

# Economy and Growth Committee

## Agenda

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**Date:** Tuesday 12th March 2024  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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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 interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable 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 26 January 2024.

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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, 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. **Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy (Pages 13 - 78)**

To consider the report on the Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy.

6. **Renters Reform and Selective Licensing Scheme Update (Pages 79 - 92)**

To consider the update report on the Renters Reform Bill and Selective Licensing scheme.

7. **Update of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Pages 93 - 114)**

To consider the update report on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

8. **Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (Pages 115 - 150)**

To consider the report on the refurbishment of Indoor Macclesfield Market.

9. **Work Programme (Pages 151- 152)**

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

10. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The reports relating to the remaining items on the agenda have been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matters may be determined with the press and public excluded.

The Committee may decide 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 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

**PART 2 - MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT**

**11. Re-Commissioning of House Related Support Contracts (Pages 153 - 164)**

To consider the report.

**Membership:** Councillors D Brown, J Clowes, B Drake, M Gorman (Chair), A Heler, N Mannion (Vice-Chair), G Marshall, R Moreton, Morris, C Naismith, C O'Leary, P Redstone and F Wilson

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**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**  
held on Friday, 26th January, 2024 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town  
Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

**PRESENT**

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

Councillors L Anderson, L Braithwaite, D Brown, J Clowes, B Drake, A Heler,  
G Marshall, C O'Leary, P Redstone and F Wilson

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Place  
Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development  
Debra Wrench, Property Projects Manager  
Steve Reading, Finance Officer  
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner (Place)  
Adrian Leslie, Legal Services  
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

**41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors C Naismith and M Gorman.  
Councillors L Anderson and L Braithwaite attended as substitutes.

**42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Item 5 – Response to Petition Poynton Pool: Councillor G Marshall  
declared that he was a member of the Strategic Planning Board and stated  
he would take no part in the consideration of the matter.

**43 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING****RESOVLED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 be approved  
as a correct record.

**44 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

Mike Ellison, Poynton Pool petition organiser, stated that the Friends of  
Poynton Pool had collected 5000 signatures in a period of 8 weeks and  
that it had been their expectation that this would trigger a meeting of Full  
Council to consider the petition. He stated that the dam was constructed,  
in part, from permeable sand and gravel which allowed flood events to  
percolate through the dam which would explain why there was no record  
of the Pool ever overflowing. He stated that there were significant errors in

the engineer's report which had been brought to the Council's attention and led to the Council correcting their position relating to risk, but the spillway proposals remained unchanged. He stated that the project's cost benefit analysis was contrary to central government guidance and did not take into account the of loss to amenity, loss to ecology and of other benefits. He requested that the Council put the proposals on hold to allow for appropriate investigation and a more credible risk assessment and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council.

Elaine Adams stated that Poynton Park was gifted to the people of Poynton in the mid-1700s, and that Cheshire East Council acted as custodian. She stated that to her knowledge the Pool, which had an average depth of 1.2metres, had never overflowed or breached the dam since it was built. She referred to the engineers cost benefit analysis and stated that it was inconsistent with the Green Book methodology and asked why the scheme did not take account of the £3m CAVAT value of the trees and asked if costs had been allocated for the 30-year Landscape Management Plan as the contactor only managed the first year for defects and liability?

Gwenda Mayers stated that about half of the Poynton adult population had signed the Petition, the numbers could have been higher, but they had stopped collecting once it exceeded the 5000 thresholds in order to submit prior to the planning application being registered. She stated that it was disappointing that the Petition was not being debated at a full Council meeting. She stated that the Petition was organised to request that the proposals be reviewed as the work was not mandatory. The Friends of Poynton Pool had consulted with specialists who had clarified this. The risk of the dam breaching, and therefore the risk to life and property was overstated as it was within the tolerable zone for risk. She asked why it had taken four months for the Petition to be heard, which she believed contravened statutory legislation. She asked if the Council could provide a rationale for submitting a related planning application on 3 November without considering the objections and wishes of the residents.

John Borthwick referred to the proposed work scheduled for Poynton Pool and stated that the information should be checked as there were a number of documents which provided different data on the same matter. He stated that an alternative water engineer, not associated with the project, should re-assess the project. He referenced the Floods and Reservoir Safety book by the Institute of Civil Engineers which referred to waves, overtopping and dam freeboards and asked if any site investigation has been carried out to identify the composition of the dam, and if not, how was it possible to set the parameters for an engineered or risk-based solution. He stated to proceed without this information could lead to the destruction of the public amenity. He asked if the Council would share the data for the tested alternative solutions.

Lynn Sullivan stated that since the Economy and Growth Committee had considered the report in June 2023, the engineer's report had been

identified as being inaccurate, which the Friends of Poynton Pool had evidence to support. She asked if it was not incumbent for the Council to ensure that the accuracy of the information was re-assessed and the original decision scrutinised to ensure the public funds were correctly used.

Mike Sullivan asked why the Council was proceeding with the proposals given in his view there were errors in the original engineer's report relating to the overstatement of the pool volume, the pool catchment area and lack of understanding of the pool dam structure and that the scheme was not mandatory.

Stewart Tennant stated that he had visited the site and reviewed the section 10 inspection report, flood study and options report. He stated that the Pool was a statutory reservoir and whilst it was mandatory that it was managed and operated in accordance with the Reservoir Act, it was not mandatory in his view that option 3C should be implemented. He stated that the work would result in the loss of social value, loss of habitat, loss of acoustic screening and loss of carbon capture. He stated that the removal of mature trees on the existing embankments could carry the risk of root dieback and future seepage which could bring the burden of further obligations and remediation for the Council. He asked if the Council would consider a new S10 inspection and if not, why not. He asked if the Council would consider working with the expertise and local knowledge in the community to explore further options which were more sympathetic, cost effective and provide a good outcome to the project.

#### **45 RESPONSE TO A PETITION - POYNTON POOL**

The Committee considered a report prepared in response to a petition in relation to Poynton Pool. The petition, received by the Council, had been signed by over 5,000 petitioners.

The Committee noted that the proposal was subject to a live planning application to which the Council was a participant.

It was proposed and seconded that a report be brought to a future meeting to include responses to the issues raised by the public speakers and why the Council did not include a cost benefit analysis. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared lost.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee receive and note the Poynton Pool Petition.

The Chair announced that he wished to make a statement and suggested that those councillors who were on the planning committees leave the room so that his comments did not predetermine them from any future

planning application. Councillors L Braithwaite, J Clowes, B Drake, A Heler, G Marshall, N Mannion and F Wilson left the room.

Councillor M Goldsmith read out his statement in relation to Poynton Pool.

Councillors L Braithwaite, J Clowes, B Drake, A Heler, M Garnet, N Mannion and F Wilson returned to the meeting.

*The meeting was adjourned for a short break.*

**46 THIRD FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023/24 (ECONOMY AND GROWTH COMMITTEE)**

The Committee received the report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2023/24 and the financial performance of the services relevant to the committee remit.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 note the report of the Finance Sub Committee of 11 January 2024.
- 2 note the factors leading to a forecast Net Revenue financial underspend of (£2.8m) against a revised budget of £24.8m (11.3%) for the Economy and Growth Committee.
- 3 note the forecast and any further mitigations to be identified.
- 4 note the in-year forecast Capital Spending of £51.0m against an approved MTFS budget of £71.6m, due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years, in respect of Economy and Growth projects.
- 5 note the contents of Annex 1 and Appendix 4 and note that any financial mitigation decisions requiring approval will be made in line with relevant delegations.

**47 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.

It was raised that a Petition from the Save Dane Moss group had been received by the Council but had not been brought to the Committee as there were live planning applications. It was noted that the Poynton pool Petition, discussed earlier in the meeting, was also subject to a live planning application. It was proposed that a report to receive and to note the Save Dane Moss petition be brought to the next meeting. In response it was stated that any report would be to note the petition and be of a factual nature to avoid any predetermination as many of the Committee's members were also members of planning committees.

It was requested that the Work Programme cover more than one municipal year, with the different stages of large projects identified in the Programme when they would be coming forward so that the Committee could be aware of any slippages in timescales which would affect the budget for the project.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be noted.

**48 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2024/25 - 2027/28 PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report which sought feedback on the responsibilities of the Committee as consultees, on the development of the Cheshire East Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

There remained a shortfall of £12.7m across all committees to be resolved and further budget change proposals were sought to help present a balanced budget. The Economy and Growth budget for 2023/24 was £25.0m. Expenditure was forecast to increase by £4.9m next year. The budget would increase by £2.0m and as a result Economy and Growth would need to find savings of £2.9m to mitigate the increasing expenditure.

It was reported that the High-Level Business Cases would be presented at the Corporate Policy Committee on the 13 of February.

Members asked questions and provided comments in relation to the proposals. These included:

- asked for an update on the budget allocated for the South Macclesfield Development Area and asked what the financial implications would be if the Council did not proceed with the Gawsworth Road/London Road Link Road and the project was removed from the capital programme. In response it was stated that the cancellation of a capital project would lead to any costs incurred to date, (and have been capitalised against the project) falling against the revenue budget for that year. The spend to date on the project was around £3.2m.
- referred to the Third Financial Review report which referenced the Council being responsible for approximately 500 services and asked what these were and if they were statutory or non-statutory services and could some of these services be provided on the Council's behalf by other local authorities.
- referred to the operating cost for Tatton Park and asked if there should be investment to generate more income and that any target

should be over a longer period than a year and that the overall subsidy should be reduced by a percentage rather than a cash saving.

- referred to the Farms Policy Member Advisory Group and asked if the issue of disposal of the estate and increasing the revenue income could be considered urgently by them.

A list of the additional budget proposals put forward by the Conservative Group was circulated to the Committee. The proposals included:

#### Disposal of Westfields:

- i. suggestion that the site could be expanded to include the two adjacent car parks to fully maximise its development potential.
- ii. The end-use of the site must include provision that meets the maximum savings potential required by the Council (SEND and ASC Supported Living/Extra Care)
- iii. A clear schedule for development of the expanded site must be included in the Work Programme for Economy & Growth as well as affiliated Committees, with clear KPIs and Project Management oversight throughout the life of the project. Appendix A1 – Economy and Growth further list of proposals OFFICIAL Such project work has a lead-in time of at least two/three years and therefore must be scheduled in the work programme from the outset.

#### Handforth Garden Village:

- i. the Handforth Village site remains a regular item on this Committee's work programme.
- ii. the Strategic Development Team report back on the financial monitoring of the scheme in order that any future sales of the site (in part or in total) are timed to maximise fiscal returns to the Council.
- iii. the Council's LPA function is supported to prioritise timely appraisal and determination of planning applications related to this and other CEC development projects necessary to deliver fiscal sustainability.

#### Macclesfield Car Parks:

- i. potentially Duke Street or part of Churchill Way, be released to support Town Centre regeneration and Town Centre residential accommodation, with capacity for older persons or 'HAPPI' disability compliant ground-floor provision.
- ii. the proposal is included in the Work Programme for Economy & Growth and aligned with the work programmes of affiliated Committees.
- iii. a clear schedule for development of the site, with KPIs and Project Management oversight throughout the life of the project.
- iv. the end use for this site is still to be determined but the confirmed over-capacity of Macclesfield's car park provision is better used to meet the Council's development requirements over the medium/long term to help ensure its fiscal sustainability.

- v. such project work has a lead-in time of at least two/three years and therefore must be scheduled in the work programme from the outset.

It was proposed and seconded that the proposals in Appendix 1 and the Conservative Group proposals be recommended to the Corporate Policy Committee for inclusion in the Council's budget 2024/25.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 recommend to the Corporate Policy Committee, for their meeting on 13 February 2024, all proposals within the budget consultation, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, for inclusion in the Council's budget for 2024/25.
- 2 the additional proposals from the Conservative Group be recommended to the Corporate Policy Committee for inclusion in the Council's budget proposals.

#### 49 **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 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 7a of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

#### 50 **HANDFORTH GARDEN VILLAGE BUSINESS CASE**

The Committee considered the report on the Handforth Garden Village Business Case.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 endorse the overarching strategy set out in the report.
- 2 delegate authority to the Executive Director Place to carry out the necessary work to progress the scheme in advance of further decisions.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.23 pm

Councillor M Goldsmith (Chair)

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OPEN

## **Economy and Growth Committee**

**12 March 2024**

### **Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy Review**

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**Report of: Peter Skates – Acting Executive Director – Place,  
Director of Growth and Enterprise**

**Report Reference No: EG/23/23-24**

**Ward(s) Affected: All Wards**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 It is a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 1996 – Part VI for Councils, irrespective of whether they are stock holding or not to have an allocations policy in place which outlines how social housing located within their authority will be allocated.
- 2 The Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy was approved in 2018 and subsequent approvals have been given to make minor amendments to bring the policy in line with legislation. Good practice denotes that policies should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are still addressing housing need.
- 3 In July 2023, proposed changes to the existing Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy were presented to the Economy and Growth Committee who resolved to:
  - note the proposed amendments to the Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy.
  - authorise officers to publicly consult on the revised draft policy for a period of 12 weeks.
  - note the final version of the revised policy following consultation will be brought back to the Economy and Growth Committee for approval to adopt.

- 4 This report outlines the outcome of the public consultation and presents the amended Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy for approval.
- 5 The review contributes towards the Council's Corporate plans aim to be Fair - to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Growth and Economy Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of the Public Consultation Appendix One
2. To approve the revised Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy – Appendix Two.
3. Delegate 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.

## Background

- 6 The way in which social housing is allocated is key to creating strong, prosperous, sustainable communities. Cheshire East Council is committed to being an open and enabling organisation ensuring that we listen, learn, and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation.
- 7 Social housing in the borough is a very limited resource and demand significantly outstrips supply with approximately 1,400 social rented properties becoming available each financial year to meet the housing needs of over 10,000 applicants registered, over 2,000 of which are in the highest priority bandings. It is therefore imperative that the Policy can adequately balance the availability of the resource with the needs that people have for social housing. The Policy will drive customer expectations and reflect the Council's and Registered Housing Providers' priorities.
- 8 To avoid placing households in bed and breakfast accommodation or emergency accommodation, it is essential that the Council has a range of accommodation options available to be able to discharge its duties under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Quick access to social housing to prevent and alleviate homelessness will enable the authority to minimise the number of individuals and families placed in expensive temporary accommodation.

- 9 A full review of the Common Allocations Policy was undertaken in 2023, with permission being sought from the Economy and Growth Committee to consult on proposed changes.
- 10 A 12-week period of consultation on the proposed changes was undertaken from 1st September to 30th November 2023 which involved engagement with a number of stakeholders as outlined with the consultation section of this report. The changes to the Policy which were consulted on are outlined below along with the rationale for the changes and also the result of the consultation. Full consultation details are contained within appendix one.
- 11 Outcome of the consultation:

- (a) The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16 - Presently the policy gives priority for houses to households with children under 16, this is aligned with Public Health Guidance indicating that young children benefit from access to a garden and outside space. Families with children are also eligible for flats but this priority means that children will not miss out on a 2-bedroom house to an older household type. However, larger families with older children are staying at home for longer and we are struggling at times to accommodate them as there are often very few 3-bedroom flats and maisonettes available. By increasing the age for priority to houses this may lessen the delay for these households.

Consultation response: 74.66% agree 14.86% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt this change and amend the Policy to permit households with older children to be given a priority for houses.

- (b) New Build criteria – Currently the policy gives priority on first let to workers with a local connection, which then cascades to non-workers with a local connection and finally workers no local connection and non-workers, no local connection. This is coming under increasing scrutiny and challenge from those who are not in work for a number of reasons including caring responsibilities and disability. The recommendation is to revise this criterion to ensure that new build developments retain a balance in the community by continuing to give options to working households but not to exclude households with disabilities, caring responsibilities or that work voluntarily.

Consultation response: 69.83% agree 20.34% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt this change with some additional criteria added; the inclusion of armed forces personnel and those enrolled in full time education. The consultation also recommended a change to the name of this criteria to “Working Plus,” this has been incorporated in the revised policy.

- (c) Homeless band C+ - The current approach to awarding priority to households with a lack of secure tenure requires a refined definition.

Consultation response: 44.41% agree 17.29% disagree. There was a low response rate to this question, and in the additional feedback didn't bring much in the way of clarity. A clear approach to this assessment may improve understanding in the future.

Recommendation: To adopt the changes and amend the policy to reflect an improved definition of how applicants meet the band C+ assessment.

- (d) Urgent Housing need – A very small change to the wording of this area of the policy to reference the broader definition of Domestic Abuse rather than specifically just Domestic Violence.

Consultation response: 87.46% agree 3.38% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt this change and to also include the revised definition of domestic abuse from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 in the policy, for clarity.

- (e) Overcrowding – The policy assessments for bedroom eligibility is based on eligibility to Child Benefit, there is a need to be clear in the policy that this is the assessment criteria. This will align assessments with that of the Department of Work and Pensions and the Housing Benefit Team.

Consultation response: 70.27% agree 7.1% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt this change, including some clarity on the approach to survivors of domestic abuse and applicants above the earnings threshold.

- (f) Welfare – Qualification for priority under this criterion is based on applicants who are experiencing anti-social behaviour, financial hardship, or poor property condition. Partners would like to add the capacity to look at domestic abuse and access to care and support from family members to these assessments.

Consultation response: 77.71% agree 8.44% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt the change, the consultation showed significant support for increasing the priority for applicants affected by these issues.

- (g) Local Connection – The policy presently has a broad category termed as “any other significant reason” for a connection to Cheshire East alongside the more prescribed residency/ work and family categories. This is open to interpretation and is an area often challenged in reviews, appeals and complaints. To define this category more carefully will give clarity, reduce complaints, and lessen demand from outside of the borough.

Consultation response: 87.12% agree 6.1% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt changes that explain that significant reasons will be defined by reasons for needing to be in Cheshire East rather than reasons for needing to leave their current borough.

- (h) Property size for allocations – Siblings of the same sex become eligible for their own bedroom at 16, this creates an automatic priority for a much larger home. By permitting the allocation of a room to siblings of the same sex up to any age would lessen the increasing demand for larger properties.

Consultation response: 67.91% agree 22.3% disagree.

Recommendation: To adopt this change with an upper age limit of 21, to follow statutory guidance adults over 21 should receive an allocation of their own room.

- (i) Transfers in social housing – Social housing in Cheshire East is a very limited resource and demand significantly outstrips supply. It is essential that best use is made of housing stock. By making it clear that a recent history of anti-social behaviour will limit a tenant’s right to be re-housed, it will reinforce the strength in communities.

Consultation response: 82.37% agreed 5.08% disagreed.

Recommendation: To adopt this change.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 12 Consultation took place between 1st September and 30th November 2023, a period of 12 weeks. A reminder was circulated at the beginning of November requesting those that hadn’t already responded to do so by the deadline.

- 13 In addition to the general public, a wide range of organisations were consulted on the draft proposals including:
- (a) Adult and Children’s Services
  - (b) Local Registered Housing Providers who were contacted personally with an invitation to respond.
  - (c) Health
  - (d) Communities
  - (e) Supported accommodation providers.
  - (f) Local homelessness charities and support groups
  - (g) Housing Benefits
  - (h) Department of work and pensions
  - (i) Voluntary and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations representing:
    - Veterans
    - People with lived experience of disability
    - Cheshire’s Gypsy and Traveller community
    - Black and Asian Minority Ethnic community
    - Domestic abuse survivors

- 14 The consultation took place through a number of mechanisms including:

- (a) Online questionnaire
- (b) Internal and external briefing sessions

and it was promoted through social media channels, press release, and direct communications with our existing customers. The online consultation had 300 responses. A detailed summary of the consultation is available and attached to this report – Appendix One.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 15 It is a statutory requirement that Councils have an Allocations Policy in place under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. The Policy needs to reflect changes in legislation and Government guidance as well as local requirements.

- 16 It is important that the Policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to ensure that the limited resource of social housing is allocated fairly, in line with legislation and with local and national priorities.

**Other Options Considered**

- 17 The only other option is to retain the existing policy; however, this could leave the Council liable to challenge.

1. Do nothing, retaining the existing policy.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	Customer dissatisfaction and complaints continue to rise in relation the areas of change identified.	Media attention due to the perceived discrimination against people who are not in work.

**Implications and Comments**

*Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 18 Under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 it is a statutory requirement that every Local Housing Authority in England has an allocation scheme for determining a reasonable preference criterion to be employed in allocating housing accommodation. Allocations must be made in accordance with the scheme.
- 19 The scheme must include a statement of the Authority’s policy on offering people who are to be allocated housing accommodation—
- (a) a choice of housing accommodation; or
  - (b) the opportunity to express preferences about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.
- 20 Before adopting an allocation scheme, or altering a scheme to reflect a major change of policy the Act requires the Local Housing Authority to:
- (a) Send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every Private Registered Provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which they have nomination arrangements, and
  - (b) Afford them a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.
- 21 The Localism Act 2011 gives Local Housing Authorities the freedom to manage their housing waiting list better by giving them the power to

determine which applicants do or do not qualify for social housing. Local Housing Authorities are able to operate a more focused list which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people.

- 22 Whilst the Act gives the Council more freedom it is still a requirement to maintain the protection provided by the statutory reasonable preference criteria to ensure that priority for social housing goes to those in the greatest housing need.
- 23 Whilst there is no specific requirement on a Council to publicly consult before adopting an allocations policy, apart from with Private Registered Providers of social housing and Registered Social Landlord, case law has established that a duty to consult can be implied where the decision being taken is so important or its impact will be of such significance that basic fairness dictates that consultation is appropriate.
- 24 Under the provisions of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 a Housing Authority has discretion to determine who qualifies to be allocated housing accommodation under its allocations policy, subject to some statutory requirements that certain classes of people automatically qualify, such as members of the armed forces. Similarly, subject to statutory requirements on preference, the housing authority has discretion on who should have preference under their allocations policy. Given this discretion, the housing authority in framing its policy must do so in a way that is both reasonable and does not discriminate against those with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. There is also a positive duty under S.149 of the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity between those who have, and those who do not have, a protected characteristic, meaning any policy on allocation should not disadvantage those with a protected characteristic.
- 25 The amendments to the policy do not on the face of it appear to be either unreasonable or discriminatory. The requirements to give those who qualify for a reasonable preference under the Housing Act 1996 remains, and the bulk of amendments are to clarify and better define terms used in the policy. Where there is a potential for conflict with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for those with a protected characteristic such as disability, gender reassignment or age, the policy is clear that reasonable adjustments to the published policy will be made where necessary to avoid either direct or indirect discrimination occurring and to advance equality of opportunity.

*Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 26 If there are any changes which will be required, which will require changes to the ICT system these will also be covered by Cheshire Homechoice budget
- 27 The proposals will not have any implications for the Council's approved budget/Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

*Policy*

- 28 The Common Allocations Policy contributes towards the vision of the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 to be an open, fair, and green Council and help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.

*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 29 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed the outcome of which was that 300 online responses were received. Overall, responses were in support of the changes, with some additional content needed focusing on physical disability, and mental health.

*Human Resources*

- 30 There are no HR implications.

*Risk Management*

- 31 By publicly consulting on the draft policy, the Council negates the risk of implementing a strategic direction that does not properly reflect the range of needs and views within the Borough, ensuring it is representative.

*Rural Communities*

- 32 There are no additional implications for rural communities. The rural/community connection criteria is proposed to stay the same as there has been very few issues in relation to this aspect of the policy. There are often protracted waiting times for rural properties as they are very limited, but local residents retain a high priority for these properties.

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

- 33 None of the changes will impact on Care Leavers directly. The allocation of houses being extended to children under 18 from 16 will increase and improve opportunities for families with older children and perhaps negate the exclusion of older sibling from the family home.

34 Children’s Services were consulted on the overall changes to the policy.

*Public Health*

35 Housing is a key social determinant for a person’s mental and physical health. The proposals within this report to review and consult on the Cheshire East Common Allocations Policy will help the Council continue to meet its responsibility to ensure that residents have access to affordable, appropriate housing, and to reduce the use of temporary accommodation where possible. This is likely to have a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents, particularly less affluent households.

*Climate Change*

36 The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents, and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. Whilst it is not the aim or remit of the Common Allocations Policy to address these issues specifically, the policy will assist households who are homeless or facing homelessness to access suitable accommodation options and maintain their health and wellbeing throughout.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	<p>Nic Abbott</p> <p>Housing Options and Homelessness Manager</p> <p><a href="mailto:Nic.abbott@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Nic.abbott@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Karen Carsberg</p> <p>Head of Housing</p> <p><a href="mailto:Karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p>
Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	Existing Common Allocations Policy

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

<b>Briefing Note:</b>	<b>Section:</b>	<b>Housing Strategy</b>
<b>Allocations Policy 2023 consultation results</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> December 2023</b>

**Background**

It is a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 1996 – Part VI for Councils, whether they are a stock holding Council or not, to have an Allocations Policy in place which outlines how social housing located within their authority will be allocated.

The current Cheshire East Council (CEC) Allocations Policy was implemented in 2018, so therefore some sections of the Policy needed amendment in light of feedback from officers, customers, and partners.

A 12-week period of consultation on the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy was undertaken from 1st September to 30th November 2023, using a number of mechanisms, including on-line questionnaire, internal and external briefing sessions, promotion through social media, press releases, and direct communication with existing customers and landlord organisations. The final draft Policy will be presented to the Council for adoption.

This briefing looks at the online questionnaire and responses received. There were 300 online responses.

The online questionnaire asked 10 questions about proposed changes to the Allocations Policy. The responses are shown below. *The data highlighted below focuses on 'agree' and 'disagree' responses.*

Included is also a considered response from the Royal British Legion with points about veteran provision, and also a summary of the qualitative comments, left by 95 online respondents.

<b>Proposed changes</b>	<b>Page</b>
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**1. The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16.**

Presently the policy gives priority for houses to households with children under 16, in line with Public Health Guidance indicating that young children benefit from access to a garden and outside space. Families with children are also eligible for flats but this priority means that children will not miss out on a 2-bedroom house to an older household type. However, larger families with older children are staying at home for longer and we are struggling at times to accommodate them as there are often very few 3-bedroom flats and maisonettes available. Increasing the age for priority for the allocation of houses may lessen the delay for these households.

**Proposed revision:**

**Increase the eligibility to 18 years old**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	33.78% 100	40.88% 121	8.78% 26	7.77% 23	7.09% 21	1.69% 5	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

**Agree: 74.66%**

**Disagree: 14.86%**

## 2. New Build criteria

Currently the Policy gives priority on first let to workers with a local connection, which then cascades to non-workers with a local connection and finally workers no local connection and non- workers, no local connection. This is coming under increasing scrutiny and challenge from those who are not in work for a number of reasons including caring responsibilities and disability. The recommendation is to revise this criteria to ensure that new build developments retain a balance in the community by continuing to give options to working households, but not to exclude households with disabilities, caring responsibilities or that work voluntarily.

### Proposed revision:

**Change the terminology of the policy to remove references to employment / work and replace with: “Positive Community Impact”. Definitions of positive Community impact would be:**

- **Workers**
- **Committed and frequent voluntary work**
- **People with a disability (in receipt of PIP or attendance allowance)**
- **People committed providing care for a relative/ friend (in receipt of carers allowance)**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	37.29% 110	32.54% 96	9.49% 28	7.80% 23	12.54% 37	0.34% 1	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

**Agree: 69.83%**

**Disagree: 20.34%**

### 3. Homeless band C+

The current approach to awarding priority to households with a lack of secure tenure requires a refined definition

#### Proposed revision:

The band C+ criteria needs to be adjusted and enhanced to reflect some legislative requirements to give reasonable preference to some homeless people.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	14.92% 44	29.49% 87	27.46% 81	6.10% 18	11.19% 33	10.85% 32	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

**Agree: 44.41%**

**Disagree: 17.29%**

*Note that the percentage agreeing is so low because over 25% (27.46) answered 'neither agree nor disagree', which could mean the question was confusing, or that respondents think that the policy should remain as it is and / or that the proposed policy change is desirable.*

**4. Urgent Housing need**

A very small change to the wording of this area of the Policy to reference the broader definition of Domestic Abuse rather than specifically just Domestic Violence.

**Proposed revision:**

**Wording changes to the words ‘domestic violence’ to ‘domestic abuse’ to be consistent with the Domestic Abuse Act**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	59.32% 175	28.14% 83	8.47% 25	1.69% 5	1.69% 5	0.68% 2	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

**Agree: 87.46%**

**Disagree: 3.38%**

**5. Overcrowding**

The policy assessments for bedroom eligibility are based on eligibility to Child Benefit. There is a need to be clear in the Policy that this is the assessment criteria. This will align assessments with that of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Housing Benefit Team.

**Proposed revision:**

**The Policy needs to be clearer about the assessment criteria for bedroom eligibility, bungalow eligibility for disabled applicants, and overcrowding. If the intent is to use Child Benefit eligibility, then the Policy should be clear on this evidence being required. The same goes for bungalow eligibility and defining CEC determined need. Under both sections, refer to the criteria that CEC use as a measure.**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	30.07% 89	40.20% 119	17.57% 52	3.72% 11	3.38% 10	5.07% 15	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

**Agree: 70.27%**

**Disagree: 7.1%**

**6. Welfare**

Qualification for priority under this criterion is based on applicants who are experiencing anti-social behaviour, financial hardship, or poor property condition. Partners would like to add the capacity to look at domestic abuse and access to care and support from family members to these assessments.

**Proposed revision:**

**There are some people who are not accounted for in the band C assessments under ‘welfare’, such as people in refuge due to domestic abuse who have not made a homeless application to CEC, and those moving closer to relatives to receive support.**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	36.49% 108	41.22% 122	10.14% 30	4.05% 12	4.39% 13	3.72% 11	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

**Agree: 77.71%**

**Disagree: 8.44%**

## 7. Local Connection

The Policy presently has a broad category termed as 'any other significant reason' for a connection to Cheshire East alongside the more prescribed residency / work and family categories. This is open to interpretation and is an area often challenged in reviews, appeals and complaints. To define this category more carefully will give clarity and reduce complaints and lessen demand from outside of CEC.

### Proposed revision:

**Make it clearer that the applicant needs to be specifically in CEC and not just because people need to leave where they are living.**

**There is a lot of challenge on this criterion because people do not feel safe where they live. People at risk of significant harm would be referred to us under witness / victim protection programmes and would be managed through homeless applications rather than as a direct Part 6 application.**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	43.73% 129	43.39% 128	6.10% 18	3.73% 11	2.37% 7	0.68% 2	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

**Agree: 87.12%**

**Disagree: 6.1%**

## 8. Property size for allocations

Siblings of the same sex become eligible for their own bedroom at age 16; this creates an automatic priority for a much larger home.

### Proposed revision:

**Consider two siblings of the same sex being permitted to share a room beyond 16. Currently children over 16 get their own room. Is it reasonable for 2 siblings of the same age to share up to any age?**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	42.57% 126	25.34% 75	9.12% 27	9.46% 28	12.84% 38	0.68% 2	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

**Agree: 67.91%**

**Disagree: 22.3%**

*Note that 22.3% is the highest percentage 'disagree' for any question, with 12.84 (38 respondents) being the highest 'strongly disagree' for any question.*

## 9. Transfers in social housing

Social housing in Cheshire East is a very limited resource and demand significantly outstrips supply. It is essential that best use is made of current housing stock.

### Proposed revision:

To include anti-social behaviour as a reason why tenants might be overlooked for a transfer within existing housing stock that is not covered in the current policy.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	48.81% 144	33.56% 99	9.49% 28	2.71% 8	2.37% 7	3.05% 9	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

**Agree: 82.37%**

**Disagree: 5.08%**

**10. Reviews and appeals**

Applicants have the right to request a review against decisions made in the assessment process.

**Proposed revision:**

**Add text to explain to applicants how they appeal a decision when their bid is overlooked by a Registered Provider.**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	33.11% 98	47.30% 140	14.19% 42	2.03% 6	1.01% 3	2.36% 7	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

**Agree: 80.41%**

**Disagree: 3.04%**

## **Royal British Legion response**

We recommend that Cheshire East Council urgently review the implications of the Covenant Duty in the drafting of its Allocations Policy and provide evidence that due regard has been paid to the Armed Forces Covenant. Cheshire East Council should regularly review staff training processes to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the housing policies specific to the Armed Forces community.

### **Identifying the Armed Forces Community**

Cheshire East Council should ensure that all residents approaching housing services are asked a question that will identify members of the Armed Forces community.

### **2. New Build Criteria**

We recommend that, in its New Build criteria, Cheshire East Council recognises recipients of CAA and AFIP supplementary payments in the same manner as 'Applicants with a disability and in receipt of PIP or attendance allowance.'

### **3. Homelessness Band C**

We recommend that Cheshire East Council be participant to carrying out and publishing the results of a mechanism, CHAIN or other, that records the number of ex-Service personnel sleeping rough in the local authority area.

### **6. Welfare**

We recommend that Cheshire East housing service should be aware of and linked into other tailored services available to veterans, including health and care support provided by the local Integrated Care System, Op Fortitude and Op Courage, and identified vulnerable veterans should be provided with points of contact and referred into those services where appropriate.

Cheshire East Council should engage with national organisations, such as RBL and Veteran's Gateway, and create pathways of housing support for the Armed Forces community.

### **7. Local Connection**

We encourage Cheshire East Council to use discretion in waiving the five year limit and allow veterans to access housing support with exemption from the local connection requirement regardless of the time elapsed since they left Service.

We further recommend that the local connection exemption apply to divorced or separated spouses or partners of Service personnel who are separating or have done so.

### **9. Transfers in social housing**

We recommend that Cheshire East Council should consider setting aside housing stock specifically for ex-Service personnel and their families and explore partnership opportunities with Stoll's Veteran Nomination Scheme.

## Summary of comments received

### The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16.

I am aware that housing is limited across Cheshire East and therefore I would worry that increasing the age to 16+ could increase the wait time for a property for families with younger children and I worry about the impact of living in inappropriate accommodation for extended periods for the most vulnerable/youngest children in our community. However, I do recognise the need for families with 16+ children and wonder whether the priority would include stipulations around the types of properties that could be bid on e.g., priority for houses given to families with younger.

### New Build

New Build priority must be given to people in work. The concept of volunteering to be considered as work is false as there are more jobs than people looking for jobs. Eligible people need to be in paid work.

Priority should be given to employed tenants to reduce the financial demands of applicants.

As well as seeking to provide social housing CE Council should ensure that new builds are providing greater numbers of affordable properties for people to aspire to. There should also be greater numbers of small bungalows built to provide suitable retirement properties. Not all mature residents wish to live in apartments with no outside facilities.

Concern around affordability. One of the reasons for some new builds having an 'employment only' criteria is due to the higher rents on new build affordable rented homes. Could there be an extra line in there to say that all applicants would be subject to passing an affordability check to ensure the tenancy is sustainable and affordable for the applicant?

There needs to be support for people who work full-time have kids and support themselves but who have bad credit due to being on benefits and pulled their life back. I don't want to be on the housing list, but I cannot get private accommodation due to me being single with 3 kids but working full-time

I think using the term 'Positive community impact' is possibly not clear, and those in employment might not actually bid. Perhaps a re-word to something like 'employment / positive community contribution'?

New build lets is a bit unclear. Do you mean only local connection has 1st priority or local connection with positive contribution?

We strongly agree under the assumption that domestic abuse victims would be given priority need overriding local connection. Anecdotally we have heard of long handover time on new builds which has a negative impact on victims/s, leading to

bed blocking in refuge in some cases. We would hope to see that flexibility could be applied when it's a victims of domestic abuse and that they are not locked into the offer. Furthermore, of consideration for victims is whether housing benefit would cover new build rent in full or would there be a shortfall.

We feel that applicants who are in further education/ full time education should be considered under 'positive community impact'.

The naming of 'positive community impact' feels wrong - most people do that. Other councils call it 'working plus', and this is easier to understand why you are overlooked.

### **Homeless band C+**

I would like to see a revision for people leaving custody, currently they are excluded from accessing social housing for 12 months, but quite often this is leaving people being placed in unsuitable accommodation, for example hostels, where it would increase the chance of re-offending. If a person being released has shown whilst in custody, they have made positive changes to their lives and behaviours and can be backed up with references from the prison and probation and any other professional involved then this period could be looked at being reduced to help support their release and rehabilitation.

If a refusal of an offer is due to a safety concern because of domestic abuse and/or VAWG, we would hope to see consideration of this, for the assessors to be supportive of decisions made around a person's safety and for the duty not be discharged. Due to the nature of DA, victims often have to move out of the area where they have local connection due to risk and then move back when they are in need of their support network. We would hope to see consideration of this and for staff to explain the homelessness assessment process clearly so victims are aware of the issues around having homelessness duties owed by another LA so they can make more informed decisions.

I would like to confirm part regarding awarding Band C for welfare needs. I completely agree with awarding Band C for Domestic Abuse, etc. but not with people wishing to move to be closer to support or provide support.

The number of applicants awarded Band C is enormous. They stand little chance of being offered accommodation due to the massive number in that banding.

I feel that a bigger push on mutual exchanges would be a better option for getting applicants moved and the register reduced.

There are too little properties and too high demand, so we need to look at other options.

I also think that we should close applications where there is no confirmed local connection as the register is overwhelmed with applications from people who have no LC whatsoever. It distorts the actual figure of applicants who have a housing need and a connection to Cheshire East.

Ex-Armed Forces veterans are veterans for life, not just 5 years after they leave the service.

In situations where Veterans have left prison early on good behaviour, they shouldn't be downgraded in banding.

### **Urgent Housing Need**

We would hope to see the statutory definition of domestic abuse outlined in the new DA act included in the policy and consideration of how this policy can maximise access to social housing for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. Refer to the Statutory Guidance published on this matter in November 2018 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

### **Overcrowding**

Child benefit can be used as form of post separation abuse by perpetrator to continue economic abuse against victims. Need to ensure policy does not enable this or punish the victims twice. For a victim where the children's main home is with the perpetrator because a family court decision went against them this could be an additional hurdle to keeping their second bedroom. Perhaps in cases of DA additional evidence could be considered i.e., support from local DA services, school records, legal orders for ex 'live with' orders, non mols or occupation orders.

### **Welfare**

It is important that any proposed changes to policy reflect any equality impact assessment findings. We are concerned that there does not appear to be any consideration or specific prioritisation given to local people with lived experience of disability as part of suggested revisions. We hear from disabled people that they are more likely to remain in unsuitable accommodation that does not meet their needs as they tend not to be prioritised over a family with small children, but there may be disabled people who are also disabled parents. Equally, for sole occupiers or couples that are disabled people, they will have specific access needs that need to be considered as part of each of the policy revisions so it evidences how disabled people are prioritised in Cheshire East.

We would like to see this revision broaden to all people experiencing domestic abuse in order to improve access to social housing for victims of DA. Not all victims will be able to access refuge and our current understanding is that those moving on from refuge are awarded band B as part of the move on process. We would also need clarification on the definition of refuge and whether this covers both commissioned and non-commissioned? Again, our understanding would be that those in non-commissioned will be allocated C+. Seemingly there is a gap for victims not in

refuge and not currently within 6 months of a MARAC hearing, who need a move. Additionally, widening the eligibility criteria for claims under 'moving closer to support from relative' so this is not restricted to eligibility for social care support would be a lifeline for victims who need to access vital support from family crucial for their long-term recovery.

We hope to see a revision of the 4-week out rule for victims of DA and VAWG. This rule prevents residents from applying through Home Choice for 4 weeks after a refusal of an offer of supported housing or following an eviction. There have been recent examples of where this has been a significant risk issue. Residents needing supported accommodation are some of CE's most vulnerable and when a refusal of an offer is based on a safety concern over mixed services for ex, we would like to see consideration of this to avoid vicims being further victimised or re-traumatised. Experience of domestic violence and abuse is in fact near-universal among women who become homeless and nearly 1 in 4 women have been sexually assaulted whilst sleeping rough. When a victim is evicted from a service it is crucial to find alternative accommodation again to prevent the victim being further victimised

Re: applicants who have an OT report for an adaptation and have been banded E. My family is in the bordering area to Cheshire East and I am in Cheshire West. Your homes are closer, but due to boundaries I am not given a health banding. Would it not be appropriate to do a 'miles from relative' check for carers and disabled people as many properties on WCH are very far away.

Recently, banding would only be increased if it was a MARAC action. I feel it would be positive if it could also include a reference from a relevant organisation (My CWA, DAFSU, Social Care and so on). Not every case where a client needs to flee is heard at MARAC and this would allow for clients' needs to be met.

When allocations are made any persons over 65 need to be housed as close to family as possible. Older people are often overlooked due to their age and usefulness to the community. 55 is outdated as as the retirement age has gone up. I think 55 should be scrapped and 65 bought in. I know a woman of 55 who is in community housing where they could be renting privately,

You refer to the mobility element of PIP to evidence a need for adaptation. This is a high threshold, and neglects to take account of other disabilities which may necessitate a property with adaptations, eg neurological and mental health conditions. It also fails to take account of Attendance Allowance which is the benefit payable to older people.

### **Local Connection**

Give priority to people who live in overcrowded homes out of the area, but work full time in Cheshire East and are wasting their wages on public transport.

If the increased preferences towards working parents are not maintained the motivation to work is lessened due to many parents solely on benefits being considerably better off financially and able to access the best housing.

Local connection – Have a permanent contract of employment where the place of work is within Cheshire East.

Might need to clarify if this is also awarded with just an offer of employment or do they actually need to have started employment.

I believe the 'local connection' should include where a child attends school. For example, I have previously bid for a new build in Macclesfield. I am classed as not having a local connection but my eldest goes to All Hallows which is in Macclesfield and I think this should play a big part in the decision.

I have strong views on the 5-year local connection criteria, and I think this is too long. I think 3 years is more reasonable. 5 years in some cases is a big part of someone's remaining life span, and creates a longer than is deemed appropriate wait for family cohesion to take place.

Consideration should be given to the flexibility of a "permanent contract of employment", many persons can prove long term agency work in the CE area but given the nature of their work do not have a permanent contract of employment.

In line with the DA Act, we would like to see clarification for those using the policy that victims who have fled to CE do not have to prove local connection in order to be owed a duty, and that the 2 consecutive years criteria doesn't apply to this group. We would also like to see that settled accommodation includes living with family/friends without a tenancy agreement as our data has found that the majority of victims were living with family and friends when last settled and at application of homelessness.

### **Property size for allocations**

The allocation of a 2-bed property to those who are pregnant - We have received mixed messages on when a pregnant applicant is eligible to bid on a 2-bed property. We've been told that eligibility starts at 32 weeks pregnancy but then been told separately that it is only when that person gives birth. This policy needs clarity.

On occasion, some properties on Cheshire Homechoice are advertised for those over the age of 25. My assumption is that mobility/adaptations are not cited as the reasons for this policy, rather that it is an issue related to ASB. As someone that works with young people, this allocations policy feels discriminatory as I have known young people to miss out on certain properties due to this policy even though they have no links or history of ASB.

"The recent allocations of bungalows by Guinness and the ability to be able to bid for such needs to be addressed. The age limit is 55 years of age. There have been recent allocations of such by people clearly not 55, with no disability whatsoever living in a three-bed fully adapted bungalow with a large garden in one case. That person works in Sussex as a full-time live-in carer, and is rarely occupying the bungalow.

Another bungalow case - the couple are fully able to basically fully decorate, do electrics, put in a new kitchen and put back in a bath rather than use the wetroom in that bungalow. The requirement for eligible for mobility pre-requisite to have mobility PIP is rubbish (these examples don't have blue badges or problems walking, bending, moving, driving). Care component should also be considered for PIP, and not everyone wants to apply for benefits to help (self-respect).

