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## **Corporate Policy Committee**

**13 June 2024**

## **Cheshire East Plan 2024-25**

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**Report of: Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive**

**Report Reference No: CPC/10/24-25**

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

### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report presents an update to the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 for the year 2024/25.
- 2 Corporate Policy Committee are also asked to consider the development of a new strategic plan for the Council and the borough, to follow the current plan.

### **Executive Summary**

- 3 The draft Cheshire East Plan 2024-25 presents an overview of work delivered in the first three years of the Corporate Plan 2021-25, and priority actions planned towards delivering the vision, aims and priorities of the Corporate Plan for the final 12 months of that plan's duration.
- 4 The new draft document is intended to provide a simpler view of the structure of the council's strategic vision, aims, priorities and priority actions. This provides a model we can follow in the design and development of future strategic plans.
- 5 The new draft document also takes into account the financial context in which the Council is now operating and the need for whole organisation transformation and improvement.
- 6 Should the committee, and the Council, approve the updated plan for the final year of the current Corporate Plan period (2021-2025), we can then continue to develop a new draft strategic plan for following period.

- 7 This may prompt further engagement activity, building on engagement activity undertaken over the last year, to inform and help shape the Council's strategic vision, aims and priorities for the future.
- 8 There is also the opportunity to develop and introduce a new strategic outcomes framework to support understanding about the organisation's work towards its strategic vision, aims and priorities for the period of the plan. This would also support day-to-day decision-making around prioritisation of activity and areas of focus.
- 9 There will also be opportunities to review how the council's vision, aims, strategic priorities and outcomes are built into various aspects of business and performance management and reporting.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the development of a new strategic plan (corporate plan) for Cheshire East Council to follow the current plan.

The Corporate Policy Committee recommends to Full Council:

2. The Cheshire East Plan 2024-25 (Appendix 1).

## Background

- 10 The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 is the council's overarching strategic document, setting out the vision, aims and priorities for the council. The current plan was approved in February 2021 and covers the period April 2021 to March 2025. By setting out a clear set of commitments and actions, a corporate plan enables residents to hold the council to account for its performance and allows everyone to see the ambitions for the borough.
- 11 In February 2024 Corporate Policy Committee resolved that a new Cheshire East Plan would be finalised following the approval of Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-28 (MTFS).
- 12 The MTFS, approved by Council in February 2024, recognises the need for whole-organisation transformation in order to reduce expenditure and redesign services as quickly as possible forecasting the requirement for budget savings of £100m over the next 4 years.

- 13 The Council has also applied for exceptional financial support from central government. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has approved, in principle, exceptional financial support in the form of a capitalisation direction up to the value of £17.6m. A condition of this support is that the Council submits a transformation plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) by August 2024.
- 14 In recent months, the Council has also been supported by a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge. This review will result in a set of recommendations from the peer team, and the Council will develop an action plan to deliver against those recommendations.
- 15 The draft Cheshire East Plan 2024-25 and, subject to committee approval, the development of a new plan to follow, should be considered in the context of the Council's financial position and the organisational transformation and improvement work already underway and being developed through the transformation programme and corporate peer challenge.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 16 Extensive engagement activity with a range of stakeholders, including general public, councillors, staff and partners was undertaken through 2023/24 to explore understanding of the Council's vision, aims and priorities, and to inform those priorities in future.
- 17 Should the committee approve development of a new strategic plan to follow the existing plan, further public and stakeholder engagement is advised to build on the findings of this earlier work.
- 18 Any engagement activity should seek to understand the expectations and priorities of the general population of the borough for the borough and for the Council itself, and how the priorities that are ultimately approved may impact on them. However, we should ensure that we effectively engage with seldom-heard populations in our communities, businesses and our partners, to establish a well-rounded view to inform the Council's vision, aims, priorities and outcomes for the borough for the next four years.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 19 It is being proposed that we provide a final year update to the existing Corporate Plan 2021-25, to provide greater clarity about the Council's vision, aims, priorities and priority activities for the final year of the plan in the context of the financial challenge and the required transformation

and improvement. It will also allow sufficient time to develop a new plan for the following period.

