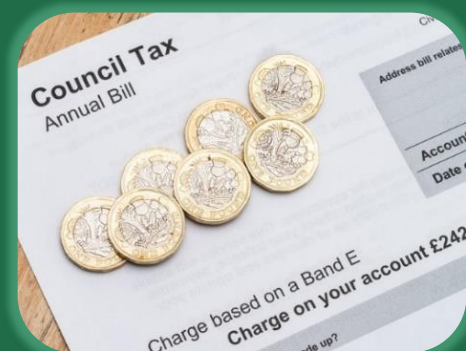


A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Budget Engagement for 2025 to 2029



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Introduction

Purpose of the engagement

The Budget Engagement for 2024 to 2025 was conducted between 19 December 2024 and 19 January 2025.

The engagement invited respondents to share their views on six principles that the council proposed to use to shape its budget and financial strategy for 2025 to 2029.

Promotion

The consultation was widely promoted, most notably though:

- Media releases
- Emails to key stakeholders including all local Town and Parish Councils
- Members Briefings
- Social media
- Promotion to council staff

Responses

For the Budget Engagement for 2025 to 2029 there were a total of 304 responses, including 295 online survey completions, 8 email responses and 1 budget webpage comment.

The main sections of this report contain an analysis of the survey responses received during the consultation. Feedback received via other means is summarised in the appendices.

Summary of feedback on the six principles

The six principles that the council proposed to use to shape its budget and financial strategy for 2025 to 2029 were set out in the survey, with feedback on each of the principles sought through written comment feedback.

Principle 1 feedback

Feedback for principle 1 is summarised below. (Please note – similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, or an example comment has been included, with the number of comments shown in the right-hand column).

Principle 1: Resizing and reshaping the budget to protect services and support for Cheshire East residents who are most in need.

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
General support. Most people would support helping those who need it most if that's in the right circumstances.	52
<p>Throwing money at this at the expense of all other services isn't the answer. Whilst the council concentrates on helping a small minority of the population, using 85% of its income, it is rapidly approaching the point where it will have no other services left to cut.</p> <p>Essential services have disappeared to accommodate this including the closure of local HWRCs; not keeping the borough tidy and presentable; not clearing gullies and drains which has increased the flooding threat; not repairing the roads; reductions in leisure centres; not maintaining the status quo on bin collections; and reductions in library opening hours.</p> <p>You will have to make cuts to Social Services at some point, so why not start doing it now and preserve some of these much-needed services before they disappear completely. There have been huge increases in Council Tax and charges and Cheshire East has never been in such a diabolical state.</p>	40

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
<p>Reshape services to meet the needs of the many not the few. Stop positive discrimination and focus on delivering services equally to all residents – All residents should be considered equally. Protecting those most in need is always important but it must be done reasonably and proportionally, we cannot abandon the needs of the whole to concentrate all resources on a minority. We cannot do everything we would like to do.</p> <p>Don't lose sight of the fact that the majority of the public don't use these services most of the time but are affected by the general decline of all the other services. The budget needs to help the wider community with the average working family being helped, the cost of living for general people at the moment is excruciating. If the majority paying Council Tax see little spent on services they use, they will get annoyed. It's honourable to prioritise the most vulnerable minority, but the majority also need to see some benefit from paying their taxes too.</p> <p>Remove the reference to those who are most in need. Principle 1 should read "Resizing and reshaping the budget to protect services and support for Cheshire East residents"</p>	33
<p>Council staff salaries are too high. Too much money is spent on recruitment and on paying management that are not performing or delivering. Cut council waste, bureaucracy and excessive executive salaries.</p>	28

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
<p>More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. This is meaningless dribble, it's impossible to comment in any meaningful way without more detail of how you will achieve this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not clear what money is spent on currently. Paragraph 6 of the latest Cheshire East Council (CEC) budget documents states that the council provides "in the region of 500 services a day." For residents to provide comprehensive and informed feedback, it is essential that a detailed list of these services is made available • "Most in need" needs to be defined clearly • The word "resizing" often refers to an actual reduction? "Resizing and reshaping" are meaningless words without more precise definitions. What does "resizing and reshaping " the budget mean? Borrowing more? Putting up charges? Looking for savings? What exactly does this mean? • What are the specific proposals? Which services will be protected, and which will not be? • What figures are available to support this proposals? • In terms of 'support' what does this entail, what services are provided, what is the overhead of the service provided, and how many staff are running this service? <p>Please write policies in plain English & to the point. Only with clear, detailed financial data can residents offer meaningful feedback on the council's budget and services. I urge CEC to prioritise transparency and ensure that this information is shared promptly.</p>	23
<p>The council has wasted too much money on "vanity" projects that have not proceeded or failed e.g. the new and unused car park in Crewe; lobbying for HS2 etc. Where necessary halt existing projects if they are unlikely to provide future value for money to prevent good money being thrown after bad.</p>	23