Disabled people under 55 have asked to be moved or be able to apply for a bungalow but Guinness prevent this. Why, when clearly they don't stick to their own policies?

Why are people allocated bungalows when they don't get PIP and work full-time in an active job?

We believe that persons over 16 should have their own space. They could be in employment and feel that the possibility of having to share with a much younger sibling could negatively impact them.

There is one area that is overlooked by these changes is mental health/illness. When a family has more than one child with mental illness and they come under the category of sharing rooms, this should be looked at/considered as a separate issue, possibly under a specific / special review and take into account a doctor's recommendation.

Throughout this survey you have failed to mention any provision for families with children with additional needs... as an example. Nowhere does it state that overcrowding includes a child with additional needs... it should. So, if somebody has 2 boys under 10 but one cannot share then they should be eligible but you've not included this which is discrimination.

Your policy that absolutely prohibits households without children under 16 being allocated a house, even though they would fully occupy is a serious misinterpretation of 'prioritising' and there is case law on this. This priority is intended to give such families a step up and should not be used to provide an absolute ban on families who fall outside of these criteria, especially when you do not have flats big enough to accommodate them. This needs to be looked into and used correctly. Families are being made homeless unnecessarily, due to the interpretation of your housing officers.

I think the change of how many 16-year-old same sex children can share will greatly reduce the need for families to move to a bigger property.

This should be clarified - is it to allow applicants to bid on smaller properties or to reduce their ability to qualify for larger properties? Consideration should be given for the overcrowding of properties and any considered timescale to remedy the overcrowding in the near future.

We would like to see consideration made for children who are transitioning to not have to share a bedroom with a sibling beyond the age of 16.

On the provision of the number of bedrooms: One family, two children aged 8 and 9 deemed suitable to share one bedroom. One year later they are not in that category and entitled to a bedroom each. Do you house them? I don't see that happening.

Priority should be given to people who live in an area, people who want to move to a "nicer" area are being offered houses because they fall into your categories, but then people who come from a town are being overlooked, therefore less desirable areas have lots of empty homes. There are a lot of contradictions in your housing procedures. Why is it a person with same sex siblings over the age of 16 cannot get a 3-bedroom house? Why is it that siblings over the age of 16 cannot get a 2-bedroom property as they are for up to 3 people? What do these families do? In your policy it says nobody can be discriminated against over age, gender but this is being done all the time. Why does there have to be an age limit, children are living at home for longer and not all young adults are mature enough to live on their own, so why can't families with children living at home over the age of 20 get re-housed? Priority should be given to people who come from an area regardless of how old their children are and anyone wanting to re-locate should have a good reason for doing so, i.e., domestic abuse, have connections with an area.

Same sex children between the age of 16-18 should be able to share a room, unless there is a need, pregnancy, disability etc. families with older children would end up having a larger property allocated to them and more likely to not need it within a few years as the children become adults and leave home. Whereas a family with younger children would occupy the property longer

So my concern is the allocating bedrooms. Because of your child benefit rule that stands in place already, I live in a 3-bed house. With me and my partner in one room, my 6- and 9-year-old boy in one, my 13-year-old son in the other...but then child protection gave me and my partner his eldest child from his ex-wife. She now sleeps in the hallway. She's 16. I share my boys 50/50 with my ex-husband and he has the child benefit for the eldest boy who's 13. I can't get a house to accommodate us all because I don't have my eldest child's child benefit. I work, they go to 3 different schools and barely have their own quiet space to study.

The age for siblings of the same gender does need to be higher.

Is there any scope for bedroom allocation for children who change gender / identify as a different gender?

### **Transfers in social housing**

With regards to transfers, unless you have a housing need (e.g. overcrowded, under-occupation, medical, severe ASB, DA, or any other serious welfare need) then people should explore mutual exchanges more, and this is something we do in Halton, to manage our housing stock more effectively. We do also identify parlour properties at notice stage, so they are advertised with an additional bedroom, as we have a limited supply of 4 and 5-bed properties.

The criteria for being overlooked is highly generic and should be considered on a case-by-case basis - for example - an individual with poor mental health / physical health who has not been in receipt of services may have been unable to tend to their property or garden or has been unable to contact the provider for support independently to get issues sorted, etc.

Individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages are also more likely to be exploited / targeted and having an option for transfer within the housing stock may provide a swift response to these concerns - without having to make applications for multiple other providers, wait to bid on Homechoice etc - effectively reducing the amount of time the person remains within the address at which they are vulnerable and acts promptly to minimise further risk.

Transfers in social housing are a vital lifeline for survivors who need to escape abuse whilst retaining their secure social housing tenancy. Rent arrears, poor property condition, a poorly maintained garden and a recent history of anti-social behaviour are also all key indicators of domestic abuse. Survivors are four times more likely than the general tenant population to receive ASB complaints and one study has found that 60% of victims / survivors had arrears of over £1,000. We would like to see added to this revision a note for users of this policy to look at applications with a domestic abuse lens, liaising with colleagues in CEDAH and across the DA partnership to ensure victims aren't being wrongly penalised and these crucial pathways to safe and stable housing are enabled.

Strongly agree with the revision proposed. I used to live near social housing residents in Wistaston who were regularly committing anti-social behaviour and making the lives of the street a misery. I strongly agree that a recent conviction or sanction for anti-social behaviour should warrant that household being overlooked. I would extend this to any charges or criminal sanction on any residents of the property under 18.

## **Reviews and appeals**

Could it be made clear that a registered provider would not hold a property empty whilst an appeal was taking place? Timescales on this are quite long and we would be losing rent.

When it comes to a review or appeal - what level of independence is afforded?

40 days is a long time for a victim who has been incorrectly banded and needs to move. We would like the appeals decision time to be shortened where there is an urgency such as DA to 20 working days to match the applicants timeline.

The 40 days for council to reply to tenant, does that mean they will be left homeless whilst the review is taking place and who and how decides an appeal?

We believe that by stating appeals must be in writing may be excluding people who struggle to write, or are unable to write. We think another option should be given (i.e., to log an appeal over the telephone).

## Consultation respondents' demographic and equalities data

Which of the following best describes who you are you responding as?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A Local Resident		59.60%	177
2	A person on the CEC Housing Waiting List		15.15%	45
3	Cheshire East Employee		12.79%	38
4	Registered housing provider		3.03%	9
5	A local business		0.34%	1
6	A member of a voluntary or community organisation		2.69%	8
7	An elected town or parish councillor in Cheshire East		3.03%	9
8	An elected Member of Cheshire East		0.67%	2
9	Other (please specify):		2.69%	8
			answered	297
			skipped	3

Gender identity				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		30.74%	87
2	Female		63.96%	181
3	Prefer not to say		4.95%	14
4	Other gender identity, please specify:		0.35%	1
			answered	283
			skipped	17

Age				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	16-24		1.41%	4
2	25-34		8.80%	25
3	35-44		19.01%	54
4	45-54		20.07%	57
5	55-64		21.48%	61
6	65-74		17.25%	49
7	75-84		7.39%	21
8	85 and over		0.35%	1
9	Prefer not to say		4.23%	12
			answered	284
			skipped	16

Ethnic origin				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish		88.97%	250
2	Any other White background		2.14%	6
3	Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian		2.49%	7
4	Asian / Asian British		0.00%	0
5	Black African / Caribbean / Black British		0.71%	2
6	Prefer not to say		4.27%	12
7	Any other ethnic group, please specify:		1.42%	4
			answered	281
			skipped	19

Religious belief / faith				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Buddhist		1.08%	3
2	Christian		51.97%	145
3	Hindu		0.00%	0
4	Jewish		0.00%	0
5	Muslim		0.00%	0
6	Sikh		0.00%	0
7	None		37.28%	104
8	Prefer not to say		7.89%	22
9	Other religious belief / faith, please specify:		1.79%	5
			answered	279
			skipped	21

A woman, pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		2.74%	6
2	No		89.04%	195
3	Prefer not to say		8.22%	18
			answered	219
			skipped	81

Sexual orientation				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Heterosexual (straight)		83.94%	230
2	Bisexual		1.09%	3
3	Gay/Lesbian		2.55%	7
4	Prefer not to say		11.31%	31
5	Other (please specify):		1.09%	3
			answered	274
			skipped	26

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CHESHIRE HOMECHOICE  
Common Allocation Policy

VERSION 5 - 2024



Cheshire East Choice Based Lettings Partnership

*"Providing housing solutions in Cheshire East through choice"*



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## SECTION ONE THE COMMON ALLOCATION POLICY

### Background

In 2010 Cheshire East Council launched their choice-based lettings partnership with the aim of developing a common allocation policy, a common housing register and a choice-based lettings scheme. The following organisations are members of the Partnership:

- Cheshire East Council
- Plus Dane Group
- Peaks & Plains Housing Trust
- The Guinness Partnership

The Partnership "Cheshire Homechoice" use a system of advertising properties and expressions of interest (bids) alongside this Common Allocations Policy to determine how properties are allocated.

In addition to the partners the following organisations advertise 100% of their available homes in Cheshire East with Cheshire Homechoice:

• Great places	• Jigsaw
• Muir	• Honeycomb Group
• Riverside	• Staffordshire Housing Association
• Halton	• Regenda
• Your Housing	• Weaver Vale
• Onward	• Sage Housing
• Southway Homes	• Arcon
• One Vision Housing	• Trafford Housing Trust
• Southway Homes	

Further to these, a small number of providers advertise a proportion of their available homes with Cheshire Homechoice:

• Sanctuary	• Johnnie Johnson
• Places for People	• Anchor
• Torus Homes	• Megenta Living
• Livv Housing Group	• Legal and General Affordable Homes
• Clarion Housing Group	•

This policy is subject to periodic review. Reviews to date include:

- 2012 – Version 2
- 2015 – Version 3
- 2018 – Version 4
- 2024 – Version 5

This document is version 5

## **Our vision**

*"Providing housing solutions in Cheshire East through choice".*

## **Key aims and objectives**

The overall aim of the policy is to ensure that all social/ affordable housing is allocated fairly and objectively to those in the greatest housing need, having regard to any legislative requirements and Codes of Guidance issued by the Department of Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

This policy has been developed with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives:

- To operate a choice-based lettings system which is simple; easy to understand; transparent; open and fair
- To operate an allocations system that offers realistic, informed choice for all
- To improve mobility within Cheshire East
- To encourage balanced and sustainable communities
- To ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently irrespective of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and age
- To give adequate priority to applicants who fall within the "Reasonable Preference" categories
- To give adequate priority to prevent homelessness whilst maintaining a balance between the needs of the homeless and other applicants in housing need
- To empower applicants by giving them more opportunity to express choice and preferences about where they want to live whilst having regard to the availability of housing resources and the high demand for housing
- To assist those applicants who are vulnerable to access the service.

## **Equality and fairness**

Cheshire Homechoice will ensure its policies, procedures and practices are non-discriminatory and will promote equal opportunities by preventing and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender (Inc. reassignment), sexual orientation, pregnancy/ maternity, religion/ belief, and age.

This policy will be accessible, responsive, and sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals. Where necessary reasonable adjustments will be made to this policy, to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity to individuals and minority groups. To achieve this, all applicants will be asked to provide relevant information when they apply to join the register and through the process of allocation.

Cheshire Homechoice will ensure all potential applicants have equality of information about the service and equal opportunity to apply, bid for and receive offers of accommodation. We will:

- Advertise the service widely in a variety of accessible media.
- Provide practical assistance to those who may have difficulty in understanding the requirements of the system.
- Provide practical assistance, where the applicant may have difficulty completing an application.
- Provide tailored assistance to those who may have difficulty in bidding for properties.
- Monitor the profile of those who are applying and placing bids to ensure that minority and hard to reach groups are actively engaged in the service.

## **Domestic Abuse**

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents between those aged 16 years or over who are personally connected to each other. This includes people who are, or have previously been married, in civil partnerships or in relationships; or have a child together; or are relatives. Abuse can be a single incident, but is more often a pattern of behaviours, and it takes many forms including:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children under the age of 18 years who see, or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a victim of domestic abuse if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

Whilst this policy aims to reflect the overarching approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse, every case is different, and flexibility can be operated within this policy to protect survivors and their families.

## **SECTION TWO THE COMMON HOUSING REGISTER**

### **Introduction**

The Common Housing Register is a single list of all applicants for housing across Cheshire East. It includes new applicants and existing tenants wishing to transfer. Applicants who apply to join the Register need only apply once to be considered for vacancies across the whole of the Cheshire East borough.

### **Who can apply?**

The register is open to all apart from those who are ineligible due to immigration status or classed as non-qualifying due to unacceptable behaviour as defined in the following sections.

### **Eligibility**

#### **Age**

Anyone age 16 or over can apply to have their housing need registered, however tenancies are usually only offered to people of 18 years of age and over.

#### **Persons from Abroad**

A person (defined by s13 (2) of the Asylum and Immigration act 1996) may not be allocated accommodation under Part 6 if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under section 160ZA of the 1996 Act. There are two categories for the purposes of s.160ZA:

(i) *a person subject to immigration control* - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)),and,

(ii) *a person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control* - regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).

All allocations made by Cheshire Homechoice will be made in accordance with the most current legislation, considering any qualifying rights to reside or immigration control limitations.

#### **Unacceptable behaviour**

Under s.160ZA of the Housing Act 1996, any applicant (or a member of their household) who is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him/her unsuitable to be a tenant, will be classed as non-qualifying for an allocation. In most circumstances this means anti-social behaviour or significant/persistent rent arrears.

#### **Joint applications**

In Line with s.160ZA of the Housing Act 1996, a joint application will not be accepted from two or more people if any one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible. However, where two or more people apply and one of them is eligible an application will be accepted from the person who is eligible, as a sole applicant.

### **Multiple applications**

Multiple applications will not be allowed. If multiple applications do exist, the application which is a most accurate reflection of the applicant's circumstances will be kept open. Any other applications will be cancelled.

### **Transfers/ Existing tenants of social landlords**

Any tenants of social landlords (registered providers) in the first 12 months of their tenancy will be excluded from registering for a move unless they can evidence an urgent need to move or significant risk of harm.

Tenants of social landlords will be permitted to register after the first 12 months of their tenancy however to be considered for an alternative tenancy from their existing landlord they will have to meet the transfer criteria outlined by their landlord.

Common reasons for tenants being overlooked are:

- Rent arrears.
- Poor property condition
- A poorly maintained garden
- A recent history of anti-social behaviour

Moves to other landlords will be considered in alignment with general lettings criteria.

### **Mutual exchanges**

Mutual exchanges are advertised outside of Homechoice, through the registered providers own channels and will be dealt with outside the policy. A link to relevant websites will be provided on the Cheshire Homechoice website or details of the scheme can be sent to applicants on request.

### **Applications from Elected Members, Board Members and Employees**

Applications can be accepted from employees, elected members, board members and their close relatives. Applicants must disclose any such relationship at the time of application.

### **How to apply**

An application can be made by completing a Cheshire Homechoice application form online and providing the information requested. The registration of an application may be delayed or cancelled if the information requested is not provided.

The purpose of the Cheshire Homechoice application is to correctly identify the housing priority for each applicant, which is expressed as a Priority Band. Once an application has been registered applicants will be notified of their:

- Date of registration
- Priority band assessment
- Priority date
- Application reference number

### **Advice, information, and support**

Advice will be provided by Cheshire East Council; information will be available online or on request in other formats and support in accessing the service will be provided to a bespoke level, on request. Where a household contains the victim of Domestic Abuse the partnership recognises and will ensure access is provided to specialist domestic abuse support services.

### **Home visits**

Home visits may be carried out to assess some applications where appropriate and required.

### **Changes in circumstances**

Applicants who move to a new address or whose circumstances change after they have been accepted onto the Housing Register (e.g., someone joining or leaving their household) should immediately contact the Cheshire Homechoice Team at Cheshire East to notify them of the change. A new application may be required.

Cheshire Homechoice reserves the right to reconsider an applicant's priority band assessment on the grounds of change of circumstances at any time until an offer of accommodation has been accepted and a tenancy agreement signed.

If an applicant's circumstances have changed prior to the allocation of a property and records held by Cheshire Homechoice have not been updated the partners reserve the right to overlook an applicant's bid or to revoke an offer. It is an applicant's responsibility to keep Cheshire Homechoice updated with any circumstances relating to housing.

### **Housing register renewal**

Applicants must keep their application details up to date and place bids on adverts for properties that meet their requirements. Cheshire Homechoice reserves the right to close inactive applications. At a minimum of annually, Cheshire Homechoice will require applicants to renew and update their application. If applicants wish to remain on the register, they must contact Cheshire Homechoice within 28 days. Providing none of the housing circumstances have changed and the previous assessment remains valid the application will be re-opened promptly, and the previous priority of the application will remain unaffected. Where circumstances have changed an application will be re-assessed in accordance with this policy.

In Bands A & B there will be more regular monitoring and reviews; Cheshire Homechoice will encourage applicants in all Bands to keep their details current and will contact applicants regularly to ensure we hold current and relevant information.

### **Closed applications**

Applications will be closed in the following circumstances:

- A request has been received from the applicant (or their advocate)
- The applicant has accepted a tenancy as a sole or joint tenant.
- The applicant has bought a property.
- Notification has been received from an executor or personal representative that the applicant is deceased, and s/he was the sole applicant.
- It is discovered that the applicant has given false or misleading information in their application.
- Information is obtained that gives reason to believe that the applicant is no longer eligible.
- If a response to correspondence is not received within 10 working days (2 weeks).

Applicants can request an explanation of the reason/s for their application closure and can request a review of the decision (see Reviews and Appeals).

If the applicant makes a request to reopen their application within 20 working days (4 weeks) of it being closed it will be reopened (where eligible) and receive the original assessment of Band and priority date provided no relevant circumstances have changed.

### **Deliberately withholding information or providing false information**

Legal action could be taken against any applicant who provides false information when applying for housing (including a fine of up to £5,000). Under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 it is an offence to:

- Deliberately provide false information; or
- Deliberately withhold information that should have been given.

Where an applicant has been found guilty of making a fraudulent application, they will automatically have their application closed as above. Possession proceedings can be instigated if a tenancy was obtained by giving false information and the tenant may be classed as non-qualifying for the Housing Register

### **Decisions**

#### **Reviews**

Applicants have the right to request a review against decisions made in the assessment process. These include:

- A decision to reduce preference.

- A decision about the priority band assessment.
- A decision about eligibility to make an application.
- A decision to close an application.
- A decision to overlook a bid on a shortlist.
- A decision to withdraw an offer/ reject an applicant's application.

The applicant's request for a review of the decision should be made in writing, to the partner who made the decision, within 20 working days (4 weeks) of the original decision being made with supporting evidence why they require a review of the original decision. Where an applicant has a confirmed difficulty with writing and needs support with writing a review, they will be encouraged to see independent advocacy, where this is not possible there will be telephone support available to transcribe the detail of a review request.

A more senior officer, independent of the original decision making, will carry out reviews. The officer will not have been involved in the original decision. The officer will consider the evidence provided and decide whether to overturn or support the original decision. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision within 20 working days (4 weeks) of receipt of the request for a review. The reply will contain the decision made, the reasons for the decision and the facts considered when making the decision.

## **Appeals**

If the applicant is not satisfied with the decision made by a reviewing officer, they can appeal against the decision. Applicants will need to do this in writing within 20 working days (4 weeks) of the review letter being sent. For the purposes of assessment decisions, the Homechoice Panel (see below) will conduct the appeal and for the purposes of allocation decisions Homechoice Board (see below) will conduct the appeal. A decision on appeal will be completed within 40 working days (8 weeks) and a final decision will be delivered in writing.

Where an appeal relates to an allocation of social housing, it is unlikely a property would be held back from allocation whilst the review and appeal process takes place.

## **Cheshire Homechoice Panel**

Cheshire Homechoice is committed to equality of opportunities and therefore will monitor all processes robustly to ensure that there is open and fair access to social/ affordable housing and to ensure allocations of accommodation are made to those in the greatest housing need. This will be done through the Cheshire Homechoice Panel. Operational managers from all Cheshire Homechoice partners will attend the panel on a regular basis to make decisions on, and monitor the following:

- Reviews of decisions.
- Customer satisfaction/complaint levels.
- Accessibility for vulnerable groups.
- Reduced preference applicants.
- Ineligible or unqualified applicants.

- Allocations to ensure they have been carried out fairly and transparently and in line with this Policy.
- The number of direct/management lets and the reasons they were made.
- Refusal of offers.
- Community, new build, and local lettings to ensure that need is being met.

### **Cheshire Homechoice Board**

Future developments and alterations to this Common Allocation Policy, or the overall scheme, will be decided by the Cheshire Homechoice board, which consists of strategic managers from each of the participating organisations.

### **Making a complaint**

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint, they should contact Cheshire East to be informed to which partner the complaint should be directed and advise them of the partner's complaint procedure.

All applicants who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively. A reply to any complaint received will be delivered within the timescales set out in each partner organisation's complaints policy. Copies of these can be obtained from the individual partners (see Appendix 1)

If the applicant has gone through the complaints procedure and remains dissatisfied, they can write to the Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government Ombudsman or apply for a judicial review.

## **SECTION THREE ASSESSING HOUSING NEED**

### **Reasonable preference groups**

All qualifying applications will be assessed under this policy, to ensure that those in greatest housing need are given preference for an allocation of accommodation. Cheshire Homechoice gives reasonable preference to applicants as set out in section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017). These are:

- People who are homeless including those who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need.
- People who are owed a duty by a local authority under section 190(2), 193(2), (189b) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3).
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability.
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

In addition, section 166 A (3) gives local authorities the power to frame their allocation schemes to give additional preference to particular descriptions of applicants who fall within the reasonable preference categories and who have particularly urgent housing needs.

To ensure that local priorities are met, the scheme may provide for other factors, other than those set out in section (2) of the Housing Act 1996, in determining which categories of applicants are to be given preference for an allocation of accommodation within the scheme, providing they do not dominate the scheme over those listed in the statutory preference categories listed in section 166A (3).