- 20 The new plan will work alongside both the MTFS and the Council transformation plan. Put simply, the new plan will set out what the Council is aiming to deliver for the borough (vision, aims, priorities and outcomes). The MTFS sets out how the council's financial resources will be allocated to deliver that vision. The transformation plan will set out how we will reshape the council and its operations to deliver the vision with the available resources.
- 21 Development of a new plan will provide the opportunity to review vision, aims and priorities and to consider the outcomes the council is working to deliver for the borough, its residents, communities and businesses, and how we measure and monitor delivery. It will also provide opportunities to engage with residents and other stakeholders around vision and priorities for the borough.

## Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The council's work programme would continue to be shaped by the original Corporate Plan 2021-25.	<p>The financial context in which the council is operating – both in the organisation itself and the wider context - has changed significantly since 2021.</p> <p>If we do not update and clarify the key deliverable activities that we will undertake in this final year of the Corporate Plan in response to the current financial context we risk prioritising the wrong things.</p>
Develop an entirely new plan now.	During the period of development for an entirely new plan, there may be confusion about the guiding vision, aims	It is important that the Council's activities and policies are shaped by clear and unambiguous

	<p>and priorities that shape the council's activities.</p> <p>Also, we would also be effectively cutting short the timeline for delivery of the priorities and activities set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-25 by one year.</p>	<p>priorities that have been agreed by Council.</p> <p>If we were to embark on creating an entirely new plan now, and not update the existing plan, we would risk introducing a period of ambiguity about the council's key priorities. This may impact on strategic focus and direction.</p>
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## Implications and Comments

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 22 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*

- 23 The recommendations in this report are presented in the context of the MTFS 2024-28. There is no variation to or impact on the MTFS 2024-28.
- 24 As described in paragraph 19, development of a new plan for the following period will be undertaken alongside development of future iterations of the MTFS giving the opportunity to build in any proposals that, if approved, may result in variation for future years.

### *Policy*

- 25 The development of the Cheshire East Plan 2024-25 supports the policy framework cited within the Council's constitution.
- 26 The document sets out the Council's agreed vision, aims and priorities, and provides examples of the work that has already been delivered towards that vision and key activities that the council plans to deliver in the final year of the Corporate Plan 2021-25.
- 27 As such it supports all Corporate Plan aims and priorities:

<b>Aim 1 - An open and enabling organisation</b>	<b>Aim 2 - A council which empowers and cares about people</b>	<b>Aim 3 - A thriving and sustainable place</b>
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<p>P1.1) Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making</p> <p>P1.2) Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation</p> <p>P1.3) Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation</p> <p>P1.4) Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough</p> <p>P1.5) Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered</p> <p>P1.6) Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents</p>	<p>P2.1) Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient</p> <p>P2.2) Reduce health inequalities across the borough</p> <p>P2.3) Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation</p> <p>P2.4) Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care</p> <p>P2.5) Support all children to have the best start in life</p> <p>P2.6) Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs</p> <p>P2.7) Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential</p> <p>P2.8) Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services</p>	<p>P3.1) A great place for people to live, work and visit</p> <p>P3.2) Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods</p> <p>P3.3) Reduce impact on the environment</p> <p>P3.4) A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel</p> <p>P3.5) Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all</p> <p>P3.6) Be a carbon neutral council by 2027</p>
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### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 28 An updated Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to inform the development of a new Cheshire East Plan
- 29 As mentioned in paragraph 17, a key consideration in developing the new Cheshire East Plan will be to ensure that the views of all groups, including seldom-heard populations and those with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010, are taken into account.

We need to be confident that we understand their priorities and the potential impact of decisions on different groups.

### *Human Resources*

- 30 The workforce will be engaged throughout the development of the new plan and to build improved operational understanding of the current plan.
- 31 This will include ensuring awareness of any priority or proposal for activity that directly impacts on organisational structure or workforce strategy.

### *Risk Management*

- 32 The delivery of the current plan and delivery of any new strategic plan for the council will be informed by the current and forecast strategic risk environment.

### *Rural Communities*

- 33 The draft plan includes specific activities relating to 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 People's 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 draft Cheshire East plan 2024-25 has been developed to reflect local priorities, including continuing the message that Cheshire East Council has one of the most ambitious net zero targets in the country. The plan will support achievement of net zero for the council and for the Borough.

- 38 Climate change and the Council's net-zero targets (for the organisation and for the borough) will be considered in the development of any new strategic plan for the borough.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Cheshire East Plan 2024-25
Background Papers:	None