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
<p>Opposed to any 9.99% increase in Council Tax. Any increase above 4.99% would be counterproductive as more people would require help to pay. A Council Tax hike of 9.99% is scandalous at this time of financial hardship for most people. A rise of 9.99%, without any referendum on the proposal, is not on, and certainly not without major reform of council spending.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council needs to rein in SEND and other associated welfare/childcare/social care spending before it even considers any increase in Council Tax. The peer-to-peer LGA review recommendations must be implemented. The councils record on wasting money, taking decisions in virtual secrecy and not involving residents is appalling.</p> <p>Resizing and restoring the budget makes sense but the increase in tax you've requested from residents is a joke! The council has bankrupt itself and will now systematically bankrupt the businesses and residents that live here.</p>	19
<p>How is it decided who is most in need? There needs to be a prioritised classification of 'most in need' – this all depends on whether the council can accurately identify those that are most in need. Council policies are creating more and more people who are "most in need", and this may be subjective.</p> <p>If there are residents who are fit and healthy but refuse to work they should not have access to support. Too many people drifting around Crewe who clearly aren't looking for work and expect those of us who are to subsidise their lifestyle choice.</p>	14
<p>Support for help of victims of Domestic Violence and their children. It is essential that charities such as Cheshire Without Abuse (My CWA) can continue working with and protecting survivors of domestic abuse. Keep My CWA!</p>	13
<p>General opposition. I can't imagine anyone agreeing with such a rise but it won't stop the increase, so what's the point in the council asking? How have we got in this position?</p>	11
<p>Too much money is spent on staff. I fail to see once again any reference to improvement in managing the workforce, there are no KPIs or targets for contractors or for your own staff. You need to re-shape your workforce, that will free up vital funds. Stop paying people for "long-term sickness". Stop paying people to "skive" at home. You are short of funds, you've made many cutbacks and still you are short of cash, the reason for that is your wage bill and excessive pension contributions. Have a pay freeze for all staff.</p>	10

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
You ask for feedback and generally ignore it , be it good or bad, so this is an utterly pointless exercise and worthless. It's a complete waste of time filling in anything. The council takes decisions in virtual secrecy and does not involve residents. You need to listen to what the residents want, not what corporate services think they want. Why is the 9.99% Council Tax rise not mentioned in the consultation?	8
Too much money is wasted on commissioners, contractors, consultants and agency staff.	6
Major budget rethink required. How has the council got in this debt? The council is clearly not budgeting correctly or is wasting money on social care, you cannot prop up society to such a level that it leaves residents without any money themselves. A radical rethink is required and I mean radical! Reality needs to be faced. The council should get some new auditors in and spell the situation out clearly.	5
The council has no long-term strategy , you should be utilising your own management team including the executives to develop a strategy that satisfies your legal compliance. Tackle the root causes of issues where possible, don't just put a short-term sticking plaster to save money in the long run.	4
Stop raising Council Tax.	3
Those who do pay Council Tax appear to receive very little in return. Without the majority of residents paying Council Tax you would have no budget. "Residents who are most in need" are not likely to pay Council Tax – The majority are paying into a system that they no longer benefit from.	3
Social care should be funded by Central Government, not Council Taxpayers. Sue central government for the £11m spent on the lie that was HS2, or tell the public their government is spending £4bn a year funding a pointless war in Ukraine whilst Cheshire East residents suffer.	3
People need to be resilient and enabled to change their life situation to better support themselves where possible rather than relying on the council. Help those in need to help themselves / signpost to other community organisations.	2
Support for Space4Autism. Return funding for this organisation to its previous level. Space4autism only receive £19k per year from the council, which is a hugely insufficient amount when it supports over 9,000 people living in Cheshire East alone at a cost of around £600,000.	3
Vulnerable clients who are legally entitled to support should receive their entitlement in line with the law and not in line with council budgets! The law is there to protect these vulnerable people who desperately need the support.	1