### **Priority band assessment**

#### **Band A**

- Under a homeless relief or full housing duty and accommodated by Cheshire East Council.
- Unable to occupy their current accommodation.
- Armed forces personnel with a housing need and serious disability.

#### **Band B**

- Under a Cheshire East Council homeless prevention or relief duty and likely to qualify for an allocation of emergency accommodation.
- Downsizing.

- Living in unsanitary conditions.
- Statutory overcrowded.
- In supported accommodation and ready to move on.
- Urgent housing need.
- Care Leavers or armed forces personnel with additional housing need.

### **Band C+**

- Under a Cheshire East Council homeless prevention or relief duty and NOT likely to qualify for an allocation of emergency accommodation.
- Homeless or at risk of homeless but not under Cheshire East Council duty.

### **Band C**

- Overcrowded.
- Tenants of registered providers who under occupy a property in Cheshire East.
- Housing is impacting on a medical condition.
- Housing is impacting on welfare.

### **Band D**

- Do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria and/or are otherwise adequately housed.

### **Band E**

- Reduced preference.

## **Housing needs assessment**

Housing need is not cumulative. The housing needs assessment will take account of all household circumstances and the highest priority circumstance will determine the priority Band. The only exception to this is band E which will override all other assessments.

## **Homelessness, Prevention & Relief**

### **Owed a full homeless duty by Cheshire East Council**

The Local Authority has a legal duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to ensure that homeless Households owed a full housing duty by Cheshire East Council under s.193C (4) are provided with suitable accommodation. Homeless Households to whom the full duty is owed and have been placed in emergency accommodation by Cheshire East Council will qualify for band A priority.

Households awarded this priority under the scheme should receive an offer of an allocation within a short period of time, therefore the priority awarded on the grounds of homelessness will only be permitted for a limited period and subject to bidding control or direct offers.

**Under a homeless relief duty and accommodated by Cheshire East Council**

Customers who have been assessed as qualifying for the Homelessness Relief Duty s.189(b)(2), in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and have been placed in emergency accommodation by Cheshire East Council will qualify for band A priority. This priority will be time limited and subject to bidding controls or direct offers.

**Under a Cheshire East Council homeless prevention duty, relief duty or full homeless duty and likely to qualify for an allocation of emergency accommodation.**

Households who are owed a s195(2) prevention duty, a s189(b)(2) relief duty or a s.193C (4) full housing duty by Cheshire East Council in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 **AND** are likely to qualify for an offer of emergency accommodation, will be placed into Band B. This priority will be time limited and subject to bidding controls or direct offers.

**Under a Cheshire East Council homeless prevention or relief duty and NOT likely to qualify for an allocation of emergency accommodation**

Households who are owed a s195(2) prevention or s189(b)(2) relief duty by Cheshire East Council in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act **AND** are **NOT** likely to qualify for an offer of emergency accommodation, will be placed into Band C+. This priority will be time limited.

**Homeless or at risk of homeless but not under Cheshire East Council duty**

Band C+ will be awarded to applicants who have:

- Received a non-priority or intentional homeless decision, by Cheshire East Council.
- Had their prevention or relief duty, owed by Cheshire East Council, discharged due to the refusal of an offer.
- Had their full homeless duty, owed by Cheshire East Council, discharged due to the refusal of an offer.
- Have elected not to be assessed under the homelessness reduction act.
- In short-term supported accommodation provided by a non-commissioned provider and ready to move on.

**AND** remain homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Those with homelessness duties owed by another LA but have a connection to Cheshire East borough will be placed in band C for reasonable preference.

**Unable to occupy current accommodation.**

Households who cannot physically access their accommodation (long term) or who are in hospital or respite care and have been medically assessed as being unable to return permanently to their current home will be placed in Band A.

**Armed forces personnel**

Current and former armed forces personnel who are already adequately housed will be placed in Band D. Where a household of current or former armed forces personnel has any additional housing need, they will be placed in Band B. (For example: If an applicant is confirmed as having served in the armed forces and is overcrowded, they will be assessed as Band B). Where an applicant is in housing need AND has a serious disability resulting from service in the armed forces applicants will be placed in band A.

### **Downsizing**

Current tenants who occupy larger homes belonging to one of the partner Registered Providers **AND** who are experiencing issues with affordability maybe placed in band B. **Applicants will need to obtain the support of their landlord before being awarded this priority.** This assessment differs significantly from the under-occupation priority; sponsorship for this priority would come from and be monitored by the Registered Provider and will be time limited and could be subject to bidding controls or direct offers.

This assessment will not confirm eligibility to any other downsizing schemes held by the partners, nor does it mean that the Registered Provider will finance a move.

### **Living in unsanitary conditions and statutory overcrowding**

If Cheshire Homechoice can confirm that an applicant has 'no access' to toilet, washing or cooking facilities; or the applicant is statutorily overcrowded, the applicant will be placed in Band B.

For the definition of 'no access' to facilities, Cheshire Homechoice will consider shared access or access to facilities outside of the home to be access. Running water will be enough for the assessment of washing facilities and a microwave is considered sufficient for cooking.

### **Households in supported accommodation**

Applicants living in short-term supported accommodation services in Cheshire East will be placed in Band D.

However, when applicants are confirmed as ready to move on by their supporting service the priority will be increased to Band C+ for those in non-commissioned service and band B for commissioned services.

**Definition of short term supported accommodation** – Placements must be short term in nature. Sheltered or home-based support would not qualify. The support service must be commissioned by Cheshire East housing services and the available placements must be exclusive to applicants with a connection to Cheshire East.

Applicants living in longer-term supported accommodation services that no longer qualify for a funded placement or the support provided and have capacity to manage a tenancy independently will be considered under the prevention of homelessness criteria with a view to the suitability of their accommodation.

## **Urgent housing need**

Additional priority may be awarded where an applicant cannot access their washing or bathing facilities safely due to a physical disability and where adaptations cannot be done to the property to facilitate access. Subject to further assessment by the partners and or the Occupational Therapy Team (where appropriate) applicants will be placed in Band B.

Households with a requirement for equipment to manage a disability which cannot be accommodated in their current home will be placed in Band B.

Where there are pending convictions or intensive ongoing investigations that indicate a significant risk of harm to a member of a household and the police or an ASB co-ordinator (or equivalent) are in support of the fact that a move is the only resolution, applicants will be placed in Band B.

In alignment with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 cases meeting following criteria will be placed in Band B:

- cases referred to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where there is a risk outside the property, of domestic abuse.
- where a perpetrator of domestic abuse remains a risk to a person/ family that cannot be controlled long term by the police as a matter of public protection.
- a move is the only solution.
- More serious issues may be considered in line with Homelessness Legislation.

Other significant risks of harm including those relating to mental health will also be considered under these criteria.

## **Care leavers**

For the purposes of assessing priority, a young person will be considered under the care leaver's policy if they can prove they are, or have previously been, a "Cared for Child" by Cheshire East Council AND are under the age of 26.

Young people who are care leavers of Cheshire East Council under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and are already adequately housed will be placed in Band D. Where a "care leaver" (as defined above) has any additional housing need they will be placed in Band B. (For example: If an applicant is confirmed as a care leaver and is overcrowded, they will be assessed as Band B). The only exception to this is if the care leaver meets any of the assessment criteria in Band A or Band E

Supporting documentation will be required from the appropriate Local Authority department.

## **Overcrowding**

If a Household is overcrowded more than the bedroom standard or overcrowded as defined in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985, they will be placed in Band B.

The table below outlines the assessment criteria for band C overcrowding. The overcrowding priority does not increase with the number of rooms lacking.

## Under occupation

Tenants of Registered Providers within Cheshire East whom under occupy a property and have a need to move to a smaller property, will be assessed as Band C.

If an applicant applies for a property of the same size or larger than their current home their bid may be overlooked by a Registered Provider as this would be considered an abuse of this priority.

For the purposes of assessing band C overcrowding/ under occupation the following criteria will be applied:

Household	Bedroom Need
Single Applicant	Studio/One bedroom
Couple	One bedroom
Person aged 21 or over	One bedroom
Single child from birth	One bedroom
Two children, both under 10 years old	One bedroom
Two children of the same sex, aged 10-20	One bedroom
Two children of opposite sex, one or both over 10 years old	Two bedrooms

To evidence child occupants in a property child benefit eligibility will be used as a measure. Where an applicant is a survivor of domestic abuse additional evidence may be considered i.e., support from local domestic abuse services, school records, and legal orders. Where households are over the higher earning threshold, dependency will be considered using bank statements and financial assessments.

## Housing impact on a medical condition

Where an applicant's current accommodation is having an adverse effect on a diagnosed medical condition of any member of the household who intends to move, band C.

## Housing impact on a household's welfare

Circumstances that will be given consideration for band C under the welfare criteria:

- Anti-social behaviour.
- Experiencing domestic abuse.
- Financial hardship.
- Property condition.
- Living in refuge accommodation.
- Moving closer to support from relatives where there is an assessed eligibility for social care support and the move will lessen the dependency on social care.

## Households with children or pregnant women

Households with children or pregnant women will be placed in Band D unless additional housing need is identified.

### **Reduced preference**

A reduced preference assessment overrides all other priority assessments.

In certain circumstances, section 167(2A) of the Housing Act (1966) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 allows local authorities to take certain other factors into account when determining priorities between applicants. This can result in the applicant being awarded a lower priority than they would otherwise receive according to their housing needs alone.

Reduced preference may apply when the applicant, or member of the household, has demonstrated unacceptable behaviour which was not serious enough to justify a decision to treat the applicant as ineligible, but which can be considered in assessing the applicant's level of priority. Examples include: -

- Property related debts.
- Current or former rent arrears.
- Acts of anti-social behaviour that have caused or are likely to cause serious nuisance to neighbours.
- Property damage.
- Assaulting, abusing, or harassing officers or elected members.
- Households who have no local connection to Cheshire East.
- 2 unreasonable refusals of written/verbal offer or wasting the time of partners.
- Intentionally worsening housing circumstances with the intent of increasing priority.
- Those applicants who wish to remain on the list but have no intention of bidding presently.
- Withholding information that should have been provided.
- Providing false information.
- No local connection.

This list is not exhaustive. Applicants who are given reduced preference will be placed in Band E.

A decision to reduce preference will be reviewed, where circumstances have changed, upon written request from the applicant. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

### **Local connection**

Applicants who fulfil **any** of the following will be considered as having a local connection:

- Currently live, or have lived, in settled accommodation within Cheshire East and have done for at least 2 consecutive years.
- Have immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister, adult child, adoptive parents) who are currently living in Cheshire East and have done for at least five years or more.

- Have a permanent contract of employment where the place of work is within Cheshire East borough.
- Members of the armed forces living outside of the borough on application who are:
  - a) members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge.
  - b) bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner.
  - c) serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result.
- Have a specific and significant reason to reside in Cheshire East:
  - a) To support the discharge of homelessness duties owed by Cheshire East Council.
  - b) Accessing hospital or health care services that are only available in Cheshire East.

Applicants without a local connection will be placed in Band E. An applicant fleeing Cheshire East to secure temporary refuge from an incident of Domestic Abuse, with a view to make a return to the borough, will not lose their local connection due to time spent in refuge accommodation.

## SECTION FOUR ADVERTISING, BIDDING, SHORT LISTING & TENANT SELECTION

Cheshire Homechoice is a Choice Based Lettings scheme that enables applicants to bid for properties they are eligible for. The successful applicant will be decided in line with this policy.

### Advertising properties

Property adverts will be clearly presented to show the charges, property features and local neighbourhood information.

Applicants will be able to view online, the properties for which they are eligible. There will sometimes be restrictions as to which applicants are eligible for a property. Any such restrictions will be made clear in the advert, for example where:

- A property is only suitable for applicants who need adaptations such as a level entry shower.
- A property that is ring fenced to certain age groups.
- A property that permits wheelchair access.

Bids from applicants may be allowed if they cannot match the requirements in an advert, applicants make the decision to place a bid and there is an expectation that they will have read all the advert content including the detailed description. Registered Providers are only able to overlook a bid if restrictions are disclosed in an advert. For example: overlooking applicants that do not have a local or community connection, there must have been a statement in the advert to advise customers that a local or community connection is required.

Property adverts will clearly display the maximum number of household members that a property can accommodate. Registered Providers will aim to maximise the occupancy of a property and under or over occupancy will only be considered if there are no bids from an applicant who can fully occupy all the rooms in a home. In deciding to under occupy a home the Registered Provider must fully consider long term affordability before making an offer.

For the purposes of eligibility, suitable property size will be determined in alignment with Local Housing Allowance guidance and this policy.

Houses will be prioritised to households with children under 18 and bedrooms allocated as a minimum to the criteria below:

<b>Household</b>	<b>Bedroom Need</b>
Single Applicant	Studio/One bedroom
Couple	One bedroom
Person aged 21 or over	One bedroom
Single child from birth	One bedroom
Two children, both under 10 years old	One bedroom
Two children of the same sex, aged 10-20	One bedroom

Two children of opposite sex, one or both over 10 years old	Two bedrooms
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To evidence child occupants in a property child benefit eligibility will be used as a measure. Where an applicant is a survivor of domestic abuse additional evidence may be considered i.e., support from local domestic abuse services, school records, and legal orders. Where households are over the higher earning threshold, dependency will be considered using bank statements and financial assessments.

Pregnant women will only be considered for an additional room for baby after baby is born.

### **Extra care housing**

Properties with extra care facilities may be advertised as part of the scheme. The service providers will directly match vacant properties to qualifying applicants that meet the eligibility criteria following a detailed assessment of their housing, care, and support needs. Although some extra care facilities will also operate their own waiting list and application process.

### **Affordable housing developments**

Affordable housing may also be advertised through the scheme. When new housing developments are built within rural areas a Section 106 agreement may state that applicants who are allocated the properties must have a direct local connection to that specific rural area. When this is the case properties advertised on the Cheshire Homechoice website will make clear what the eligibility criteria are for the property.

### **Bidding**

Available properties will be advertised daily, and applicants can bid for up to 2 properties at any one time. All vacant homes will be advertised in the first instance for a minimum of 5 days to include a Saturday, Sunday & Monday.

Bids can be placed on properties via the telephone, email, the website, and auto bid. Visitors to Cheshire East Offices will be directed to an internal phone line. Advice and support will be provided to applicants who need it; to ensure they are able to access and use the scheme.

Where a provider has made an offer to an applicant and pending the signing of the tenancy an applicant will no longer be permitted to place bids and any previous bids for other homes should not be considered. Registered Providers are not permitted to offer a home to an applicant who has received an offer.

### **No bids or suitable applicants**

If a property is not let on the first advert, providers must re-advertise the property as a "home available now" and consider opening the restrictions (i.e., considering permitting a wider age range, or under occupation or reducing non-working limits). At this time other

media can be considered but applicants with a Homechoice application must be given priority or those sourced externally.

### **Bidding support for vulnerable applicants**

Cheshire Homechoice places demands on applicants. It gives people an active role in the lettings process and encourages them to place bids on empty properties.

Applicants will need to:

- Receive information on the housing options available.
- Have access to and ability to use the technology necessary to apply to Cheshire Homechoice and place bids for properties.
- Have the capacity to make decisions based on the information provided.

Broadly speaking vulnerability can mean anyone who cannot be actively involved in the choice-based lettings process, for example:

- Older people.
- People with learning difficulties.
- People with mental health issues.
- People fleeing domestic abuse.
- People with drug or alcohol issues.
- People with medical needs.
- People with sensory impairment.

Cheshire Homechoice will ensure vulnerable applicants are able to access the Cheshire Homechoice website. When a vulnerable applicant is identified every effort will be made to assist and support them through the process. In all cases the level and type of support will be decided on an individual basis. Several measures will be put in place to ensure that vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged for example through:

- Providing appropriate advice and assistance.
- Providing information in other formats.
- Partnership working with support agencies.
- Translating documents on request.
- Ensuring appropriate support is available for applicants using the system.
- Using auto-bidding and property alerts to improve accessibility.

Wherever possible Cheshire Homechoice would like applicants, whatever their background or presumed ability, to become active participants in the choice-based lettings process. However, it is recognised in limited circumstances it may be necessary to assist certain vulnerable people outside of the choice-based lettings process and to allocate properties to them.

### **Bidding control for homelessness & prevention**

Applicants who are awarded priority on the grounds of homelessness or the prevention of homelessness will be closely monitored and reviewed by Cheshire East Housing Options and Homechoice case workers.

## **Short listing & tenant selection**

Bids on property adverts will be placed in the order of priority e.g., Band A highest priority, then Band B, Band C+ Band C, Band D and finally Band E.

If two or more applicants within the same Band have bid for the same property for which they qualify, the date they entered their current Band will be used to determine the higher priority. If the Band date is the same, the original housing register application registration date will be used to determine priority.

If an applicant is ranked first for more than one property and provided the eligibility criteria are met, they will be contacted to decide which property they wish to consider and no further offers on additional properties will be made.

Once an applicant has accepted an offer of a property, they will no longer be permitted to place any bids. Equally, Registered Providers are not permitted to approach applicants who have accepted an offer with another provider, even if historic bids have been placed.

## **Shortlisting out of band order**

In certain circumstances shortlists may be allocated out of band order and applicants may see that a home they bid for is allocated to an applicant with a lower priority.

Reasons for this include:

- Properties with adaptations.
- Community connections – rural lettings.
- New property priority – new build lettings.
- Multiple unit allocations.
- Local lettings.
- Houses prioritised for children.

## **Properties with adaptations**

Adapted properties are homes, which have been designed for or significantly adapted to meet the needs of applicants with physical or sensory disabilities. In most cases, adapted homes will be advertised along with all other vacant homes to ensure that applicants assessed as needing this type of accommodation are given the widest possible choice. On occasion providers may use a bespoke search of applicants on the housing register to make direct offers.

Applicants with a need for adapted accommodation that has been determined by Cheshire East (CE determined need) will be given priority for adapted homes over others in the same priority Band who do not need adaptations.

In some cases, properties are advertised with an age restriction, e.g., bungalows; where it is likely that these homes are suitable for an applicant with a disability, providers will permit bids from applicants that have a (CE determined) need for adaptation. For the purposes of assessing a (CE Determined) need for adaptation applicants will be asked to supply evidence of their eligibility for the mobility element of the personal independence Payment (PIP) or Armed Forces Independence payment (AFIP).

Where a house might be better suited to meet the needs of a disabled household but there are no children under 18 in the household, there can be flexibility shown, evidence of PIP payments, AFIP payments, DLA payments and Occupational Therapy reports will be required.

In selecting an applicant for an adapted property from the short-list, the full circumstances of each case will be considered when deciding who will be offered the property. In some circumstances a property may be allocated out of priority order if a property is particularly suitable for the needs of an applicant.

Applicants with a need for adaptations can also bid for properties without appropriate adaptations, however the applicant must understand that they are likely to be required to fund their own adaptations or to have funding in place from an external source; registered providers are unlikely to fund adaptations.

### **Community connection – Rural lettings**

Properties in rural areas may be let under the Cheshire Homechoice policy for meeting local need. Advertisements for these properties will stipulate that those with a community connection will be given preference within the terms of the policy.

The partners of Cheshire Homechoice are mindful of the concerns of residents for stability and sustainability within their communities, but also of the need to foster diversity within those communities and facilitate geographical mobility within the Cheshire East Borough.

In some rural areas we may require applicants to demonstrate a community connection to that settlement. Cheshire Homechoice will make any such requirement clear in the advertisement for the property. In these instances, any applicant currently registered with Cheshire Homechoice may bid; however, preference will be given to the household in the greatest housing need demonstrating the community connection. In the absence of a bid from any applicant with a community connection, the property will be let to an applicant with no community connection.

In these cases, a person will be deemed to have a community connection if they fulfil one or more of the criteria below. If there is more than one applicant with a connection, they will be considered in the order of their priority Banding and priority date.

- Currently live, or have lived, within the boundaries of the parish or adjoining parish and have done for at least 2 consecutive years.
- Have immediate family (sibling, son, daughter, parent, stepparent, or adoptive parents) who are currently living within the boundaries of the parish or adjoining parish and have done for at least five years.
- Have a permanent contract of employment based within the parish or adjoining parish.

An adjoining parish is defined by another rural parish with an adjoining boundary to the parish in which the vacant property is located. The adjoining parish must also fall within the boundaries of Cheshire East Borough.

Allocations will be conducted considering all reasons in their own merit, not comparing against people who can demonstrate a stronger connection. The connections are not tiered.

All applicants will be required to have evidence of their connection to a parish on file before the close of the bidding cycle in which a property is advertised.

### **New property priority - new build lettings**

There will be a cascade priority for all new build developments on **first let only**.

A shortlist for a new property will be re-ordered to ensure that the following cascade of priority is followed:

1<sup>st</sup> priority – Applicants demonstrating a local connection to the town/ village in which the property is being built.

2<sup>nd</sup> priority – Applicants who can demonstrate “Working Plus” criteria.

Working Plus criteria are:

- Applicant(s) in work (full or part time).
- Applicant(s) committed to 5+ weekly hours of regular long term voluntary work (with a reference).
- Applicants with a disability and in receipt of PIP. AFIP or attendance allowances.
- Applicants providing frequent and regular care for a friend or relative with carers allowance in payment.
- Current or former armed forces personnel.
- Those enrolled on and attending full time further education.

To qualify for a new build priority the evidence of connection or Working Plus criteria must be on file before the close of the bidding cycle; this is the applicants’ responsibility.

\*\*Where a new property is built within the confines of one of the rural communities the community connection criteria will replace the local connection criteria.

Properties designated for older people will only include the connection criteria and not the Working Plus criteria.

