

Corporate Policy Committee

5 October 2023

Developing a New Corporate Plan

Report of: Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive

Report Reference No: CP/22/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update on progress made in relation to developing a new strategic plan for Cheshire East, further to the introductory report that was presented in July 2023.
- 2 A new plan is being developed for several reasons. Firstly, that there are a significant number of new elected members of Cheshire East Council and that the plan needs to reflect post-election priorities. Secondly the context in which we are operating has changed and is one of financial challenge, rising inflation and increasing costs and demands, which means there is a greater need to focus our resources and potentially target services. There are also advancements being made in relation to digital capabilities and artificial intelligence that the council needs to safely and securely take advantage of to drive efficient service delivery.

Executive Summary

- 3 The new Cheshire East Strategic Plan will be a plan to outline the priorities and ambitions of Cheshire East. The forthcoming engagement exercises will work with communities and stakeholders to understand what we want the Cheshire East of the future to look like, and what are the ingredients that make a good place to live, work and visit. Under these high level ambitions the plan will state priority areas for the long term, and actions that can be delivered in the medium term, by April 2028. What is feasible to be delivered will be dependant on our available resources over that period. How we will deliver the plan will be

informed by the refresh our organisational culture, striving for a high support and high challenge organisation.

- 4 **Appendix 1** shows a draft refreshed strategic policy framework. Existing council strategies have been mapped and show that over 50 strategies are in existence, with over 3,000 performance commitments made. In addition to acting as an overarching strategic plan for Cheshire East, the development work also seeks to streamline a new strategic framework, to enable us to work more collaboratively and more efficiently.
- 5 Due to the resource challenges we face, there is a need to prioritise and to consider targeting areas of service delivery to areas that our evidence shows require them the most. In Phase 1, two key areas have been highlighted as key priorities to be developed: the need to reduce health inequalities and implement the outcomes desired by the recently updated health and wellbeing strategy, and to continue our commitments to achieving net zero for both the council and for Cheshire East.
- 6 This report also summarises the internal engagement activities that have taken place during July and August 2023 (known as “phase 1”) to inform the next phases of developing the strategic plan.
- 7 One outcome of phase 1 was that there was unanimous agreement to move away from the term “corporate plan “as this can be seen as a barrier to people engaging with the plan. Therefore, the report refers to “Cheshire East Plan” and “Cheshire East Strategic Plan”. It is also recommended that the discussions with partners have recommended that no one organisation can achieve strategic objectives in isolation and therefore the Plan will be a key document for the area of Cheshire East, rather than just a council plan, and will support our role as a community leader and place shaper. The refreshed place will be used to set the ambitions of the council for the borough of Cheshire East, and to influence partners and stakeholders as to our strategic aims.
- 8 This report also details how the intelligence gathered during Phase 1 has shaped the activities that will be undertaken during phases 2 and 3. This is a key period of opportunity for us to build on our assets and use those strengths to address our challenges.
- 9 The new plan will be presented to Council in February 2024, and will go live on 1 April 2024. A reminder of the overall timetable is also included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve that the Corporate Plan will be referred to as the Cheshire East Plan.
2. Approve the planned activities and timescale to implement phases 2 and 3 of developing the new strategic plan.
3. Remain committed to the previous decision of 11 July 2023 to agree to receive the draft Cheshire East Plan on 8 February 2024.

