

Appendix 3 - Report of the Member Advisory Panel to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure, May 2024

- 1 We were appointed by the Highways and Transport Committee to act in a non-decision-making capacity to advise the Director of Highways and Infrastructure from a Member's perspective in interpreting and understanding the findings of the peer review. We undertook this process through a number of meetings with officers between March and May 2024, either side of the review conducted by Future Highways Research Group (FHRG) in April 2024.
- 2 Prior to FHRG conducting the review we were briefed regarding the capability and capacity of FHRG. We were satisfied with their experience in conducting such reviews and that their analysis tool was appropriate for the council's needs. We were also briefed regarding the consideration of the council's commercial position and set our comments in that appropriate context.
- 3 In considering the review findings, we recognised the reflection it represented of our Highways service. It is a fair reflection that the service provides reasonable value for money. While there are some clear opportunities to improve, it came across clearly that improvements should be sought in partnership with Cheshire East Highways / Ringway-Jacobs as our current service partner. The relationship and collaborative working within the service are recognised as key and relatively unusual strengths and it is clear that we should build upon those aspects rather than risk losing them.
- 4 We would particularly like to see the following in the response to this review:
 - (a) As members, we recognise the Highways service's importance to residents and want to feel confident acting as advocates for the service with them. We are keen to provide members with more information about:
 - (i) The service and its scope;
 - (ii) More specific and accessible communication about service delivery; and
 - (iii) Events to help members better understand how services are delivered.
 - (b) The review recognises that the council's ability to improve in no small part relies upon the capacity of its Highways client team. While capable, this team is too small and under-resourced. We also note that other

authorities have moved away from a 'thin' client model. Increasing the resourcing of this team is critical if the council is to improve this service.

- (c) We support making the link clearer between the objectives of the highway maintenance policy and how it delivers the council's strategic goals of Open, Fair and Green.
 - (d) We must remember that while it is a Highways service contract, the contract is the council's and not just Highways'. We need to enable services outside Highways and Infrastructure to both understand how they can use services delivered by and work closer with CEH as our partner.
- 5 We note that the Highways service will be developing an action plan to respond to the recommendations of the review. We also note that the service will be looking to benchmark its performance and value for money in the future and look forward to a similar future review to measure progress.

Councillor Mark Goldsmith, Chair – Highways and Transport Committee

Councillor Laura Crane – Vice-Chair – Highways and Transport Committee

Councillor Nick Mannion – Chair – Finance Sub-Committee

Councillor Janet Clowes – Leader – Conservative Group