### **Multiple unit allocation**

Re-lets (not new build) in multiple unit blocks of flats or maisonettes will be allocated on a 50-50 basis. Lettings will be made in accordance with:

50% to singles over 25, couples and families in employment

50% to applicants in the highest priority band

### **Local lettings**

Certain properties may be let in accordance with a Registered Provider’s local lettings policy. When properties are advertised on the Cheshire Homechoice website, they will be clearly labelled with the eligibility criteria. Any local lettings policies will be reviewed by

Cheshire East before being implemented and annually (where relevant) to ensure that tenant selection is fair, and need is still being met.

### **Houses to children**

In respect of public health recommendations and the benefits demonstrated to children through access to outdoor space, in addition to the requirement for young people to remain in education until 18, houses will be prioritised to households with children under 18.

### **Capital limits & income checks**

In some instances, Registered Providers may overlook a bid placed by an applicant if they have sufficient income, equity and/or savings to be able to afford to rent or purchase a property on the open market.

Assessments may be conducted by Registered Providers to ensure that applicants can afford to pay the rent for a property before an offer is made. If an applicant cannot afford to pay the rent, their bid for a property might be overlooked.

Where an applicant is deemed not to be able to afford a home, despite being eligible for the housing related benefits to support the rent, Registered Providers should be providing access to or referring to financial support services.

The procedure for assessments will be shared with the Local Authority and monitored to ensure that access to social/ affordable housing by vulnerable applicants is not being restricted. Registered providers will be responsible for promoting financial inclusion for all applicants.

### **Viewing properties and receiving offers**

Registered Providers may request additional information to support the allocation process.

A formal offer of accommodation will not be made until the information and/or supporting evidence has been provided and failure to do so may lead to an application being closed.

Applicants who unreasonably refuse 2 verbal/written offers within a 12-month period will have their priority reduced to Band E for a period of 12 months. Applicants accepted as Statutorily Homeless will be assessed in line with current housing legislation that applies to refusing offers.

If an applicant does not agree with their priority being reduced, they can request a review.

### **Feedback on results**

Lettings results will be made available to the public via the Homechoice website (feedback). Results will include:

- Lettings results for property type and neighbourhood.

- The total number of bids made for the property.
- The successful applicant's registration date and/or priority Band.
- Properties described as a management let, where an offer was made, and the property was not advertised/ or the property advert was no successful in facilitating tenant selection.
- The results of customer satisfaction surveys.

### **Direct lets**

The partner Registered Providers will advertise ALL vacant properties via Cheshire Homechoice. There will be certain occasions when a property cannot be advertised, for example:

- An emergency move for an existing tenant.
- Where a property has specific adaptations, and a tenant has been sourced from the register via a bespoke search.
- Where a shortlist for a similar property has been used.
- Where a property has not been let to an applicant from a shortlist and the provider used alternative media.

The Cheshire Homechoice Panel will monitor all lets made outside of the choice-based lettings process to ensure fairness and for transparency all direct lets will be recorded online, for public information.

### **Nominations**

Registered Providers (not formal Cheshire Homechoice partners) operating within Cheshire East will provide at least 50% of their vacancies (excluding transfers) for nominations via the scheme. The Local Authority will monitor to ensure compliance with the nomination agreements in their area.

### **Future development of the scheme**

Cheshire Homechoice is committed to continually reviewing its practices and procedures associated with this policy, to ensure a consistent and joined up approach in the delivery of a first-class choice-based lettings service.

## Appendix 1

### Contacts

#### **Cheshire East Council**

Town Hall  
Macclesfield  
Cheshire  
SK10 1EA  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)  
Tel: 0300 123 5017 option 1

#### **The Guinness Partnership**

1 Stable Street  
Oldham  
OL9 7LH  
[www.guinnesspartnership.com](http://www.guinnesspartnership.com)  
Tel: 01270 506200

#### **Plus Dane Group**

Shepherds Mill  
Worrall Street  
Congleton, Cheshire  
CW12 1DT  
[www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk)  
Tel: 01260 281037

#### **Peaks & Plains Housing Trust**

Ropewalks  
Newton Street  
Macclesfield  
SK11 6QJ  
[www.peaksplains.org](http://www.peaksplains.org)  
Tel: 01625 553553

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OPEN

## **Economy and Growth Committee**

**12th March 2024**

### **Renters Reform Bill and Selective Licensing scheme update**

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#### **Report of: Peter Skates – Acting Executive Director – Place and Director of Growth and Enterprise**

**Report Reference No: EG/25/23-24**

**Ward: Crewe South Ward.**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide Members with an update on the work being undertaken in the Nantwich Road area of Crewe (map attached Appendix 1) the progress of the Crewe Neighbourhood project action plan, the proposed Selective Licensing scheme and the Renters (Reform) Bill 2023.
2. The action plan contributes towards the key priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, by "working together with partners to help support people and residents", "reducing health inequalities" and making it "a great place for people to live, work and visit".

#### **Executive Summary**

3. In 2019 the Nantwich Road area of Crewe was identified as a priority area for intervention as it is displaying multiple issues around poor property condition, higher levels of deprivation, crime and of anti-social behaviour that were considerably higher than other areas of Cheshire East. The proportion of private rented properties in this area was also significantly higher than the rest of Cheshire East and nationally.
4. On 9th December 2019 the Council's former Cabinet agreed a two staged approach for the area, and a working group was convened to develop a collaborative action plan across a number of Council services to work with external partners, to co-ordinate current services and develop targeted interventions that could have the potential to drive improvements in the Nantwich Road area, and demonstrate that due diligence had been undertaken and all options considered in line with Government guidance.

- 5 Once this was completed a further review would then be undertaken and if it was apparent that existing measures alone were not sufficient to tackle the underlying problems within the area then approval would be sought to progress to the consultation stage of the Selective Licensing process.
- 6 Since the adoption of the Crewe Neighbourhood project action plan, the working group have been proactively engaging with residents, Councillors and other teams within the Council and the local area on a range of projects to improve and support the Nantwich Road area.
- 7 However, in May 2023 the Renters (Reform) Bill was introduced to Parliament and this will legislate for the reforms set out in the 'A fairer private rented sector' white paper published in June 2022, and will overhaul residential tenancies in England.
- 8 One of the key proposals within the Bill is the introduction of a new Government Landlord registration scheme for the UK which would negate the need for a Selective Licensing scheme to be introduced in the Nantwich Road area, as once introduced it will ensure that all landlords will be legally required to register themselves and their properties on a Property Portal and could be subject to penalties of up to £5,000, by their local Council if they market or let out a property without registering it and providing the required information. Repeat offences could lead to fines of up to £30,000.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy and Growth Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the work being undertaken by the Crewe Neighbourhood project working group and progress made to date to help improve the area.
2. Agree to await the Royal Assent of the Renters (Reform) Act and the introduction of a new Government Landlord registration scheme for the UK, which would remove the need for a Selective Licensing scheme to be introduced in the Nantwich Road area.
3. Note, that while awaiting implementation of the Renters (Reform) Act, the Council shall continue to assess and evaluate available evidence and options to facilitate effective oversight & licensing of landlord properties in the area.

## Background

9. Cheshire East has seen a rapid growth within the private rented sector over the last few years. This is now the second largest tenure behind home ownership,

overtaking social housing provision. It offers a flexible form of tenure and meets a wide range of housing needs. It contributes to greater labour market mobility and is increasingly the tenure of choice for young people. The private rented sector is an essential part of a strong housing market.

10. There are currently over 21,000 private rented properties across Cheshire East and the sector consists of a number of forms of housing including family accommodation, self-contained flats, and Houses in Multiple Occupation (shared houses, flats in multiple occupation, partial conversions and fully self-contained flats which do not meet the 1991 Building Regulations standards).
11. Whilst it is acknowledged that many private landlords manage their tenancies well and maintain properties to a good standard, often above the standard required by the law, there are a number of landlords whose management and properties may not meet acceptable standards.
12. Cheshire East plays an essential role in quality assurance in this sector. Poor management and property standards can have a negative impact on an area, leading to low housing demand, increased levels of anti-social behaviour and community tensions. We have to ensure that we listen to community concerns and demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that existing housing is of good quality and it provides a safe and warm environment in which people can live and thrive.
13. Local authorities have a discretionary power under Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 to introduce a Selective Licensing scheme in an identified priority area, for up to five years, however, a Local Authority must meet Government legislative requirements and undertake a detailed review of the conditions for the introduction of a Selective Licensing scheme, provide evidence to support their concerns, look at alternative approaches and consult widely to ensure that it is a success and would not be subject to challenge.
14. In 2019 the Nantwich Road area of Crewe was identified as a priority area for intervention, following a detailed review of the conditions for Selective Licensing, as it is displaying multiple issues around poor property condition, higher levels of deprivation, crime and of anti-social behaviour that were considerably higher than other areas of Cheshire East. The proportion of private rented properties in this area was also significantly higher than the rest of Cheshire East and nationally.
15. Government guidance states that Selective Licensing should be part of a wider strategy and that schemes should be adequately resourced and include services such as active outreach support programmes to engage with landlords and tenants. This is reinforced in the independent review of Selective Licensing where it indicates that when implemented in isolation the effectiveness is often

limited, and schemes appear to be more successful as part of a wider, well planned, coherent initiative with an associated commitment of resources.

16. On 9th December 2019 the Council's former Cabinet agreed a two staged approach, and a working group was convened to develop a collaborative action plan across a number of Council services, including: Community and Partnerships, Housing, Strategic Planning, Public Health and Waste Management teams, to work with external partners including; Crewe Town Council, Ansa and Cheshire Police to co-ordinate current services and develop targeted interventions that could have the potential to drive improvements in the Nantwich Road area, and demonstrate that due diligence had been undertaken and all options considered in line with Government guidance.

17. Since the adoption of the Crewe Neighbourhood project action plan, the working group have been proactively engaging with residents, Councillors and other teams within the Council and the local area on a range of projects to improve and support the Nantwich Road area. These include:

17.1 Waste Management:

- Developed a Waste Management and Fly-tipping policy which specifically covers the key issues identified as contributory factors to the waste management and fly tipping issues experienced across the borough, including specific areas of Crewe.
- Developed a Community Enforcement policy which sets out the applicable legislation and levels of enforcement activity which may be applied to a number of poor waste management issues, amongst other areas of work covered by the Community Enforcement Team.

17.2 Cleaner Crewe project:

- Cleansed the Top 20 streets/alleyways in Crewe to improve the look of the area, distributed 2,500 Section 46 notices to residents advising them of the Council's waste management requirements, and tackled the fly tipping and bin management issues which were prevalent in some `hotspot` areas of Crewe.
- Since the beginning of the project in 2021, 21 alleys in the Nantwich Road area have been cleaned up and 16 have been maintained by a multi-agency team which includes residents. 72 clean up sessions have taken place, involving 535 people donating 1,357 hours and over 500 planters/wall troughs and 10 benches have been installed.
- 294 unsightly abandoned and contaminated bins have been removed from the streets.
- Piloted a `One Team' scheme in Crewe, to create a standard operating procedure and single team capable of sifting waste for evidence, cleansing the waste, activating enforcement investigations, and issuing subsequent penalties.

- Established 'Friends of Crewe South 1 Alleyways' residents' group to help develop the alleyway regeneration programme, and sustain the improvements made in the area.
- Sited three CCTV cameras in hotspot areas of Crewe to support enforcement activity which has demonstrably reduced fly-tipping in the area.
- The enforcement team have issued 22 fly-tipping fines, 15 Section 46 fines, and 117 warnings for bin and waste mismanagement.

#### 17.3 Health Inequalities:

- Researched health inequalities in the six wards, in conjunction with partners and developed a Population Health Intelligence pack that highlights health needs, disease progression, demographics, health inequalities and economic measures to help inform future interventions in the Crewe area.
- Developed a 'Living Well in Crewe' report for the Cheshire East Increasing Equalities Commission. Many of its findings were also incorporated into the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Researched and developed a new Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Crewe which focuses on the wider lifestyle indicators, and key aspects of health and care service provision and delivery.

#### 17.4 Strategic Planning:

- Implemented 3 Article 4 directions in Crewe (including the Nantwich Road area) which came into force in November 2021. These directions remove permitted development rights that enable the conversion of dwellings to small houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) in areas of Crewe without the need for planning permission. Any new HMOs in the Direction area now require planning permission.
- Adopted the 'Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning document' to provide additional planning policy guidance to those parties involved in planning applications for HMO's.
- Adopted the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document which includes Policy HOU 4 against which planning applications for HMO's are assessed.

#### 17.5 Cheshire Police:

- The Local policing team worked closely with organisations, partners, and resident to identify crime types, themes, risks, and emerging threats and

agree work plans to impact on reducing the number of incidents and priorities identified.

- Crewe Exploitation team established to tackle crime relating to serious and organised crime gangs operating across the UK which impact on Crewe.
  - Worked closely with organisations and partners to share intelligence and information on those individuals at risk of exploitation.
18. Although the working group have proactively collaborated with residents and other external organisations to improve the Nantwich Road area, the constant changes of tenants in this area due to high levels of rental properties and HMO's is still a big issue, although not unique to Crewe. The constant turnover of tenants means that:
- The waste and fly-tipping education message is lost and needs to be constantly refreshed.
  - Some people do not have a personal stake in the area.
  - There is a constant churn of left behind rubbish at the end of the tenancies which is not always disposed of appropriately.
19. In addition, we were unable to follow Government guidance and undertake a key element of the Crewe Neighbourhood project action plan, to work proactively with Landlords/residents to improve the quality of private rental properties in the project area, due to a lack of resources.
20. Over the last three consecutive years, a business case has been submitted as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy budget setting process to seek to secure additional funding to increase the Housing Standards Team to undertake proactive enforcement work in the area. The business case has not been supported due to financial pressures and therefore this element of the action plan has not been progressed.
21. The existing measures alone have not been sufficient to tackle the underlying problems within the area and we are not able to evidence that we have undertaken alternative approaches, therefore we are not able to progress to the next stage of the implementation of a Selective Licencing Scheme.
22. However, the introduction of the Renter (Reform) Act will legislate for the reforms set out in the 'A fairer private rented' white paper published in June 2020, once it receives Royal ascent will overhaul residential tenancies in England.
23. The Act will also include the introduction of a new Government Landlord registration scheme for the UK, which will remove the need for a Selective Licensing scheme to be introduced in the Nantwich Road area, as when introduced it will ensure that all landlords will be legally required to register themselves and their properties on a Property Portal, it will provide a one-stop-

shop and access point for landlords, helping them understand their obligations, demonstrate compliance with standards and will also provide Councils with more data about private sector properties, so we can identify poor quality or non-compliant private rented sector properties in the project area, and who owns them more easily and we can then use our powers under part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 to bring about improvements.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

24. No consultation has taken place to date, as the Government has specified that a Selective Licensing scheme can only be implemented once we provide evidence that targeted interventions have taken place in the project area to ensure that it is a success.
25. However, throughout the process the working group have engaged with residents, Crewe Town Council, Councillors and other teams within the Council and the local area on a range of projects.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

26. Local authorities have a discretionary power under Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 to designate an area for Selective Licensing for up to five years. However, a Local Authority must first demonstrate that there is sufficient evidence for their concerns, look at alternative approaches and consult widely.
27. The working group have completed many of the objectives within the Crewe Neighbourhood project action plan, however, one of the key elements is for staff to work proactively with Landlords/residents to improve the quality of private rented accommodation in the project area, this would require financial resources to employ additional staff in the Housing team, which are not available. As a Selective Licensing scheme can only be introduced after all other reasonable measures have been implemented, it may be subject to challenge if it was introduced at this stage, which may have legal and financial implications for the Council.
28. However, the introduction of a new Government Landlord registration scheme for the UK, as part of the Renters (Reform) Bill will remove the need for a Selective Licensing scheme to be introduced in the Nantwich Road area, as when introduced it will ensure that all landlords will be legally required to register themselves and their properties on a Property Portal, it will provide a one-stop-shop and access point for landlords, helping them understand their obligations, demonstrate compliance with standards and will also provide Councils with more data about private sector properties, so we can identify poor quality or non-compliant private rented sector properties in the project area.

## Other Options Considered

29. The table below outlines the anticipated impacts and risks associated with the identified options considered:

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable households may continue living in poor quality housing conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor property conditions would continue.</li> <li>• High levels of deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour would continue.</li> </ul>
Committee not approving the recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources would be required to undertake a proactive approach to Housing Enforcement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased financial pressure on the Council.</li> </ul>

## Implications and Comments

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

30. There are no obvious legal implications to the adoption of the recommendations in this report. The adoption of a selective licensing regime is discretionary. The assent and implementation of the Renters (Reform) Act will obviate the need for a selective licensing regime and will likely make the achievement of the working groups objectives easier in so far as housing standards go.
31. The powers of local authorities in the proposed Act are considerably more than those currently contained within the Housing Act 2004 when it comes to enforcement of housing standards in the private rented sector, which absent a selective licensing regime, are limited predominately to houses in multiple occupation.
32. Whilst there is no readily available timetable for the assent and implementation of the proposed Act it is likely to be quicker to await this rather than to seek to adopt a selective licensing regime which has minimum requirements that require to be satisfied before this can be done, and on the evidence presented in this Report do not appear to be able to be met at this time. Seeking to adopt a selective licensing regime

at this time pending the assent and implementation of the Renters (Reform) Act is therefore likely to have a short-term effect only.

*Section 151 Officer/Finance*

33. The projects undertaken by the teams within the Nantwich Road project working group were funded from within existing Council budgets including Adult Social Care, Commissioning, Communities, Economic Development, Housing, Neighbourhood Services, Strategic Planning, Public Health; from a capital reserve established at the start of the Cleaner Crewe project and funding from the Police and Crime Commissioners Officer and Safer Cheshire East Partnership and through collaboration with other external organisations.
34. A further business case has been submitted for additional resources to undertake a 12-month pilot, to begin proactive housing enforcement activity to enable us to evidence whether this is sufficient action to avoid the need for a selective licensing scheme or if we need to move to the next stages. The cost of the pilot is £188,000 and the outcome would then determine if additional resources were required. If the Council move forward with a Selective licencing scheme, then additional resources would be required to undertake the requirements of the scheme.
35. Due to the current financial pressures, the business case is not currently supported.
36. Any additional financial obligations brought about by the introduction of the Renters Reform Act will be considered and brought forward through the business planning process if appropriate.

*Policy*

37. The work being undertaken by the working group and the introduction of a landlord registration scheme would support the following aims and priorities of the Corporate Plan:

<p><b>An open and enabling organisation.</b></p> <p>Listen, learn, and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation.</p>	<p><b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b></p> <p>Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.</p> <p>Reduce health inequalities across the Borough.</p>	<p><b>A thriving and sustainable place</b></p> <p>A great place for people to live, work and visit.</p> <p>Welcoming, safe, and clean neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Thriving urban economy with opportunities for all.</p>
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*Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion*

38. The Council has not undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this proposal. However, an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the implementation of the new Government's Landlord registration scheme once the Renters (Reform) Act is in place and any equality implications will be addressed through the implementation plan.

*Human Resources*

39. There are no immediate HR implications as all work undertaken through the workgroup has been managed through existing staffing. However, there is potential for additional staffing resources to be required to manage the implementation of the new Landlord registration scheme, but this will be dependent on the specific terms of the project and whether Government funding is available for Local Authorities to implement the scheme once the Renters (Reform) Act is in place.

*Risk Management*

40. Expectation is that we will be able to identify and tackle poor housing conditions under the new Government Landlord registration scheme and then use our powers under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 to bring about improvements.
41. As the scheme will cover the whole of the Borough and England there is no risk that Landlords may migrate to other neighbouring areas outside of the designated project area.

*Rural Communities*

42. There are no direct implications for rural communities, as the priority area is within Crewe.

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

43. Improvements brought about by the work undertaken in the Nantwich Road area to date and the introduction of a new online Landlord registration scheme, as part of the Renters (Reform) Act will help tackle poor quality housing, will seek to enable the delivery of safe, secure and sustainable homes and will have a positive impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people and their educational attainment.