Background

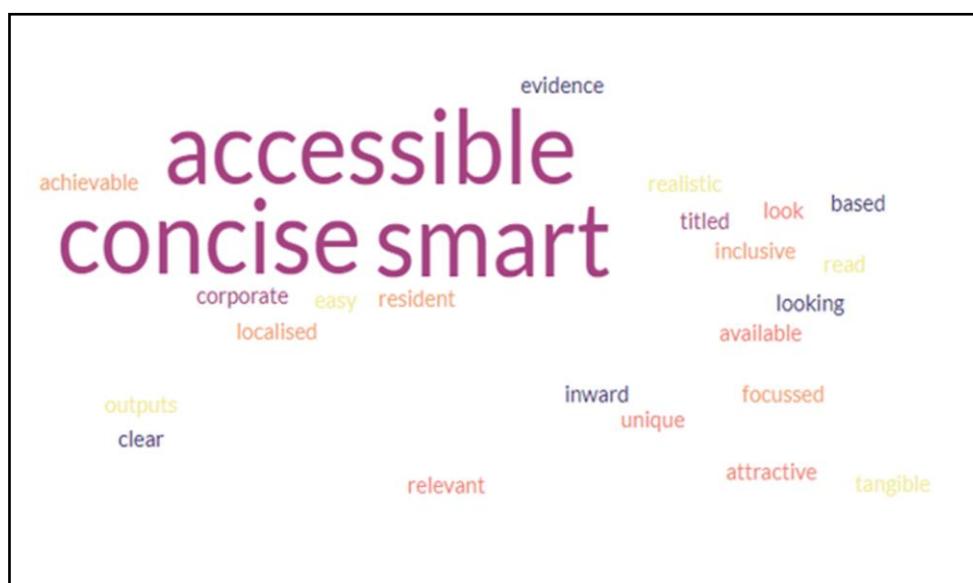
- 10 The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan is the council's overarching strategic document, setting out the vision and priorities for the council. The current plan was approved in February 2021 and covers the period April 2021 to March 2025. By prioritising a clear set of commitments and actions, the Corporate Plan enables residents to hold the council to account for its performance and allows all to see the ambitions for Cheshire East.
- 11 The Plan is the “umbrella” strategy that sits above, and informs, all other strategies and plans. All strategies produced by Cheshire East Council should reference, and support the achievement of, the Corporate Plan. All members of the council workforce should be able to see the “golden thread” of their day-to-day activities contributing to the achievement and success of the plan.
- 12 The new Corporate Plan is being co-created over the three phases, as previously agreed by Corporate Policy Committee in July 2023:

Phase	Title	Dates	Aims
1	Visioning and pre consultation	July and August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To capture ideas to create the vision and mission statement• To confirm the timeframe of the new plan• To confirm the scope of the new plan• To understand the latest data and intelligence to form evidence-based priorities• To confirm the priority themes• To agree the consultation and engagement process
2	Consultation and Engagement	September – mid November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure co production of the plan• To ensure that the plan in

			uniquely Cheshire East
3	Post-consultation and draft Plan agreement	November 2023-February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop the plan in line with the outcomes of the Consultation and Engagement programme • To agree the wording of the priorities and content of the plan • To agree the performance management framework • To agree the launch of the Plan

- 13 During July and August 2023, phase 1 of the above process was completed. Phase 1 focussed on engaging and gaining feedback internally prior to going out for external consultation and engagement.
- 14 The following groups of internal stakeholders were engaged with during phase 1; elected members through member engagement sessions (two face to face and one via Microsoft Teams), Corporate Leadership Team, Wider Leadership Team, Wider Leadership Community, the Brighter Futures Champions, “In the Know” staff information briefings, Managers Share and Support sessions, individual internal meetings (where requested), team meetings and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 15 A cross council officer group has also been established in Phase 1 with an approved terms of reference to coordinate work across the council directorates and ensure that a collaborative “one council” approach is achieved.
- 16 A first activity undertaken was to ask stakeholders “how would you describe a good plan?”. The word cloud at Figure one highlights the responses received. In the word cloud the larger the font size, the more people used the same word.

Figure 1



- 17 The most common words used were accessible, concise, and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound).
- 18 Engagement also considered the name, timescale and scope of the plan. There was universal agreement that it is recommended not to continue to use the title “Corporate Plan”. It was suggested that this phrase is not accessible to residents. It was proposed that a simple and straightforward title of “Cheshire East Plan” is used.
- 19 There are already some longer-term ambitions for Cheshire East that have been agreed, for example the net zero target of 2045 for Cheshire East, the health and wellbeing strategy, regeneration programmes and initiatives such as HS2. The Plan will therefore support achievement of these longer term aims and objectives and will consider what can be delivered and progressed in the period until April 2028.
- 20 The Phase 2 internal engagement also considered the current vision of Open, Fair and Green and consideration of the ambition for the next Plan. Figure 2 shows the word cloud produced for the most common words suggested. Green and sustainability remains a key theme. The word “together” was frequently referred to. This is indicative of the plan being more collaborative across partners, rather than a council plan, and also deemed to represent less silo working and greater efficiencies across council teams and departments. The Phase 2 engagement will further consider the specific priorities of the plan and what an appropriate vision would be to summarise them.