Comments on Principle 1	No. of comments
I have confidence in this council's approach to this. Re-sizing and reshaping is necessary to redress a national issue.	1
Stop procuring in-house adult social care services as these provide costly on costs to the council when there are plenty of providers who can provide these services much more cost effectively.	1
Looking after the elderly should be a main priority. Those who have paid into the system should now be looked after in their old age.	1
Housing for the Homeless needs to be addressed.	1
The budget can't possibly be balanced with the extortionate amounts that are paid out for Adult and Childrens services.	1
CEC is being driven by finance , rather than finance being geared to supporting CEC's strategic and business plans.	1
An independent panel should assess and approve plans.	1
There are numerous companies and executives in Cheshire East who could assist in helping you with your development and therefore it maybe worthwhile exploring setting up a Cheshire residents development team to review how you currently operate and allow them to offer solutions.	1
The council is extremely out of touch with its constituency.	1

Principle 2 feedback

Feedback for principle 2 is summarised below. (Please note –similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, or an example comment has been included, with the number of comments shown in the right-hand column).

Principle 2: Investing in children's services – for example recruiting to additional posts to deliver the children's services improvement plan.

Comments on Principle 2	No. of comments
<p>General support. Children's services can never be good enough until we can provide stability and permanence for children. Early intervention is vitally important to prevent further escalation. More help is needed in schools for those with special needs. Target support to children as soon as they're born and continue until 18 years old.</p> <p>Children's services are currently underfunded, and their needs are not being met. The societal changes we are seeing, children need to be better served. As an adoptive parent, child services need to be protected at all costs, they need to be able to have a future, free from harm and have choices in their lives.</p>	48
<p>Opposed to further recruitment of staff until current inefficiencies have been addressed. Do not create additional posts, there are already too many very highly paid staff, don't recruit more without first seeking internal best practice effectiveness. The council cannot afford to increase costs and must start living in the real world, in the real world where your residents exist, if you cannot afford something new then you simply cannot have it. How can you invest by putting in further debt? Try using the money to improve services rather than creating another level of management, just deliver the improvement plan. who is responsible for evaluating these roles and ensuring value for money, as it seems current oversight is severely lacking. Cancel the Working from Home policy, have no bonuses, freeze pay for all staff. Recruit people who will deliver.</p>	33

Comments on Principle 2	No. of comments
<p>Increase support for front line social workers that are already working for the authority, to boost morale and prevent skilled workers leaving, and to prevent high sickness due to lack of support and unreasonable caseloads. Social workers are leaving because of the stress and some of the supply social workers are unfit for the role. Staff turnover rates in children's services are astronomical – This is due to lack of staff and support in the role, and with more support the pressures may ease, therefore benefiting your staff retention. Paying your staff a wage which suits their responsibilities and stresses. The wages that support staff are paid needs to be looked at – It costs much less to offer an attractive wage and retain staff than it does to continually have recruitment happening.</p> <p>The question is where will you obtain these recruits from as the labour market is poor. You are not setting up any training schools or collages to entice people to work in the profession.</p>	23
<p>More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. What are these posts? Would these posts be commissioners? Would additional posts just be in place temporarily or as permanent roles? Will there be opportunities for CE staff to progress within children's services to these positions? It would be good to see the proposed impact of recruiting to additional posts. What services are provided for children? Which services are to be improved? Have we seen the children's service improvement plan – what does it do? What does "improvement" mean exactly? What is the assessment process to judge success? What will follow if the set goals aren't met?</p>	19
<p>Childrens Services has a massive budget already that needs to be kept to. How much more are you going to throw at these services? They are a money pit. These services have been ineffective for over 10 years. If it is unworkable financially to improve services, why are you even considering them at this time?</p>	14