*Public Health*

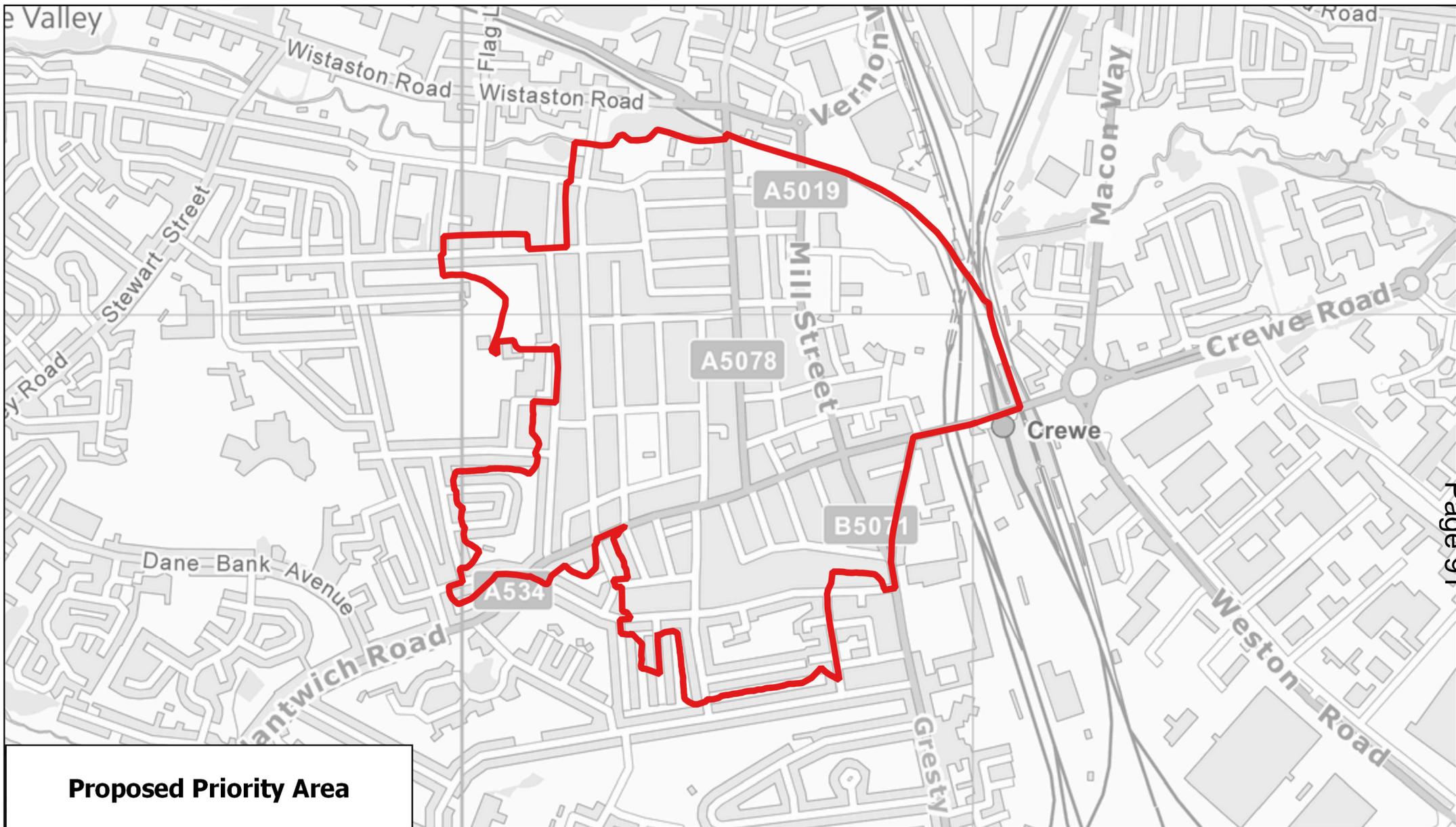
- 44. The impact of poor housing conditions can have significant detrimental implications for all those affected, and it is therefore essential that families are able to access suitable housing options regardless of their location and financial circumstances.
- 45. Improvements in housing, the local environment through the Cleaner Crewe project and community engagement will have a positive impact on mental health and reduce the risk of many preventable diseases that are made worse by poor conditions.

*Climate Change*

- 46. The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents, and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. Improvements in housing standards such as improved heating systems and insulation can help to tackle fuel poverty for vulnerable residents and tackle climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	<p>Karen Carsberg, Head of Housing</p> <p><a href="mailto:karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk">karen.carsberg@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Pam Henriksen, Policy Officer</p> <p><a href="mailto:Pam.henriksen@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Pam.henriksen@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Nantwich Road area map.
Background Papers:	Briefing note – Renters (Reform) Bill 2023

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**Proposed Priority Area**



 Proposed Priority Area Boundary



1:10,000

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OPEN

**Economy and Growth Committee****12 March 2024****UKSPF Update****Report of: Peter Skates, Executive Director - Place****Report Reference No: EG/28/23-24****Ward(s) Affected: All wards****Purpose of Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update the Economy and Growth Committee on progress made with allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF), with particular focus on the Core and Rural Funds.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 The Council is the accountably body for the UKSPF in Cheshire East and is responsible for the management of the UKSPF allocation for 22/23-24/25. The allocation amounts in total to £13,948,936.
- 3 Council delegated powers to officers to manage the fund, which has enabled officers to respond to central deadlines and make significant progress despite the challenges.
- 4 This report seeks to update Committee on the management of the fund and the projects approved to receive funding to date.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Economy and Growth Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made in allocating and utilising the 2022-25 Cheshire East UKSPF allocation; together with the issues faced in pursuing spend by March 2025; the risk of underspend; and the mitigation proposed to reduce that risk.

## Background

### *Context*

- 5 UKSPF is a central government fund provided to local authorities in lieu of former European funding streams, described as a central pillar of the government's Levelling Up agenda. The fund was first announced in April 2022 when indicative allocations were identified for the three years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 6 Unlike many other Levelling Up funding streams, UKSPF was allocated on a non-competitive, formulaic basis. Cheshire East Council was identified as the accountable body for the UKSPF in Cheshire East with a total indicative UKSPF allocation for Cheshire East of £13,948,936 spread across the three years 22/23-24/25.
- 7 Although local authorities have some discretion over the use of funds, the allocations must be aligned to fund priorities and cannot simply be allocated by the Authority for any purpose.
- 8 The fund is divided into three elements:
  - A Core UKSPF allocation of £11,585,762 split across the three years 22/23-24/25 which can be spent on defined types of interventions within three categories: 'People and Skills', 'Communities and Place' and 'Business Support'.
  - A Rural 'top up' allocation of £827,627 for years 23/24 and 24/25, only to be spent on capital schemes supporting rural business', communities and place.
  - £1,563,749 to be spent exclusively on the Multiply (Adult Numeracy) Programme.
- 9 A condition of receiving any of the funding was that the Council had to develop, and have approved, Investment Plans for each element of the funding. Local authorities are required, through the Investment Plans to set out, at a high level, how they will utilise each element of the funding. The Multiply Investment Plan was approved by the Department for Education (DFE) in August 2022. The Investment Plan for core UKSPF were required to be developed and submitted for approval to the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 1 August 2022 but were not approved until December 2022. The Rural Fund Investment Plan takes the form of an addendum to the core investment plan, and this was approved by DEFRA in April 2023.
- 10 In view of tight timescales imposed centrally for the delivery of key workstreams and spend associated with UKSPF, on 20 July 2022 Council

delegated authority to various officers. A key delegation was to the Executive Director - Place who was delegated authority to manage the Cheshire East UKSPF programme for 2022-25; taking all necessary actions in the interests of maximising the impacts of the fund, aligned to the fund parameters, local priorities and aligned to the core UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan. At the time of this delegation, only the Multiply and Core elements of UKSPF had been announced. In October 2022, following announcement of the UKSPF Rural 'top up' fund, Corporate Policy Committee extended delegations to the Executive Director - Place to also cover the Rural Fund element of UKSPF.

#### *Update on decisions*

- 11 Utilising the powers delegated by Council, officers have taken key decisions on the administration of the fund. These decisions are summarised in the table below. Links to decision papers are provided in Background Papers where these have been published.

Jul 2022	Delegations granted by Council to officers relating to management of UKSPF Multiply and Core funds
Jul 2022	Officer decision - approval of core UKSPF Investment Plan for submission to DLUHC
Oct 2022	Corporate Policy Committee agree Terms of Reference of a new Cheshire East UK SPF Local Partnership Group and delegate further powers to Executive Director - Place relating to the management of the Rural Fund allocation
Nov 2022	Officer decision to approve methodology for selection of projects to receive UKSPF (core fund)
Nov 2022	Officer decision to approve and submit Rural Addendum to core UKSPF Investment Plan
Jan 2023	Officer decision to accept UKSPF funding
Feb 2023	Officer decision to approve skeleton programme of projects to be funded from UKSPF core fund
Jun 23	Officer decision to accept revised MoU incorporating Rural Fund
Jul 23	Officer decision to approve additional projects to be funded by UKSPF and to launch wider call out for further project proposals
Aug 23	Officer decision to launch further call out for limited categories of further project proposals

Nov 23	Officer decision to approve supplementary capital and revenue estimates for 22/23 and 23/24
Nov 23	Officer Decision to award UKSPF core funding to further tranche of projects

*Update on project selection*

- 12 Projects have been selected to receive UKSPF in several tranches. The first group of projects identified to received funding, were all projects to be led by CEC. The decision to focus on CEC led projects was linked to the fact that funding for 22/23 was not confirmed until Dec 2022, with no time to then launch a wide call out for project proposals. This first tranche of projects was agreed by the Chief Executive in February 2023, the decision having been referred upwards by the Executive Director- Place in the interests of ensuring appropriate scrutiny, given that at that time, the Executive Director- Place was also chairing the CEC UKSPF Programme Board.
- 13 In July 2023 the Executive Director- Place then determined to both approve a second tranche of CEC projects and additionally to launch a wider call out for further project proposals from across the Council and from other suitable organisations across the Borough in a position to act in a delivery capacity. An independent external appraiser was appointed to design and run the call out and to assess, via a transparent and fair scoring system, all project proposals received and make recommendations to CEC as to which projects should receive UKSPF. That call out was made known to all members of the Local Partnership Group, made available on the Council's website and all local members were notified.
- 14 Following that comprehensive project assessment process, in November 2023, utilising delegated authority, the Executive Director- Place approved a further tranche of projects, internal and external, to receive UKSPF.
- 15 It should be noted that a balance has been struck by officers between speed of allocation of funding and the desire to make funding available to a wide range of potential partners via a fair and transparent process. In short, ensuring a fair and transparent allocation of funds via an open call out for projects, has inevitably slowed the process of fund allocation.
- 16 All UKSPF monies have been allocated to a range of projects being delivered by CEC and third parties, including some town councils.

- 17 An overview of these projects is set out in the table in **Appendix A**. This appendix breaks projects down into allocation type (Multiply, Core, Rural); gives an overview of the amount of funding allocated to the project; the geographical location, anticipated outputs; and clarifies the current status of each project.
- 18 Committee should also be aware that there have been several constraints imposed centrally which have made it difficult to facilitate spend in a timely manner and such constraints continue to raise significant risks to the effective use of this funding. These issues are explained more fully in the following paragraphs.

*Funding constraints posing challenges to spend of UKSPF*

- 19 Challenges to the efficient spend of UKSPF have arisen from the start of the fund. In 2022/23 UKSPF allocations were to cover Multiply and Core activities as set out in the approved Multiply Investment Plan and Core UKSPF Investment Plan. Whilst the relevant central ministerial departments made clear that from April 2022, councils could spend their own funds at risk ahead of Investment Plans being approved and grant funding letters being issued. This would clearly create financial risk for the authority and the advice from the S151 officer was that spend should not be incurred ahead of receipt of funding.
- 20 Unfortunately, formal confirmation of allocations did not occur at the start of the financial year. The Multiply annual grant funding allocation letter was received well into the financial year, the Council accepting that funding at the end of September 22. Confirmation of the core funding was significantly further delayed and the core UKSPF grant allocation letters were not issued by DLUHC until 5 December 2022, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the financial year. This effectively left only Quarter 4 of 22/23 for councils to accept the funding, approve supplementary estimates, confirm, and mobilise projects, and incur expenditure. For many projects initially anticipated to be funded from the 22/23 allocation, this vastly reduced timeframe was simply unrealistic. Despite this situation in 22/23 £602,486 of core UKSPF was spent and reclaimed from an allocation of £1,406,039, and, for the Multiply element £294,677.03 was spent in 22/23 with £167,247.93 of the 22/23 allocation remaining unspent.
- 21 Moving into 23/24, the rules for the Multiply funding meant that the remaining unspent allocation from 22/23 was deducted from the Multiply allocation for 23/24. At the time of the issue of grant funding letters for the core fund in December 2022, the advice from DLUHC was that any unspent core allocations would also need to be returned at the end of 22/23. However, following significant lobbying from local authorities, MPs, LEPs etc across the country, this position was reconsidered and DLUHC subsequently agreed that authorities would be able to carry

forward unspent core 22/23 funding into 23/24, subject to approval of 'credible plans' demonstrating how the unspent funding would be spent. It was not specified what a credible plan comprised until end of financial year monitoring forms were released. Lead authorities therefore had no certainty around the amount of core UKSPF funding to be made available for 23/24 until plans were approved and annual funding letters issued. Unfortunately, it was not until 14 August 2023 that DLUHC issued the annual funding letter for core UKSPF 23/24 allocation to the Council and the amount of funding available to spend in year was confirmed. As this was over 4 months into the 23/24 financial year the Council has been again left with a compressed period to spend the 23/24 allocation which includes the underspend from 22/23.

- 22 To summarise these issues, the way the fund has been managed by the Government, with uncertainties over allocations, late confirmation of allocations, and strict yearly allocations with no certainty over the next years allocation, has posed significant challenges for officers seeking to protect the Council from unnecessary financial risk. This situation has led to funding being allocated to projects much later than is ideal.
- 23 There appears to have been some acknowledgement of the issues posed by the strict spending criteria and government's sponsoring department (DLUHC) has recently confirmed that any unspent core allocation can be rolled over into 24/25. This is very welcome but not without further limitations.
- 24 Looking forward to 24/25, there are still challenges associated with projects being able to spend and deliver the programme that has been agreed. Officers are working with projects to mitigate these challenges and wherever possible support accelerated funding.
- 25 In an attempt to mitigate the risks associated with the hard deadline for UKSPF spend, it is the intention of officers to lobby central government and to encourage others to lobby, for a relaxation of the current fixed deadline to allow contracted work that which is unspent to be rolled forward beyond 24/25.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 26 A requirement of the UKSPF core fund was that lead authorities establish UKSPF Local Partnership Groups comprising representatives of a wide range of local organisations across specified categories. The role of the Local Partnership Group was set out in the prospectus for the UKSPF and was to include informing the core fund Investment Plan and providing advice on strategic fit and deliverability of proposals driven forward utilising UKSPF.

- 27 Throughout June and July 2022 Council officers engaged with several local partner and stakeholder organisations to identify priority local issues and opportunities aligned to the objectives of the UKSPF; the findings being used to inform the UKSPF Investment Plan. The Terms of Reference of that group were formally agreed by Corporate Policy Committee in October 2022. Membership is drawn from public sector, private sector, and civil society organisations. Elected member representatives from Cheshire East Council include the Leader and Deputy Leader and Council Committee Chairs in respect of Economy and Growth, Environment and Communities, Children and Families and Adults and Health. All five local members of Parliament and representatives from 11 Town Councils, were also invited to be members, as were neighbouring authority representatives from Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington councils. Representation from local businesses and the business support sector, as well as members representing the voluntary, community, faith, social enterprise, and civil society sector, members representing rural and environmental considerations, the Police and Crime commissioners' office, public health, DWP, local education and skills providers and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- 28 Since its establishment, the Local Partnership Group has been used as a touchpoint when making decisions on UKSPF management and to disseminate information on project call outs.
- 29 It should also be noted that when project call outs were launched, all local members were contacted to make them aware of the opportunity for the submission of project proposals.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 30 Delegations from Council to officers for management of UKSPF, that to the Executive Director – Place, are broad meaning that decisions are not generally required from any committee. This has proven invaluable in enabling projects to be identified and selected for funding without undue delays. However, officers wish to ensure members are appraised of progress and to ensure transparency around decisions, aligned to the Council's corporate commitment to being an organisation which works in a transparent manner.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 31 This report does not require a decision by committee but is provided as an update to ensure transparency. The alternative option considered was not providing a committee update.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing - do not report progress to committee	Members may be left unaware of progress and ongoing challenges with this funding	<p>Opportunities to lobby for an extension of the window for spend may be missed.</p> <p>Members may understandably be more reluctant in the future to delegate to officers if not kept appraised of the outcome of delegations</p>

## Implications and Comments

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 32 There are no legal implications stemming from this report since it is an update report.

### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 33 There are no direct financial implications stemming from this report since it is an update report. However, there are challenges around the ability to spend the funding within the funding envelope of 31 March 2025, and the timing of the receipt of UKSPF grant from government. Finance is working with the relevant services to mitigate the risks and allow Officers, Members, and other stakeholders to lobby government for further flexibility.

### *Policy*

- 34 The types of interventions identified in the UKSPF Investment Plans, and the specific projects selected aligning to those intervention types align to Council priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan and/or other strategic policy documentation. The methodology used for selection of projects has at every stage required project referrals to clearly identify the links between proposals and strategic policy/strategy and awards of funding have considered that strategic policy fit.
- 35 There are a wide range of projects being supported by UKSPF across the borough each of which align to various priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Taken in totality some of the key priorities which the funding is supporting are set out below.

<b>An open and enabling organisation</b>	<b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b>	<b>A thriving and sustainable place</b>
<p>Listening, learning, and responding to our residents - Proposals have been informed by input from the Local Partnership Group.</p> <p>Supporting a sustainable financial future for the council – to minimise financial risk for the Council spend has not been carried out at risk prior to confirmation of funding. It is acknowledged that this financially cautious result in funding remaining unspent.</p>	<p>Many of the projects awarded UKSPF will deliver outputs which empower people. Significant portions of the funding has been used to support grant schemes such as the Councils community grant programme</p>	<p>A great place for people to live, work and visit – Many projects awarded UKSPF are focused on enhancing specific locations across the borough via capital projects. This includes projects supported in Crewe, Macclesfield, Congleton, Wilmslow and Knutsford.</p> <p>Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all – a significant proportion is being used to support a variety of business grant schemes.</p> <p>Transport network that is safe and promotes active travel – several projects being supported are designed to encourage and facilitate active travel within the borough.</p>

### *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion*

36 Individual projects supported by UKSPF may have EIAs developed where appropriate.

### *Human Resources*

- 37 The UKSPF core and rural programme is being led by the Economic Development Service with several other services supporting including Legal and Finance and Procurement. The External Funding, Complex Worklessness & Inclusion Service within the People Directorate leads on the Multiply element of UKSPF.
- 38 Staff resources in several of these teams are extremely stretched, with current vacancies. Any staff illness poses risks for management of the fund and delivery of funded projects.

### *Risk Management*

- 39 A full time UKSPF Programme Manager commenced in post on 1 September 2023. Having this full time resource reduces risk around fund management, but this level of management support is still less than ideal. Risks around the management of projects are mitigated via regular UKSPF Programme Board meetings.

### *Rural Communities*

- 40 The core UKSPF allocation supports many projects which have benefits for rural as well as urban communities, such as business grant schemes. Additionally, the Rural Fund top up is designed to be exclusively spent in areas classified as rural by DEFRA. Overall, the UKSPF allocations therefore are benefiting rural communities as well as urban.

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

- 41 The UKSPF is not specifically aimed at children and young people. Children and Young people may benefit from specific supported projects alongside other age groups.

### *Public Health*

- 45 There is clear potential for projects funded using the UKSPF to support residents to live healthier lifestyles. Projects could bring positive health outcomes via a variety of routes, for example, funding used to support projects designed to increase accessibility to open spaces, to help deliver active travel schemes, to support community run social and wellbeing projects, and to provide support into employment should all increase life expectancy.

*Climate Change*

- 46 Several projects receiving or due to receive part of the UKSPF allocation are at least in part designed to help tackle climate change. Several active travel schemes are being supported and other schemes designed to support businesses and residents to reduce greenhouse gases, such as the Sustainable Inclusive Growth Project which will provide a mix of financial (grant) and non-financial (business support) assistance to help businesses develop sustainable and inclusive growth plans which identify opportunities for growth whilst reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency and providing fair employment practices.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Jo Wise Development and Regeneration Manager
Appendices:	Appendix 1
Background Papers:	<a href="#">Council delegation of powers in respect of UKSPF</a> <a href="#">Published Core and Rural UKSPF Investment Plan</a> <a href="#">Corporate Policy Committee approval of ToR of Local Partnership Group</a> <a href="#">Nov 22 Officer Decision on method for project selection</a> <a href="#">Nov 22 Officer Decision to approve and submit Rural Addendum</a> <a href="#">Jan 23 Officer decision to accept UKSPF funding</a> <a href="#">Feb 23 Officer Decision to approve Skeleton Programme</a> <a href="#">Jun 23 Acceptance of revised MOU</a> <a href="#">Jul 23 Officer Decision to launch project call out and approve further projects</a> <a href="#">Aug 23 Officer Decision to launch further call out</a> <a href="#">Nov 23 Officer Decision to approve Supp. Estimate</a> <a href="#">Nov 23 Officer Decision to allocate to additional projects</a>

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<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
			(£)	
<b>E1: Improvements to town centres &amp; high streets</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>	<b>Total UKSPF</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
Ly2, Crewe	CEC	150,047	completed	Amount of public realm created or improved - 1500sqm
Mill Street Corridor- Station Link, Crewe	CEC	250,000	in progress	Amount of public realm created or improved (TBC sqm )
Macc on Foot, Macclesfield	CEC	495,000	in progress	Amount of public realm created or improved (200sqm )
Knutsford Market Hall Renovation, Knutsford	Knutsford Town Council	160,000	in progress	Number of rehabilitated premises ( 1 )
Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (MIMR), Macclesfield	CEC	1,349,400	in progress	Number of commercial buildings developed or improved (1)
<b>E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage &amp; creative activities</b>		-		
Ly2, Crewe - E6 allocation	CEC	70,000	completed	Number of local events or activities supported - 20
Crewe Town Centre Arts Development & Trail, Crewe	Crewe Town Council	90,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants (3 ) Number of local events or activities supported (20 )
Cultural Step Change, Crewe	CEC	100,000	in progress	Number of local events or activities supported (10, plus 10after 2024/25)
Cheshire East Creative Champions, Cheshire East area	CEC	50,000	in progress	Number of local events or activities supported (12)
Community/Cultural Grants, Cheshire East area	CEC	80,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants (10)
<b>E7: Support for active travel enhancements in local area</b>		-		
Flag Lane cycleway, Crewe	CEC	100,000	in progress	1 cycleway improved /200m (approx. 600sq m) of cycleway improved
Black Lane cycleway, Macclesfield	CEC	100,000	in progress	1 cycleway improved /200m (approx. 600sq m) of cycleway improved
Mill Street Corridor – Station Link, Crewe	CEC	450,000	in progress	1 cycleway improved
Park Lane – Ayreshire Way, Congleton Walking and Cycling	CEC	150,000	in progress	1 cycleway improved

