

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

6 February 2025

Cheshire East Plan 2025-29

Report of: Karen Wheeler – Interim Assistant Chief Executive

Report Reference No: CPC/53/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report presents the draft new Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 for approval and recommendation to full Council.
- 2 The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 sets out the council's overall vision and commitments for the borough and provides clarity of purpose and strategic direction for the organisation, residents and partners, aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 3 Corporate Policy Committee provides strategic direction to the operation of the council and is responsible for the formulation, co-ordination and implementation of the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan. The Committee has a responsibility to recommend the Cheshire East Plan to full Council for approval in line with the Budget and Policy Framework set out in the Constitution.

Executive Summary

- 4 This report presents the draft new Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 for approval and recommendation to full Council.
- 5 The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 sets out the council's overall vision and commitments for the borough and provides clarity of purpose and strategic direction for the organisation, residents and partners.

- 6 The plan is at the heart of the council's strategic framework and golden thread running through its policies, people, processes and practice, and is aligned to the new operating model developed as part of the Transformation Plan. The aspirations which form part of the model for how the council will work are included in the draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29. This will help us improve our culture and processes, systems and structures underpinning the delivery of the plan.
- 7 It is also aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025-29 which is the resource and financial plan of the Cheshire East Plan.
- 8 The proposed vision and commitments for 2025-29 as set out in the draft plan are:

Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all

Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing

Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council

- 9 The commitments reflect both the short-term challenges the council is addressing and long-term ambitions for the people and place of Cheshire East.
- 10 This is an overarching document reflecting key existing strategies and plans including the council's approach to delivering transformation and improvement. The plan does not include all the detailed projects and actions required to implement it but recognises that working in strong partnerships will be key to successful delivery. Once the Cheshire East Plan is agreed, a delivery plan will be created to set out the specific activity the council will prioritise and lead, to work towards achievement of the commitments. This will involve collaboration and co-production with Members, staff, partners and residents, as well as effective engagement. The delivery plan will be agreed by Corporate Policy Committee and progress reported regularly with an annual review.
- 11 A cross-party Member task and finish group was set up to support the development of the plan and has provided constructive input into the commitments and approach overall including that the tone should be positive and forward looking, and the language used easy for residents to understand. The Members are Councillors Braithwaite, Goldsmith, Gorman and Posnett. Staff engagement has taken place throughout the process.
- 12 Corporate Policy Committee provides strategic direction to the operation of the council and is responsible for the formulation, co-ordination and

implementation of the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan. The Committee has a responsibility to recommend the Cheshire East Plan to full Council for approval in line with the Budget and Policy Framework set out in the Constitution. If supported by Corporate Policy Committee, the draft plan will be recommended to full Council for approval in February 2025 alongside the MTFS.

RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree the draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 at Appendix 1
2. Delegate authority to make any final amendments to the interim Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader prior to submission to Full Council
3. Support the development of an annual delivery plan as part of a new corporate performance management framework
4. Agree that the committee receives at least quarterly updates on progress with the Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 and delivery plan.

The Corporate Policy Committee recommends to Full Council:

5. The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 as amended in accordance with the above delegation.

Background

- 13 The current Cheshire East Plan 2021-25 was approved in February 2021 and covers the period April 2021 to March 2025. The Plan was refreshed for 2024/25 to better reflect the council's financial position and was agreed at full Council in July 2024. In recommending the refreshed plan to full Council, Corporate Policy Committee also agreed to the development of a new strategic plan for Cheshire East Council to follow the current plan.
- 14 A new plan for 2025 onwards is now essential to provide residents, partners and the organisation with clarity of purpose and strategic direction aligned to a new operating model and MTFS. Although not a statutory requirement, a corporate plan is best practice and by setting out a clear set of strategic commitments, the Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 will allow everyone to see the council's vision for the borough.

