	Executive Director Adults, Health and Integration		Yes	Yes	Fair; Green	No