<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
		(£)		
A538 Waters Roundabout Pedestrian and Cyclist Crossing, Wimslow	CEC	100,000	in progress	1 cycleway improved
<u>E8: Campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of local area</u>		-		
Macclesfield Museum on the Street, Macclesfield	Macclesfield Town Council	43,487	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants 1
Visit Knutsford Campaign and Tourism Strategy	Knutsford Town Council	37,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants 1
Totally Congleton, Congleton	Congleton Town Council	39,500	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants 1
Wilmslow For All, Wilmslow	Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire & Merseyside	40,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants 1
<u>E9: Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects</u>		-		
Community Cost of Living Response Grant, Cheshire East area	CEC	390,000	completed	No. of organisations receiving grants (40) No. of organisations receiving non-financial support (40) No.of local events or activities supported (44 )
Further community focused grant, Cheshire East area	CEC	372,000	in progress	No. of organisations receiving grants (100 ) No. of organisations receiving non-financial support (80 ) No.of local events or activities supported (88)

<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
		(£)		
<b>E11: Capacity building &amp; infrastructure support local groups</b>			-	
VSCFE Infrastructure Provider and UKSPF funded grant scheme, Cheshire East area	CEC	191,000	in progress	No. of orgs receiving grants (25) No. of orgs. receiving non-financial support (50) No. of facilities supported/created (40)
<b>E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living</b>			-	
Warmer Greener Community Buildings, Cheshire East area	CEC	190,332	in progress	No. of organisations receiving grants (8) No. of organisations receiving non- financial support (14)
<b>E14: Relevant feasibility studies</b>			-	
Macclesfield Indoor Market Public Toilets Feasibility	CEC	3,140	completed	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Macclesfield Car Park Utilisation Feasibility	CEC	60,000	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Congleton Market Area Feasibility	Congleton Town Council	50,000	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Bollin Valley / Greater Bollin Trail, Cheshire East	CEC	100,000	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Knutsford Town Centre Improvements feasibility studies	Knutsford Town Council	88,250	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 6
Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership, Wilmslow	Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire & Merseyside	75,000	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Community-Led Climate Change Action in Crewe	Cheshire Wildlife Trust	17,327	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
Crewe Heritage Centre Capital Redevelopment feasibility study	Crewe Town Council	45,000	in progress	Number of feasibility studies supported - 1
<b>E19: Investment in research &amp; development at the local level</b>			-	
Cheshire East Research & Development Productivity Improvement Programme (CERDPIP), Cheshire East area	University of Sheffield	302,400	in progress	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support (90)
<b>E22: Enterprise infrastructure &amp; employment / innovation sites</b>			-	

<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
		(£)		
Flexible workspace project, Cheshire East - Grants, Cheshire East area	CEC	494,000	in progress	Number of businesses receiving grants (3-4) Number of commercial buildings developed or improved (3-4) Metres sq of commercial buildings dvpt. or improved (1000 sq m)
Flexible Workspace Grant Scheme - flexible co-working spaces, Cheshire East area	CEC	240,000	in progress	Number of businesses receiving grants (5) Number of commercial buildings developed or improved (5) Metres sq of commercial buildings dvpt. or improved (1500 sq m)

<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
		(£)		
<b>E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems</b>				
Online SME support hub, Cheshire East area	CEC	49,151	completed	No. of businesses receiving non-financial support -50 No. of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready -20
Cheshire East Business Vitality, Cheshire East area	The Circle	105,000	in progress	No. of businesses receiving non-financial support ( 118 ) No. of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready (20)
Cheshire East Business Support Initiative, Cheshire East area	East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise	126,900	in progress	No. of businesses receiving non-financial support (1000)
<b>E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators &amp; accelerators</b>				
<b>Business Accelerator Programme, Cheshire East area</b>	provider tbc	787,000	in progress	No. of businesses receiving non-financial support (180) No. of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready (60)
<b>E29: Supporting decarbonisation &amp; improving natural environment</b>				
Sustainable Inclusive Growth Project, Cheshire East area	CEC	1,056,000	in progress	Number of businesses receiving grants (100) Number of decarbonisation plans developed (100)
<b>E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth</b>				
Temporary Employer Engagement Officer, Cheshire East area	CEC	99,585	in progress	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support 100 Number of employers as a result engaging with Employment Support organisation.-65
The Pledge Partnership, Cheshire East area	Youth Federation Ltd	110,461	in progress	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support (220)
<b>E33: Employment support for economically inactive people</b>				

CORE UKSPF				
		(£)		
Support to Long Term Unemployed, Cheshire East area	FedCap	974,000	in progress	No. of econ. inactive people engaging with keyworker support services (200) No. of socially excluded people accessing support (50) No. of people supported to access basic skills (50) No. of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment (50) No. of people supported to engage in job-searching (100) No. of people receiving support to gain employment (200) No. of people receiving support to sustain employment (50) Effective wkg between keyworkers & addit. services (50)
E34: Courses including basic, life & career skills		-		
Support to Economically Inactive people, Cheshire East area	Focusing First on People (FFOP)	426,000	in progress	Number of people supported to engage in life skills (50) No. of people supported onto a course through providing financial support (50) No. of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support (50)

<b>CORE UKSPF</b>				
				(£)
<b>E36: Increase levels of digital inclusion, essential digital skills</b>			-	
Local Digital Skills Training, Cheshire East area	Cheshire Learning Partnership (CLP)	331,000	in progress	Number of people supported to access basic skills (50) Number of people supported to engage in life skills (40) No. of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support (60)
<b>ASSIGNED EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>3,408,923</b>		
<b>FUNDING CALLS PROJECTS</b>		<b>4,835,057</b>		
CEC PROCUREMENT EXPENDITURE		<b>1,922,000</b>		
GRANT SCHEMES EXPENDITURE		<b>372,000</b>		
MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION		<b>463,430</b>		
		<b>11,585,762</b>		

## Rural SPF

Supporting Rural Business:	Delivered by	2023/2024	2024/2025	Total	Status	outputs
Capital grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises, Cheshire East area	CEC	£80,000	£190,000	£270,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants (2) Number of jobs safeguarded (15)
E17: Capital grants for the development and promotion of the visitor economy, Cheshire East area, Cheshire East area	CEC	£50,000	£95,000	£145,000	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants (0) Number of jobs safeguarded (0)
<b>Communities and Place:</b>						
E4: Capital grants for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions,	CEC		£50,000	£50,000	not started	tbc
E11: Capital grants for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups, Cheshire East area	CEC	£80,000	£212,627	£292,627	in progress	Number of organisations receiving grants (25) Number of organisations receiving non-financial support (50) Number of facilities supported/created (40)
E15: Capital grants for investment and support for digital infrastructure, Cheshire East area	CEC		£70,000	£70,000	not started	tbc
<b>Total</b>		<b>£210,000</b>	<b>£617,627</b>	<b>£827,627</b>		

## Multiply

Intervention	Provider	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total	Status	Outputs
c) Innovative numeracy programmes delivered together with employers - Cheshire East area	Reaseheath College	£ -	£120,487.50	£121,535.20	£ 242,022.70	in progress	160 substantive learners; 10 outreach learners
d) Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in numeracy order to access a certain job/career - Cheshire East area	Cheshire Learning Partnership	£ -	£ 96,390.00	£100,585.54	£ 196,975.54	in progress	120 substantive learners; 10 outreach learners
e) New intensive and flexible numeracy courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths, leading to a Functional Skills Qualification - Cheshire East area	Reaseheath College	£ 57,834.00	£104,422.50	£100,585.54	£ 262,842.04	in progress	166 substantive learners; 10 outreach learners
h) Numeracy courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving, or have just left, the care system - Cheshire East area	Reaseheath College	£ 57,834.00	£ 64,260.00	£62,682.48	£ 184,776.48	in progress	56 substantive learners; 10 outreach learners
i) Numeracy activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners - Cheshire East area	Year 1 = Great Places Housing Association. Years 2 & 3 = Reaseheath College	£ 57,834.00	£ 96,390.00	£ 96,561.24	£ 250,785.24	in progress	133 substantive learners; 10 outreach learners
Off menu interventions	Reaseheath College	£242,000.00	£ -	£ -	£ 242,000.00	completed	
Totals intervention Allocation		£415,502.00	£481,950.00	£481,950.00	£1,379,402.00		
Admin Allocation		£ 46,423.00	£ 67,807.00	£ 67,807.00	£ 182,037.00	in progress	
<b>Total Grant Allocation</b>		<b>£461,925.00</b>	<b>£549,757.00</b>	<b>£549,757.00</b>	<b>£1,561,439.00</b>		

Unspent Allocation		£167,247.97				
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Total **£294,677.03** **£549,757.00** **£549,757.00** **£1,394,191.03**

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OPEN

## **Economy and Growth Committee**

**12 March 2024**

### **Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment**

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**Report of: Peter Skates, Executive Director- Place**

**Report Reference No: EG/27/23-24**

**Ward(s) Affected: Macclesfield Central**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report outlines a proposal to refurbish elements of Macclesfield indoor market utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and seeks approval to enter a contract with a value over £1M for that refurbishment work.

#### **Executive Summary**

- 2 The approved Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) identifies the desirability of investment in Macclesfield indoor market to increase its attractiveness to a wider range of residents and visitors.
- 3 On 16 November 2023 the Acting Executive Director - Place, utilising authority delegated by full Council, and having considered the outcome of a transparent selection process run by external independent advisors, determined to allocate UKSPF to a further tranche of CEC and external recommended projects. That decision included the award of £1,349,400 of UKSPF for the refurbishment of Macclesfield indoor market aligned to the Macclesfield SRF. That decision, which is linked in background papers, was well publicised in the local press. Subsequently on 13 February 2024 the Acting Executive Director - Place awarded an additional £229,100 of UKSPF to this project, (£50,000 for branding and £179,100 for capital works).

- 4 An extremely tight timetable for delivery of all UKSPF funded projects is dictated by UKSPF requirements, with current rules requiring spend of all UKSPF allocations by the end of March 2025.
- 5 As the value of the contract for construction work included in the refurbishment works will exceed £1,000,000, authority is required from committee to enter into contract for those works. Whilst ongoing design and costing workstreams are not due to be completed until circa June 2024, committee approval to proceed to enter into contract is being sought now, to prevent any unnecessary delay in the process which might jeopardise the project.
- 6 This report is therefore seeking authority to enable officers to proceed to contract with a preferred supplier as soon as the design and costings work is completed, and a preferred supplier identified.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy and Growth Committee is recommended to:

1. Authorise the Head of Economic Development to select and enter into a contract with a provider to deliver refurbishment works to Macclesfield Indoor Market, noting the value of the contract will exceed £1,000,000.

#### Background

- 7 In December 2022, the National Association of British Markets (NABMA), published the results of a national survey of markets. The results suggest the market industry faces major challenges arising from multiple factors including the pandemic, the economic crisis, and the difficulties faced by town centres generally, such as from increased competition from online retailing etc. Overall market stall occupancy is down, as are trader numbers. The survey further identified that 84% of markets are operated or controlled by local authorities and only 40% have an annual financial surplus.
- 8 In many ways, Macclesfield Indoor Market is a typical local authority market. It has some advantages being centrally located, adjoining the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in the heart of Macclesfield town centre and directly below a multi-storey car park. Conversely, it has several

disadvantages such as uninspiring architecture, and limited visibility from public vantage points.

- 9 The market building was constructed circa the 1970s and has not had significant investment for many years. It is typical in appearance of a functional commercial space of that era. The maintenance of the building is the responsibility of the Council's Facilities Management Service, whilst responsibility for the running of the market has fallen to CEC Environmental Service who have contracted the day-to-day management to ANSA Environmental Services.
- 10 Today, the market space is dated and the design of the market space and its stalls present daily challenges for stallholders and customers.
- 11 Ongoing physical issues include:
  - Lack of security shutters on many stalls;
  - Stepped floor levels restricting accessibility/creating safety issues;
  - Limited services restricting scope for food and drink outlets;
  - Lack of communal seating area to serve food and drink outlets;
  - Utilitarian strip lighting adding to the stark functional atmosphere;
  - Poor external/entrance signage;
  - Confused layout and limited visibility of stalls;
  - Wide variety in stall designs and lack of clear design aesthetic;
  - General tired appearance and ongoing maintenance challenges.
- 12 Photographs illustrating the current condition of the market are set out at **Appendix 1**.
- 13 Given the current condition of the market, it is not surprising that the Council has struggled to achieve full occupancy of the market over several years. Whilst the visual impact of vacancies is reduced by allowing traders to utilise unoccupied space at no extra charge or by letting space free of charge to charities, 13 of the 50 stalls are not currently generating an income (26%). Income and expenditure associated with the market has been provided by various teams and is summarised in **Appendix 2**. This illustrates that, having regard to costs associated with running the building as well as the market, the market currently operates at a loss.
- 14 In October 2019, the Council approved the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Strategy, which identified multiple actions to reinvigorate Macclesfield Town Centre as and when resources allow, and opportunities arise. These actions include revitalising the indoor market to increase its attractiveness to a wider range of residents.

- 15 Subsequently, in 2021 the Economic Development Service commissioned a study of the market to identify how it could be improved should funding sources be identified. That study included a public survey, discussions with traders, and input from a team with experience of renovating markets. The recommendations which stemmed from that study suggested a range of improvements dependant on available budget, with the full package of works being estimated likely to cost in the region of £3.2M (April 2023).
- 16 In 2023, an opportunity arose to deliver a minor, but significant improvement to the indoor market. On the back of the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) offering £40,000 grants for new Changing Places Toilets, Macclesfield Town Council pledged a significant grant of £110,000 towards the cost of developing a publicly accessible set of toilets in the indoor market, including the first Changing Places Toilet in the town centre. These toilets were delivered and opened in November 2023. This has enabled the dated public toilet at Park Green, subject to anti-social behaviour, to be closed, with the intention of the building being sold at public auction. Photographs of the new accessible toilets are shown at **Appendix C**.
- 17 In mid 2023, a further opportunity arose to apply for part of the Cheshire East UKSPF allocation. A proposal was developed and submitted for consideration and in late November 2023 confirmation was received that £1,349,400 of UKSPF has been allocated for refurbishment works to enhance the market. Subsequently in December 2023 a further opportunity arose to apply for 'up scaling' UKSPF funding. A further application was submitted for additional funding to enable the project to proceed without a requirement for match from CEC funds and to introduce an associated branding exercise. On 13 February 2024 the Acting Executive Director – Place approved that application such that the overall capital allocation for this budget from UKSPF is now £1,528,500 decision with a further £50,000 available for associated branding work.
- 18 With UKSPF funding now approved, a project for the upgrading of the market is due to be included in the capital programme set out in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, to be considered by Council in February 2024.
- 19 The list of works which are currently being explored is summarised below. This is not intended to be exhaustive but to give an indication. These initial ideas are further illustrated in **Appendix 4**.
  - New level surface, accessible stalls with shutters
  - New warm white lighting and festoon lighting as appropriate
  - A communal seating space with screening
  - Repositioned stalls to increase visibility

- New or repaired floor
  - Greater number of stalls with facilities for food preparation
  - Improvements to the Churchill Way entrance and lobby
  - Improvements to the staircase entrances and lift lobby
  - Improvements to the entrance from the Grosvenor Centre.
- 20 The works are intended to be scalable, with a view to ensuring the final scope of works falls within the approved budget. Not all items currently under consideration may be deliverable within the budget.
- 21 Design work intended to clarify the scope and detail of works to be delivered has already been commissioned to be paid for from the overall UKSPF budget allocated. That design work commenced shortly after funding was confirmed and is due to take circa 7 months to complete. When complete, the design work will produce a clearly defined schedule of works and costings.
- 22 Given the current limitations of UKSPF allocations, the period for delivery of this project is extremely challenging. Under the current terms of the UKSPF allocation, the funding must be spent by end March 2025. With a currently immovable end date for the project, there is a clear risk that any unforeseen issues causing even minor delays could prevent delivery of the project as envisaged. Macclesfield's MP has been made aware of the difficulties a fixed end date for the spend of UKSPF poses for any project of this nature, with a view to him pursuing an extension of time for UKSPF spend.
- 23 The exact order of works and implementation plan for the project cannot be firmed up until the scope of works has been finalised with further discussions then taking place with the intended contractors, ANSA market management team, traders, and Environmental Services. However, given the tight timescale and fixed project budget, it is planned to try to deliver enhancements in phases, working with traders, market management and contractors to identify appropriate phasing, then moving traders within the market utilising unlet space as necessary, with the aim of minimising inconvenience for traders in so far as is possible, and aiming to ensure all traders can continue to trade for the duration of the works.
- 24 It is intended to utilise the North-West Construction Hub Low Value Framework to procure the construction works, specifying that work must be completed within this period. Given the anticipated cost of the improvement works exceeds £1,000,000, committee approval is required to proceed to contract.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 25 In 2022, as part of the study to explore options to improve the market, a survey of local resident's views on the indoor market was undertaken by the appointed team. The findings of this survey, which was completed by 389 individuals, were considered when identifying potential improvements. The appointed market study team also considered the views of market traders before making recommendations. Some of the recommended changes can be seen to stem directly from market trader's views, such as the provision of stall security shutters, and some stem from residents, such as the recommendation to create accessible toilets. Some improvements recommended, such as improved signage, echo views expressed by both traders and residents alike.
- 26 Since 2022 several meetings have been held with market traders to keep them informed regarding the outcome of the market study, the implementation plan for the new toilets, and the intention to seek funding for further improvements. In December 2023, traders were informed that UKSPF has been awarded but it has been made clear to traders that further permissions are required before any improvements can be taken forward. The response from traders to the range of improvements being explored has been positive. Given the tightness of the timescale and the limitations on the budget, the intention is to introduce improvements in a phased manner, allowing traders to continue to operate their businesses from the market. Officers have committed to regular updates being provided for market traders as key milestones are met and trader's views will be considered as the project progresses. Officers are keen to minimise disruption for traders, but it must be understood that with such tight timescales and limited fixed budget it may be too challenging to meet all requests.
- 27 Macclesfield indoor market is located within Macclesfield Central ward. Ward members Cllr Braithwaite and Cllr Farrall have both been supportive of the vision to upgrade the market since inception, were both proactive in supporting the introduction of new toilets into the market in 2023, and have both reiterated their support for this further phase of refurbishment proposals. The project team will continue to keep these ward members updated on key milestones regarding this project as it progresses.
- 28 Macclesfield Town Council have also been keen collaborators in finding means to improve the market, make officers available to support CEC in meetings with traders and continue to work in a collaborative constructive way with officers on all matters relating to the market project. The Town Council will be kept involved in the project as it is pursued, and their support and encouragement are of significant help to the CEC project team.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 29 The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 states that the Council will seek to deliver its strategic regeneration plan for Macclesfield under the priority of ensuring thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all. That strategic regeneration plan is the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), approved by Cabinet in October 2019. The SRF specifically identifies the desirability of revitalising the indoor market to attract a wider range of shoppers.

### Other Options Considered

- 30 Not proceeding to contract refurbishment works has been considered, particularly given the limited staff resources available within the Economic Development team. However, the opportunities for external funding to support this kind of project in locations such as Macclesfield, which are not perceived centrally to be a priority for levelling up funding, are exceedingly rare. If this opportunity is not embraced, it may be many more years before a similar opportunity arises.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	No improvements to the market will be delivered	Conditions continue to deteriorate; vacancies increase and income to CEC decreases whilst costs continue to rise.

### Implications and Comments

#### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 31 If the North-West Construction Hub Low Value Framework is used to procure the construction works, this should result in the award of a contract that is compliant with the public contract regulations. Legal will support the process for contract award utilising this Framework in tandem with colleagues from the procurement team.

#### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 32 This project was awarded £1,349,400 UKSPF on 23 Nov 24. Up to £80,000 of that revenue budget has been allocated towards design work. The project has subsequently been put forward to be included as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, to be considered by Council on 27 February 2024.
- 33 The project is being designed to be scalable. This will enable elements to be removed from the scope without undermining the entire project to

limit financial risk to the Council from rising costs. There is no current expectation that the Council will be required to contribute to the cost of the scheme.

- 34 The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and DLUHC relating to the UKSPF allocation, states that no funding will be provided for activity after 31 March 2025 and that the Lead Local Authority must be able to include funding within the 2024-2025 accounts by the end of the funding period, with underspends in the final year of the programme being repaid to the Secretary of State. The project team are aware of this limitation on the funding, and this should be written into any contract for the works. It is likely that a significant portion of the award will need to be claimed in arrears so it is important that the project team factor this into any procurement contracts to ensure that they are “end loaded” therefore limiting the time that the Council needs to forward fund the work before receipt of the claim.
- 35 If successfully delivered the scheme has the potential to improve the attractiveness of the market to new traders and reduce vacancies, thereby increasing income to the Council in the longer term.

*Policy*

- 36 The Corporate Plan (2021-25) recognises the importance of successful town centres under the priority of ensuring Cheshire East is a thriving and sustainable place. Further, it specifically states that by 2025 the Council wants to see the delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Macclesfield. That regeneration plan, the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework, in turn, specifically references the desirability of revitalising the indoor market.
- 37 The refurbishment of Macclesfield indoor market would support additional priorities in the Corporate Plan as set out below.

<b>An open and enabling organisation</b>	<b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b>	<b>A thriving and sustainable place</b>
Listening, learning, and responding to our residents - proposals have been informed by a survey of residents as well as discussions with market traders.	Working together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient – local markets can act as important social- hubs	A great place for people to live, work and visit – enhancing the market will benefit all residents who visit it and could stimulate wider investment in the locality.

<p>Supporting a sustainable financial future for the council – the proposal aims to deliver changes which should reduce vacancies and hence increase income.</p>	<p>strengthening community bonds.</p>	<p>Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all – the works will make stalls more flexible for a wider range of start-up/ small scale businesses</p> <p>Transport network that is safe and promotes active travel – improved facilities for cyclists are planned as part of the enhancement works.</p>
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### *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion*

38 An Equality Impact Assessment for this project is set out at **Appendix 5**.

### *Human Resources*

39 The project is being led by the Economic Development Service and Facilities Management Service working collaboratively. Regular communication is ongoing with ANSA and Environmental Services who are responsible for Market Management. Other Services are likely to need to support the project including Procurement, Assets and Legal.

40 Staff resources in several of these teams are extremely stretched, with current vacancies. Any staff illness or unplanned absence poses a risk for the project.