Comments on Principle 2	No. of comments
<p>The whole service needs to be totally overhauled. This service needs huge reform – Children’s services are in chaos, something terrible will happen if the state of the service continues to go downhill. Cheshire East already has some of the most expensive children's services in the country. Its SEND debt is bigger than its eight surrounding neighbouring authorities put together, despite the fact that those eight local authorities have ten times more children than Cheshire East. It is five times higher per head of children's population than Surrey County Council and four times higher than Kent County Council. Cheshire East also has some of the worst children's services in the country. Money is not the problem – the problem is the way in which services are delivered. You need to transform your children's services, this will cost money in the short term, but you need to get out of the terrible situation you are in and plan for long term savings from upfront investment. £12.5k per week for one child is extortionate. Too many bosses, not enough ground level staff. SEND isn't working and it should be. I live near a SEND school and can't believe the amount of taxis that are used for transporting children to school.</p>	11
<p>Opposed to the council spending Council Tax on these services. It's a complete waste of my money. Council Tax should be spent on everyone not just children, funds should be spread equally. We have too many children’s services. Opposed to any 9.99% increase in Council Tax.</p>	7
<p>Stop raising Council Tax. Opposed to a 9.99% rise in Council Tax.</p>	6
<p>Invest in SEND services and increase SEND capacity in approximate settings for children. Increase spaces within local state schools. More should be spent on early intervention and prevention (the walk-in centre at Monks Coppenhall is good). Less should be spent on high-cost placements which often deliver poor outcomes and low quality of life for the children involved. We need to be able to house and educate the children of CE in county, not sending them out of county at huge cost.</p>	6
<p>Parents should be looking after their children, not Council Tax payers. Children services should be schools, parents have a responsibility to care for their children correctly. Children services should be paid for by the parents who chose to have children. The most important thing you could do for kids to help in learning how to think critically and independently.</p>	5
<p>Support for Space4Autism. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].</p>	4
<p>Delivering children’s services are a statutory responsibility of this Local Authority, and so delivering these services is not an option. If you need to improve Childrens services (and your Ofsted Report and SEN provision suggest you do), employing essential staff to do so is not an option and consultation is a moot point.</p>	4

Comments on Principle 2	No. of comments
Improve performance management – Additional resources should be provided but they must be provided with clear objectives and performance must be measured against the achievement of these objectives. Supportive if this is sustainable with long term goals and not requiring external funding not available. Use technology to make processes smarter.	4
Internal recruitment is welcomed if this lowers costs overall. Recruiting is fine if this strategically sets the council up to meet its requirements, as long as costs remain affordable.	3
Support for My CWA. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].	3
General opposition.	3
Stop wasting money.	3
Solve the underlying causes. Why is there an increase in children services when birth rates are falling? Why do so many children now require SEND support? These are basic questions that need to be asked before the trend of rising costs can be reversed. Is more support in early years and parenting required to prevent rising costs in later years? What is being done to resolve the underlying issues? Is it down to poverty and joblessness? Cheshire is a wealthy area – many accessing these services should be able to self-fund so means testing is a must.	3
Principles 1 and 2 contradict each other – If you are “resizing and reshaping” the budget, how will you be able to invest in an improved children’s service?	2
Stay away from agency workers. Too many posts are being covered by agency staff at a huge expense.	2
Stop cutting funding for schools, such as school meals, after school clubs, short break funding and EHIPs to parents. Who is going to keep these services afloat for the most vulnerable children and young people? If the council recruits to deliver yet again it would cost so much more, just fund the services you have already correctly, that would be a start.	2
Give the cash to an NGO to do the job	1
Listen to parents. Reduce the need for parents having to go to tribunals.	1
This should be applied equally across the borough.	1
The Children's Improvement Plan is essential.	1
The Children’s Improvement Plan mirrors a similar plan that was implemented in Cheshire West and is now being unwound. How much money is going to be wasted on recruiting management to implement a plan that has already failed in Cheshire West?	1

