

OPEN

31st January 2025

Joint Committee Terms of Reference Amendments

**Report of: Growth Directors of Cheshire West and Chester Council,
Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council.**

Report Reference No: CWJC/10/24-25

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No
Cheshire West and Chester	No
Warrington	No
Cheshire East	No

Purpose of Report

- 1 To report the formal response of each of the three Councils to the Joint Committee's request to amend the Terms of Reference for the Committee to (a) include oversight and strategic direction for devolution to Cheshire and Warrington and (b) the ability to approve expenditure regarding sub-regional governance and other funding.

Executive Summary

- 2 At its meeting on 29th November 2024, the Joint Committee considered a report which proposed amendments to its Terms of Reference to enable it to provide effective strategic leadership on the development of any devolution proposition for Cheshire and Warrington. The proposed changes were to allow the Joint Committee to advance a potential devolution agreement with the Government to such a stage as it can make specific recommendations to each of the three Councils.
- 3 The proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference were made in the context of the imminent publication of the Devolution White Paper

by the Government, which was subsequently published in December 2024.

- 4 The proposed changes to the Terms of Reference would also clarify a government funding anomaly following the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership functions to Local Authorities.
- 5 All three Councils have now considered the Joint Committee's request and all have agreed to amend the Terms of Reference accordingly. The amended Terms of Reference are attached as **Appendix 1** to the report. In considering the proposed changes Cheshire West & Chester Council, through a Council Motion, has requested the Joint Committee to consider the re-naming of the Devolution Agreement from Cheshire & Warrington to Cheshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the agreement by each of the three Council's to amend the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee.
2. Note the amended Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee, detailed in Appendix 1.
3. Consider the request by Cheshire West and Chester Council regarding the name of the Devolution Agreement.

Joint Committee Terms of Reference – Amendments

- 6 At its meeting on 29th November 2024, the Joint Committee considered a report which proposed amendments to its Terms of Reference to enable it to provide effective strategic leadership on the development of any devolution proposition for Cheshire and Warrington. The proposed changes allow the Joint Committee to advance a potential devolution agreement with the Government to such a stage as it can make specific recommendations to each of the three Councils.
- 7 In December 2024, the Government published its Devolution White Paper, and it is expected that the English Devolution Bill will pass through Parliament in 2025/26. The Government is expected to announce details of a Devolution Priority Programme for those areas wishing to proceed as soon as possible, and Council Leaders and Deputy Leaders have expressed an interest in being included in the Programme so the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference to

enable the Joint Committee to oversee and provide strategic direction is timely.

- 8 In addition to the devolution related changes, since the functions of the Local Enterprise Partnership were transferred to Local Authorities in April 2024 government funding for sub-regional matters rest with local authorities, however, the Terms of Reference did not refer to this. Therefore, the Joint Committee also recommend a change to clarify the position so that such decisions are delegated to the Committee.
- 9 The Joint Committee's Terms of Reference were originally agreed by the three constituent Councils in February 2024 and it follows, therefore, that any subsequent request by the Joint Committee to change or amend them also need to be agreed by the three Councils. All the Councils have now considered the Joint Committee's request and agreed to the proposed changes.
- 10 Cheshire East Council considered the Joint Committee's request at its' Council meeting on 11th December 2024 and agreed the proposed amendments. Cheshire West and Chester Council's Cabinet considered and agreed the proposed changes at their meeting also on 11th December 2024. Warrington Borough Council's Cabinet considered and agreed the amendments to the Terms of Reference at its meeting on 13th January 2025.
- 11 At their full Council meeting on 12th December 2024, Cheshire West & Chester Council agreed a motion which included a request that the Leader of their Council, Councillor Gittins, (who is also the Chair of the Joint Committee) discusses with the Joint Committee, the possibility of the devolution agreement name to be called 'Cheshire' rather than 'Cheshire and Warrington' and, if approved, in principle, request the Joint Committee members discuss with their constituent devolution task and finish groups. The Joint Committee is, therefore, asked to discuss this request and to make a decision on the matter.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board

- 12 The Business Advisory Board has previously expressed its' support for an approach which would deliver the benefits of devolution at the earliest opportunity and empowering the Joint Committee to drive the process at pace would be welcome.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 13 The report is mainly for noting and simply reports the outcome of the respective Council meetings regarding the Committee's request to

amend the Terms of Reference, and therefore, no reasons for the justifying the recommendations is necessary. The recommendation relating to the Cheshire West & Chester Council motion is simply fulfilling a formal request for which there is no alternative action.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 14 Insofar as it relates to this report no consultation or engagement has been necessary as it is simply reporting the outcome of considerations by the three Councils for information. However, a comprehension communications and engagement plan is being developed as part of the on-going work around devolution to Cheshire and Warrington.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 15 There are no direct legal implications relating to this report. The Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee and the relevant delegations within them have previously been formally approved by each Council. It is therefore appropriate that all three Councils approve any changes or amendments to them for them to take effect.

Finance implications

- 16 There are no financial implications because of this report as it relates to relative minor changes to the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee. Any financial implications relation to devolution will be reported and considered in due course by the Joint Committee and, where appropriate, the three Councils.

Risk Management

- 17 A full risk register will be established as part of the project management arrangements for developing and Devolution Agreement and Strategic Combine Authority.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 18 There are no direct implications relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion relating to the report.

Policy

- 19 Any devolution agreement would support the Cheshire and Warrington vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Peter Jones, Programme Director, Cheshire & Warrington Sub-regional Programme Office Peter.jones@warrington.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Amended Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee.
Background Papers:	Joint Committee report 29 th November 2024 – Amendments to the Joint Committee Terms of Reference.