### *Risk Management*

41 A risk register is being developed and will be maintained for the duration of the project. The key risk at the present time relates to the exceptionally tight timescale for delivery of a project of this nature due to the fixed deadline imposed by UKSPF. This deadline is outside the control of the Council and the local MP for Macclesfield has been made aware with a request made to lobby for extension of the available timescale for spend.

### *Rural Communities*

42 There are considered to be no specific implications for rural communities arising from this report.

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

43 There are considered to be no specific implications for young people/cared for children stemming from this report.

*Public Health*

44 There are considered to be no significant direct implications for public health stemming from the project with a neutral overall impact on public health anticipated. This is not to say the project cannot have indirect positive benefits. Given the potential for thriving markets to provide relatively low-cost healthy produce and for markets to provide social hubs, a thriving market is considered to have the potential to have a general indirect positive impact on public health.

*Climate Change*

45 Whilst not primarily being proposed as a scheme to reduce carbon, having a thriving, attractive market in the heart of the town centre, may encourage people to shop more locally thereby reducing emissions associated with travel. Additionally, opportunities will be taken to ensure climate change is considered throughout the design process, for example when fittings are selected, in the incorporation of features to support active travel etc. Whilst longer term market management is outside the scope of the project, the interaction with traders which results from the project may also enable new conversations to be developed around their efforts to reduce carbon, such as in their choices for packing, opportunities for reuse of materials and recycling.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	<p>Jo Wise Development and Regeneration Manager  <a href="mailto:Jo.wise@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Jo.wise@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development  <a href="mailto:charles.jarvis@cheshireeast.gov.uk">charles.jarvis@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a></p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1: Photographs of Macclesfield Indoor Market</p> <p>Appendix 2: Record of market income and costs</p> <p>Appendix 3: Photographs of new market WCs</p>

	Appendix 4: Illustrative initial proposals Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	<a href="#"><u>Officer decision: UKSPF allocation to additional projects</u></a>

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Appendix 1 – Macclesfield Indoor Market photographs illustrating current condition.



Churchill Way Entrance



Grosvenor Centre Entrance



Service Area



Inside Market Hall



Churchill Way Entrance



Inside Market Hall



Market Hall Entrance



Inside Market Hall

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## Appendix 2 – Macclesfield Indoor Market Income and Expenditure

		2022/23	2019/2020	2018/19	2017/18
			£	£	£
<b>Macclesfield Indoor Market</b>					
<b>Expenditure</b>	Employees	58,735	51,537	50,526	55,591
	Premises		-		
	- General		-	-	1,334
	- Repairs & Maintenance		101,591	51,273	67,571
	- Rates (NDR)		9,173	4,843	9,162
	- Electricity		29,526	34,670	31,239
	- Gas		(1,016)	422	1,024
	- Water		2,915	2,926	3,066
	- Service Charge		21,333	42,667	64,000
	- Trade Waste Collection		8,147	12,331	9,390
		185,858	171,669	149,132	186,786
	Transport	-	-	-	6,162
	Supplies & Services	10,594	6,344	6,469	449
	<b>Total</b>		<b>229,551</b>	<b>206,127</b>	<b>248,988</b>
<b>Income</b>					
	Stall Rents		(103,360)	(148,373)	(158,729)
	Recharge for Electricity		(5,164)	(5,263)	(11,503)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91,461</b>	<b>(108,525)</b>	<b>(153,636)</b>	<b>(170,232)</b>
	<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b>	<b>159,214</b>	<b>121,026</b>	<b>52,491</b>	<b>78,756</b>

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**Appendix 3 – Macclesfield Indoor Market new accessible toilet facilities  
(New Changing Places and public toilet facilities completed November 2023)**



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# Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (MIMR)

Summary of client vision and objectives



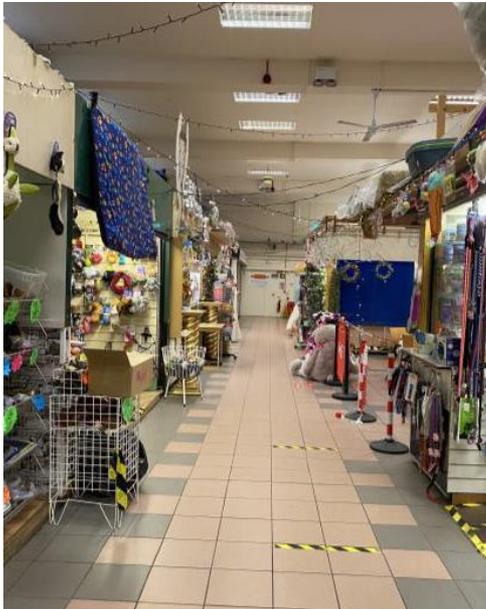
# Suggested look and feel

To be informed by branding (if funding agreed) but current thoughts are:

- Colour palette – natural wood, black, cream and dark green (not too much cream i.e. not too bright).
- Emphasize sustainability
- Use of robust but natural materials where possible
- Seeking to attract a younger demographic without alienating older generations



# Floor, ceiling and lighting improvements



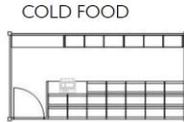
- As a minimum, repair as necessary to ensure safe, stable level surface and enable removal of all hazard tape
- Allow for new flooring to demark communal seating area
- Anticipated to be unaffordable but new flooring to be costed for comparison
- Retain emergency lighting as necessary but remove all high-level strip lighting
- paint ceiling darker colour e.g. dark green
- Screening unsightly services/exposed wires
- Pendant lighting with pendants at relatively low level e.g.
- WARM white lighting throughout. No cool white lighting.
- Festoon lighting as appropriate within, around or between stalls AND at entrances to entice

Open

Fair

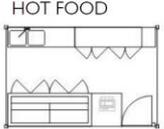
Green

# Stalls with shutters



COLD FOOD

Size : 13.6 m2  
 Suggested occupants:  
 - Baked goods  
 - Butchers  
 - Fresh produce  
 - Other Fresh farm goods

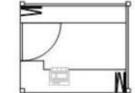


HOT FOOD

Size : 13.6 m2  
 Suggested occupants:  
 - Deli foods  
 - cafe  
 - Coffee shops



RETAIL - TYPE 1 (flexible)



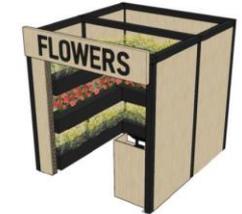
Size: 13.6 m2  
 Suggested occupants:  
 - Pet shops  
 - Hand crafts  
 - Records books  
 - etc



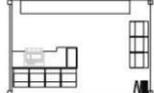
RETAIL - TYPE 2



Size: 6.7 m2  
 Suggested occupants:  
 - Flowers  
 - Mobiles  
 - Beauticians  
 - etc



TEXTILE STORE



Size : 7.4 m2  
 Suggested occupants:  
 - Clothing  
 - Yarn  
 - Mass textile  
 - Seamstresses  
 - Seasonal wears



## Objectives:

- Allow for replacement of all stalls with new modular stall system
- All stalls to have entrances level to the floor (not raised)
- All stalls to have open shutters allowing visibility and security
- All stalls to have new stall lighting
- Consistent signage (ideally allow for sign writer to hand paint signs liaising with traders to incorporate ideas)
- To create a more consistent look and feel
- Allow for water at all existing stalls with water and plumbing to additional stalls to enable flexibility for future use (market Manager to be asked to provide details for services to all existing stalls on a plan)
- Note: Although the original consultants' report suggested relocating stall holders into zones, we would prefer to aim to replace stalls on their existing site if possible.



# Communal Seating Space



## Objectives:

- A designated seating area with appropriate screening to ensure appropriate safety and privacy
- A sense of 'partial enclosure' by placement of seating/planters etc.
- New flooring
- Feature to visually reduce height of this area and allow structure for ambient lighting
- New tables and chairs (designs to be informed by branding)
- USB charging ports for public use

# Churchill Way entrance



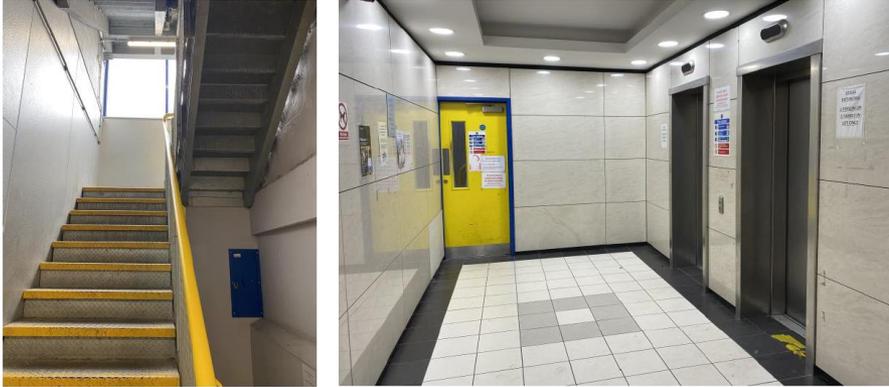
Artists' impression from previous consultancy work



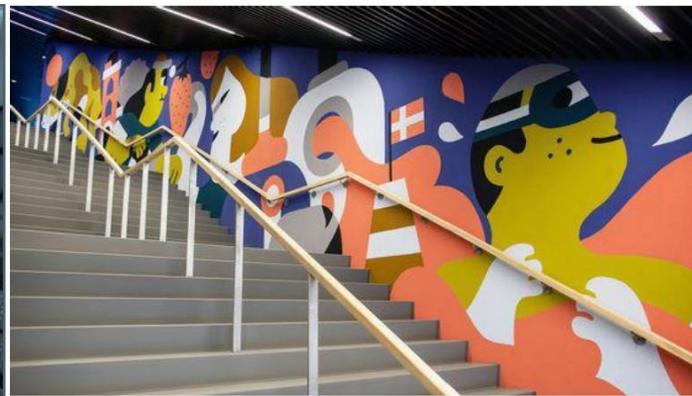
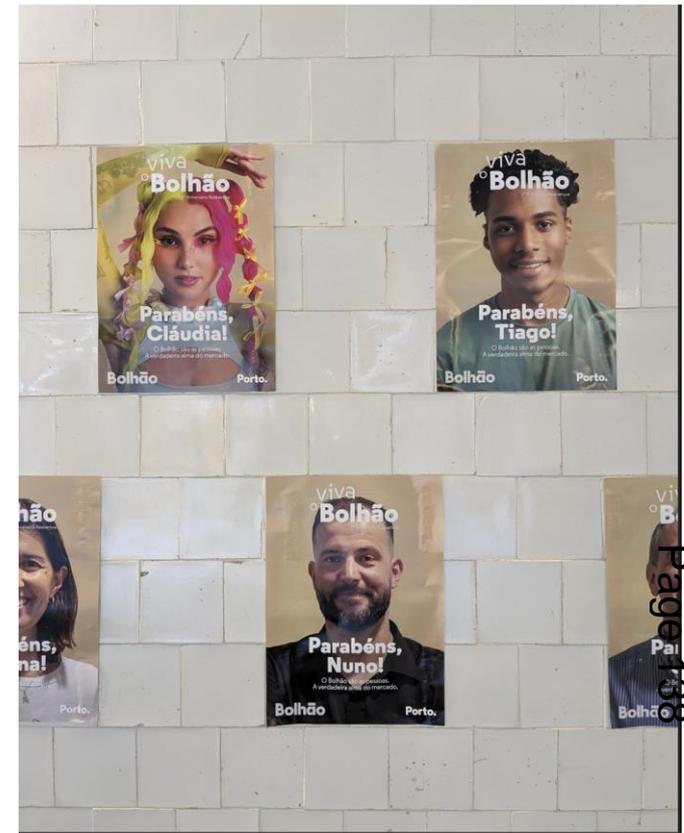
- A - Text painted on brick work arches as per artists impression
- B - Replace market hall entrance sign
- C - New signage over southern elevation service entrance
- D - Refresh of ply portico
- Refresh of external area to be addressed through separate contract and funding; greening/cycle racks
- Screen off caged areas and ducting
- Retained cycle parking area ideally with additional equipment
- New lighting/internal entrance signage
- Artwork/murals



# Stairs and lift lobby



- Stair area Yellow Room – deep clean/repairs to stabilise wall surface ready for mural
- Stair area Grosvenor Centre entrance – removal of silver laminate panels and making good wall ready for mural
- New bespoke signage following branding from lift access and both stair accesses (both directions – ‘Market’ and ‘Parking’)
- Community Notice Board/Trader profiles in lift lobby
- Fire safety information boards as needed
- Murals in stairwells



# Potential Grosvenor Centre Entrance



## Objectives:

- A – New market entrance signage (branded)
- B – Doors to be refreshed (potentially replaced if budget allows, otherwise recoated)
- C – Window frames recoated



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# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**TITLE: Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (MIMR)**

## VERSION CONTROL

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>
8/8/2023	0.1	Jo Wise & Craig Wallace	New Document

## CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL –EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**Stage 1 Description:** Fact finding (about your policy / service /

<b>Department</b>	Growth & Enterprise		<b>Lead officer responsible for assessment</b>	Jo Wise
<b>Service</b>	Economic Development		<b>Other members of team undertaking assessment</b>	Craig Wallace
<b>Date</b>	8/8/2023		<b>Version</b>	0.01
<b>Type of document (mark as appropriate)</b>	<b>Plan</b>	Yes		
<b>Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)</b>	<b>New</b>	Yes		
<b>Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation)</b>  <b>Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service</b>	<p><b>Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (MIMR)</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">Macclesfield SRF</a> identifies as an objective improving the environment in the town centre, with the historic heart as a priority location. ‘There is a need to enhance the physical environment of the Retail Core in order to better appeal to all town centre users. Interventions to support this could include...Investment in enhancing the indoor market and Grosvenor Centre Car Park would also improve the look and feel of the Retail Core’ and ‘support the revitalisation of the existing indoor market to attract a wider range of shoppers’.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Macclesfield Town Centre Recovery Plan</a> identifies improving the market offer of the town and liaising with traders to achieve this.</p> <p>The aim of this project is to address both these objectives; improving the market offer in the town centre, not only to enhance the quality of the town centre environment but also to change its functionality to make it a ‘go-to’ destination for visitors.</p>			
<b>Who are the main stakeholders, and have they been engaged with?</b>	<p>The main stakeholders are:</p> <p>Market Traders</p>			

<p><b>(e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</b></p>	<p>Adjacent businesses Macclesfield DIB/East Cheshire Eye Society Blue Badge holders Local residents/visitors to the town centre Local elected Members Macclesfield Town Council</p> <p>The MIMR project has been informed by numerous consultation and engagement activities that have occurred in recent years as explained in more detail below.. Further engagement is envisaged as plans are developed in detail, particularly with market traders and those with insight into how the project might impact on people with specific needs such as Macclesfield DIB and the Cheshire East Eye Society.</p>
<p><b>Consultation/ involvement carried out</b></p>	<p>In 2019, recognising the need to support the vitality and viability of Macclesfield town centre, Cheshire East Council (CEC) commissioned a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) to identify clear objectives, priorities, and a route map for town centre regeneration. Between February and March 2019 CEC consulted on the SRF for Macclesfield town centre by employing a range of consultation strategies that resulted in over 250 responses, the majority originating from an online survey.</p> <p>Some of the key findings from the SRF consultation alongside an assessment of how these findings support the proposed investment from the LUF are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the six identified character areas outlined in the draft SRF, respondents to the consultation identified “Chestergate &amp; Historic Heart” as the highest priority area for regeneration and the “Retail Core” as the joint second greatest priority area. The proposal seeks to improve the indoor market, sited in the Grosvenor Centre in central Macclesfield. The proposal is therefore focused on the area of the town centre which the local community has identified as the most important area for regeneration. These results clearly demonstrate the general support for investment in these areas of Macclesfield town centre.</li> <li>• Investment made in the indoor market and Grosvenor Centre car park was referenced heavily in the comments received</li> </ul>
<p><b>What consultation method(s) did you use?</b></p>	<p>To date, public consultation on concept designs used CEC website to collect responses. Paper copies of questionnaires were made available on request for people who cannot access the internet.</p>

Stage 2 Initial Screening

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

<p><b>Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis?</b> (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)</p>	<p>The parties most directly affected by this proposal would be existing market traders and their customers.</p>
<p><b>Who is intended to benefit and how</b></p>	<p>The measures are intended to benefit both the General Public and traders in Macclesfield Indoor Market.</p> <p>The measures would significantly enhance the appearance of the indoor market in the town centre, with the intention of enhancing the town centre experience for all who use it. To enhance dwell time with additional seating that enables more social interaction, and to improve perceptions of place with the aim of encouraging wider private investment in the town centre. This should benefit the local community as a whole.</p>
<p><b>Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?</b></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Changing the design of the indoor market can have both particular impacts on those with visual impairments or mobility issues (including those with pushchairs) in potentially positive ways.</p> <p>For example, improving the layout of the market hall and remodelling the stalls so that they are uniform in shape and look can reduce 'clutter' making it less difficult for people with visual impairments or mobility issues to navigate a clear unobstructed route through the market. Increased seating may help older people who may rely on sitting down to rest.</p>
<p><b>Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?</b></p>	<p>The decision to progress with any detailed design, would take into account impact on all current users alongside the benefits to local businesses and would have regard to any mitigation.</p>
<p><b>Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected?</b> (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)</p>	<p>Not considered likely provided due consideration is given to design and mitigation from the perspective of all users and access for all is a key design objective.</p>
<p><b>Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?</b></p>	<p>Based on general correspondence and discussions with users such as East Cheshire Eye Society there is a current conflict in the public realm when pavement areas are used for outdoor seating/advertising/sale of goods etc by individual businesses. The careful design of the indoor market gives scope to consider and hopefully help reduce such issues in the market hall..</p>
<p><b>Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)</b></p>	

<b>Age</b>	<b>Y</b>		<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Religion &amp; belief</b>		<b>N</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Y</b>		<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>Sex</b>		<b>N</b>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Race</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Sexual orientation</b>		<b>N</b>

**Stage 3 Evidence**

<b>What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts</b>		<b>Level of Risk (High, Medium or Low)</b>
<b>Age</b>	No specific evidence has been identified but it is assumed evidence would be available to demonstrate that older age groups will be more likely to have mobility and visual issues and therefore may be more impacted by availability of public seating, clarity of unobstructed access routes etc	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>
<b>Religion</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Past engagement with the Macclesfield DIB and East Cheshire Eye Society on similar projects indicates there is a high risk of changes to the public realm impacting on how people with disabilities can access and use the space. This is also true within the indoor market area.</p> <p>This may impact on how disabled people feel about using the town centre as well as any physical impacts.</p> <p>We have previously worked with Macclesfield DIB and the Cheshire East Eye Society and their input has been invaluable in shaping detailed designs for the Castle St scheme for example. We would continue to liaise with them pre, during and post works on any future stage of any indoor market interventions.</p>	<b>High</b>
<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>	No specific evidence has been identified but it is clear that parents with young children using prams may be impacted in similar ways to wheelchair users with regard to access in the indoor market.	<b>Low</b>
<b>Sex</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>

<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>
<b>Race</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No impact	<b>Low</b>

**Stage 4 Mitigation**

<b>Protected characteristics</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b> <i>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</i>	<b>How will this be monitored?</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>Age</b>	Maintain as a minimum existing levels of indoor market seating	Cheshire East Regeneration Service	Craig Wallace	Through detailed design stages
<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>	No impact			
<b>Religion</b>	No impact			
<b>Disability</b>	Materials /detailed design for the indoor market should be discussed with both the DIB and East Cheshire Eye Society. This will enable discussion on potential issues in further detail and help identify mitigation for any issues identified.	Cheshire East Regeneration Service	Craig Wallace	At stage of development of detailed designs

<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>	Materials /detailed design for the indoor market should be discussed with both the DIB and East Cheshire Eye Society which should highlight issues for anyone needing more space for access such as those with prams and pushchairs alongside wheelchair users. This will enable discussion on potential issues in further detail and help identify mitigation for any issues identified.	Cheshire East Regeneration Service	Craig Wallace	At stage of development of detailed designs
<b>Sex</b>	No impact			
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	No impact			
<b>Race</b>	No impact			
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No impact			

## 5. Review and Conclusion

<b>Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed</b>			
<b>Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts</b>	<b>How will this be monitored?</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>	<b>Target date</b>
Liaise at detailed design stage with Macclesfield DIB and East Cheshire Eye Society in addition to requiring design team to adhere to any current regulations with regard to accessibility for those with disabilities.	This will be monitored by the project officer responsible for project management on any public realm scheme.	Craig Wallace	On going as detailed designs are developed and refined.
<b>Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions</b>	<a href="#">Macclesfield Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework</a> <a href="#">Macclesfield Town Centre Recovery Plan</a>		
<b>When will this assessment be reviewed?</b>	Every 12 months		
<b>Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?</b>	No		
<b>Lead officer sign off</b>	Jo Wise	<b>Date</b>	8/8/23
<b>Head of service sign off</b>	Charles Jarvis	<b>Date</b>	8/8/23

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**Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website**

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**Economy and Growth Committee Work Programme 2024/25**

<b>Report Reference</b>	<b>Committee Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>EIA</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Priority</b>	<b>Part of Budget and Policy Framework</b>	<b>Exempt Item</b>
EG/01/24-25	04/06/24	Service Budgets 2024/25	To set out the allocation of approved budgets for 2024/25 for services under the Committee's remit, as determined by Finance Sub Committee	Director of Finance and Customer Service – Section 151 Officer	No	No	Open	Yes	No
EG/02/24-25	04/06/24	Westfields: Future Use – Update	To provide an update on the future use of Westfield offices.	Acting Executive Director of Place	No	Yes	Open	Yes	Yes
EG/03/24-25	16/1/2025	Westfields - Progress update	To provide an update on Progress on the Westfields Offices.	Acting Executive Director of Place	Yes	Yes	Open	Yes	Yes - in Part

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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