Figure 2



- 21 There has been many sources of information and intelligence gathered on priorities, themes and specific projects and initiatives that will be referenced within the plan. There was also discussion around the need for the plan to be realistic and achievable within the current resource constraints. Therefore, it is recommended that the key priorities of the plan are around health and wellbeing and around achievement of net zero targets and sustainability. The Health and Wellbeing strategy that has recently agreed is a key foundation document that informs the plan. The plan is being co-created around six key themes (exact wording to be developed and refined); health and wellbeing, children and young people, net zero and sustainable communities, improving the economy, transport and accessibility and continuous improvement of the council.
- 22 Phase 2 will develop and refine these priorities into a set of outcomes and details of key activities.

Consultation and Engagement

- 23 Consultation and engagement will take place from September to mid-November, in accordance with the refreshed Consultation and Engagement toolkit agreed by Corporate Policy Committee in 2022.
- 24 The following activities are scheduled to take place; a general residents survey bringing together questions around the development of the plan and our medium-term financial strategy, an internal staff “pulse” survey, the use of the mobile library service for engagement, partnership meetings, voluntary and community focus group sessions, engagement with children and young people and face to face pop up style events around the borough. Volunteer ambassadors are being identified to support the sessions.

- 25 The feedback will be collated and will inform the content and development of the plan during Phase 3. This information will also inform the equality impact assessment.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 26 The recommendations have been made in order to achieve the initial timescale previously agreed at committee and to achieve the overall outcome of a new plan in place by April 2024.

Other Options Considered

- 27 An alternative option would be to roll over and continue with the current Corporate Plan. This option was discounted as the operating context of the council is different to the environment and context in 2020/21 when the current plan was produced.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 28 The Cheshire East Plan will be produced in accordance with legislative requirements and will be ultimately subject to approval by Full Council.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 29 The activities within the report can be funded from within existing budgets for resident surveys and consultation. The activities will also support development of proposals to achieve a balanced budget within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Policy

- 30 The development of the Cheshire East Plan supports the policy framework cited within the Council's constitution. It also supports the current Corporate Plan, particularly in relation to the "Open" strategic theme and the priority to "listen, learn and respond to residents".

An open and enabling organisation	A council which empowers and cares about people	A thriving and sustainable place

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 31 The process to develop the Cheshire East Plan will ensure that it is as accessible and inclusive as possible. This will include consideration of

different channels and methods of consultation and engagement. The process will also have due regard to ensuring that diverse communities can support the co creation of the plan. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed alongside the plan.

Human Resources

- 32 The workforce will be engaged within the development of the new plan using existing staff engagement networks.

Risk Management

- 33 A risk management implication has been identified with regards to consultation activity on MTFS items occurring at the same time as the engagement on the plan. All staff volunteer ambassadors will be briefed on this subject in order to mitigate the risk. Where appropriate, stakeholders will be referred to any statutory consultation proposals.

Rural Communities

- 34 The process will ensure that it is accessible to those living in rural communities to ensure their views are taken into account in developing the plan.

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

- 35 Children and Young Peoples groups, and their representatives will be included as stakeholders in the co creation of the new plan.

Public Health

- 36 The process of developing the new Plan will ensure that public health priorities are supported and reflected in the plan. The plan will have due regard to the Marmot principles and the priority to reduce health inequalities across Cheshire East.

Climate Change

- 37 The new Cheshire East plan will be developed to reflect local priorities, including continuing the message that Cheshire East Council has the most ambitious net zero target in the country. The plan will support achievement of net zero for the council and for the borough.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	<p>Sarah Bullock</p> <p>Director of Policy and Change</p> <p>sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Strategic Framework
Background Papers:	Corporate Policy Committee report reference: CP/14/23-24