- 15 The LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge report published in July 2024 includes a recommendation for the council to *Develop and agree a new multi-year Council Plan*. The report states that:

"...the opportunity exists for the Council to refresh its Council Plan to provide a consistent and clear narrative regarding its priorities and the difference it is seeking to make to the life of residents. This process will support staff, partners, and residents to be able to articulate and understand the ambitions of the organisation and will also support the Council to coordinate and corral organisational and individual contributions towards these goals."

- 16 This is an overarching document reflecting key existing strategies and plans including the council's approach to delivering transformation and improvement. It is recognised that other plans have necessarily been created before this to respond to external feedback and timelines including the Transformation Plan, Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan and Children's Services Improvement Plan. Other critical and cross-cutting strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28, have also been used to inform the Cheshire East Plan. Important aims from these strategies and plans are embedded within the overall commitments.
- 17 The plan does not include all the detailed projects and actions required to implement it but recognises that working in partnership will be key to successful delivery. Once the Cheshire East Plan is agreed, a delivery plan will be created to set out the specific activity the council will prioritise and lead, to work towards achievement of the commitments. This will involve collaboration and co-production with Members, staff, partners and residents, as well as effective engagement. It will also enable residents to hold the council to account for its performance in delivering against the commitments in the plan.

Annual Delivery Plan

- 18 The delivery plan will be created in the coming months to be agreed by Corporate Policy Committee in June 2025. Progress will be reported regularly with an annual review.
- 19 The Cheshire East Plan and its delivery plan are a core element of developing a new council-wide Performance Management Framework based on best practice. The framework will provide insight to inform decision-making, ensure accountability, transparency and enable robust internal and external scrutiny. It will set out a hierarchy of strategies, policies, service plans, key performance indicators and inform personal development plans (PDRs) for all staff – a golden thread.

- 20 The principles of the framework include:
- Alignment, management and reporting of all aspects of performance and assurance including finance and risk
 - Include SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) indicators and targets covering strategic, demand and organisational measures
 - Be underpinned by robust data quality assurance
 - Be sustainable using automation and digital technology where possible e.g. PowerBI
 - Ensure openness and transparency, facilitating continuous improvement
 - Ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountability
 - Create one version of the truth
- 21 Corporate Policy Committee currently receive a quarterly update on the delivery of the Cheshire East Plan 2021-25 only and service committees receive performance information on a regular basis specific to the subject of the committee. The new framework will improve strategic corporate oversight and consistency of approach, complementing the detailed performance and service specific dashboards that are considered at service committees.

Communication Plan

- 22 A Communication Plan will be developed to support the launch of the new Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 and ensure the vision and commitments are widely communicated, embedding them in everything that the council does.
- 23 The Communications Plan will include an updated look, feel and tone to the council's communication channels and materials ensuring a modern and engaging approach to reflect Commitment 3 to be an effective and enabling council and underpin the approach to collaboration.
- 24 If agreed, the plan will be launched at a series of all staff events taking place in March 2025.

Consultation and Engagement

- 25 Engagement with a wide range of staff has taken place throughout the development of the draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 including at in person staff events involving over 400 staff from across the council at all levels, Wider Leadership Community, Management Boards and Corporate Leadership Team.

- 26 A cross-party Member task and finish group was set up to support the development of the plan and has provided constructive input into the commitments and approach overall including that the tone should be positive and forward looking, and the language used easy for residents to understand. The Members are Councillors Braithwaite, Goldsmith, Gorman and Posnett.
- 27 Member groups were engaged in the overall approach and timescales - 'a plan for a plan' - in November 2024 and a briefing was delivered to the Town & Parish Councils Network.
- 28 Residents and partners have been consulted and engaged in a variety of ways in the development of the strategies and plan that have informed and underpin the draft plan. An annual delivery plan will be developed to set out the specific activity the council will prioritise and lead to work towards achievement of the commitments. This will involve collaboration and co-production as well as effective engagement with Members, staff, partners and residents.
- 29 Previous resident engagement activity in Macclesfield and Crewe in late 2023 was reported to Corporate Policy Committee on 13 February 2024 along with the outcomes of the 'shaping our future' survey. This public consultation has also informed the draft plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 30 Corporate Policy Committee provides strategic direction to the operation of the council and is responsible for the formulation, co-ordination and implementation of the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan. The Committee has a responsibility to recommend the Cheshire East Plan to full Council for approval in line with the Budget and Policy Framework set out in the Constitution.
- 31 The draft new Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 is presented with this report for approval and recommendation to full Council in February 2025, together with any amendments required following input from Corporate Policy Committee and any other necessary amendments required.

Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	No Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan from April 2025 – lack of clarity of overall purpose, ambition and priorities for Members, staff, partners and residents	No overall golden thread impacting direction for staff and golden thread through other strategies and service plans Lack of clarity leads to competing demands for resources and risk to deliverability of the MTFS

Option	Impact	Risk
		LGA Corporate Peer Challenge recommendation is not met
Develop a one-year/short-term plan	Only short-term clarity of ambition and priorities for the council	Lack of strategic direction, multi-year longer-term vision and ambition as recommended by the LGA
Develop a long-term/five-to-ten-year plan	Lack of immediate pace and clarity for delivery addressing short-term challenges and opportunities	External factors such as the national policy landscape more likely to change during the period

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 32 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Corporate Policy Committee provides strategic direction to the operation of the council and is responsible for the formulation, co-ordination and implementation of the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan. The Committee has a responsibility to recommend the Cheshire East Plan to full Council for approval in line with the Budget and Policy Framework set out in the Constitution.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 33 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The draft plan has been developed alongside the MTFS 2025-29. The MTFS is the resource and financial plan for delivery of the Corporate Plan. The council will use its resources to deliver the commitments.
- 34 If there are any material changes that impact on the MTFS identified through the development of the delivery plan, they would need to be brought back for amendment through Corporate Policy Committee and full Council.

Policy

- 35 This report proposes a new Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan 2025-29 setting the overarching policy framework and priorities for the council. Quarterly reporting on the current plan will continue, demonstrating progress against the existing priorities open, fair and green for 2024/25.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 36 The commitments in the draft plan will support the council to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Embedding a new approach to engagement and collaboration will be essential including listening to and working with individuals and partners representing seldom-heard populations and those with protected characteristics. The operating model developed as part of the Transformation Plan includes the principles to be inclusive and equitable.
- 37 Conversations with staff have shaped our aspirations for the council we want to be and how we work and are included in the plan. This will help us improve our culture and processes, systems and structures underpinning the delivery of the Cheshire East Plan 2025-29.

Human Resources

- 38 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report. The draft Cheshire East Plan provides clarity on the overall strategic direction for the organisation and will be reflected in service plans and personal development reviews (PDRs) as part of the golden thread.

Risk Management

- 39 Budget, risk and performance are fundamental elements of a good Performance Management Framework and are intrinsically linked. The new plan helps to inform the identification and management of corporate risks with risk assessments taking place for individual activities and projects where appropriate. All elements of budget, risk and performance reporting and management will be reflected in the Performance Management Framework and risks identified as part of the delivery plan.

Rural Communities

- 40 The plan recognises the need for greater inclusion for rural communities. A Rural Action Plan 2022-26 was approved by the Economy and Growth Committee, which includes priorities around digital connectivity, access, housing, visitor economy and support for rural based businesses.

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

- 41 Priorities relating to children, young people and cared for children are reflected in the draft Cheshire East Plan. The plan has been informed by the Children's Services Improvement Plan and other key strategies.

Public Health

- 42 The draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 supports the council's Public Health priorities using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and 'tartan rug' to ensure that work with partners continues to address issues of health inequality, poor housing, poverty, employment and education across urban and rural communities across the borough.

Climate Change

- 43 The council's existing commitment to be carbon neutral with minimal offset by 2030 is reflected in the draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 and ambitions to influence becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Karen Wheeler – Interim Assistant Chief Executive karen.wheeler@cheshireeast.gov.uk Michael Moore – Head of Engagement and Communications michael.moore@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Cheshire East Plan 2025-29
Background Papers:	Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 Agenda for Corporate Policy Committee on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024, 2.00 pm Cheshire East Council