Comments on Principle 2	No. of comments
This service should be funded by central government.	1
School transport should be means tested.	1
Why the resistance to proper commissioning? The Children's Commissioning Team is so small and don't have control of Children's Service budgets so you've no chance of saving money or making the right improvements without embracing modern commissioning practices.	1
Recruit those on benefits to reduce the burden of the welfare system.	1
Cheshire East needs to ensure that monies that are allocated to schools for SEND provision is spent to ensure those needs are met rather than being classed as additional funding.	1
Be open about council plans, after all this time there should be no surprises! It's poor budgeting or poor awareness.	1
Children's services received an inadequate CQC rating , not recruiting to an improvement plan is not an option if you want this to improve.	1
Undertake competitive tendering for external support services.	1
An independent panel should assess and approve plans.	1
CAMHS is vitally important but there are long waiting lists and some children are unable to access services in a timely manner.	1
The budget for SEND is hit hard by the LEA not sticking to statutory deadlines for admissions procedures causing parents to go to tribunal with the unnecessary extra costs and hardship this entails.	1
There is a need for more places in small special schools within Cheshire East for autistic pupils.	1
As long as it's remembered that children go up to the age of 18. 16 – 18 year olds tend to get forgotten about.	1
Children's Services Improvement Plan. Right in principle if it is actually the right strategic approach otherwise it's investing in yet more chaos and poor management / services.	1
Consultation – I recommend building working groups to regularly provide feedback on your proposals.	1

Principle 3 feedback

Feedback for principle 3 is summarised below. (Please note –similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, with the of comments listed in the right-hand column).

Principle 3: Investing in adult social care to ensure our budgets reflect the anticipated growth in demand and increasing complexity of need for those who require the most help – including ensuring that growing demands and staffing costs are fully funded in the budget.

Comments on Principle 3	No. of comments
General support. This is an area of underfunding, it is essential this problem is addressed, central government have abdicated responsibility for social care services. These people have generally worked all their lives and should not be left to struggle in their old age. Why do old people suffer whilst central government squanders cash on pointless wars? More money is needed for this service, rather than putting up individual's charges, prioritise by cutting back on non-essential services.	56

Comments on Principle 3	No. of comments
<p>Current adult social care service is not fit for purpose and is unsustainable. The demographic pressures will not change, and society will only keep aging. There is a nationwide social care crisis. The council cannot keep raising the costs indefinitely, someone in the council has to have the backbone to say we offer a, b and c and that is it. The council should try to think more transformatively about how this is delivered. You need to reevaluate how you provide social care services in the most efficient way whilst still providing high levels of care.</p> <p>How do you sustain this? There is literally no money there to support this, this is a money pit. How can you justify allocating additional funding without a clear understanding of the scale of the issue? This lack of data and foresight shows that you have no clear strategy or understanding of what you are doing, making it irresponsible to commit more resources without proper evidence or planning.</p> <p>The council will never have enough money to do this whilst the private sector continues to cash in. They can't continue to reap rewards under everyone else's pain for the next generation. Stop relying on private companies to provide care and become a care provider yourselves. The social care levy should have come into existence and this would have helped the pressures.</p> <p>This requires investment across a number of areas including NHS and care homes and support workers to fully implement meaningful change and cost savings.</p>	18
<p>General opposition. Opposed to increasing this investment. All departments need money including highways, recreation libraries, parks etc. Stop this discrimination and deliver services to all equally. Cutting basic services for the many to benefit the few is not a solution. The problem is hardworking people are penalised in the current system, they have to pay out of a potential inheritance. Hence the "investing in social care" is often at the expense of those already bearing the heaviest taxpayer cost. Cut these services to bare minimum.</p>	17
<p>Stop wasting money on unnecessary projects, the woke agenda, overpaid managers and absent staff. Have a pay freeze for all staff. Put money into services rather than management, have less directors and more workers.</p>	13

Comments on Principle 3	No. of comments
More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. It's impossible to comment on such a vague statement, in any meaningful way. What does adult social care actually involves? Where is the money going? What exactly are you accountable for that central government isn't through the NHS? How will the extra money be spent? What is the criteria for success? How do you categorise those in most need? What does "fully funded" mean? How does rising adult social care costs impact on budget setting? More transparent information should be released for constructive comments. Accurate forecasting requires the right data, & for that data to be current. Do you have it?	13
Reshape services to meet the needs of the many not the few. Concentrate on delivering core services instead. Funding this cannot mean other residents are left without adequate services. It seems as though the council has become completely focused on adult social care and SEN provision while all other services are being left to rot. People are paying more and more but are actually receiving less in terms of services. You are demonstrating that you favour inequitable policies.	10
Stop raising Council Tax. Council Tax is too high, taxpayers get nothing for it.	8
This service should be funded by central government.	7
A disproportionate amount is already spent on adult social care. Tough decisions need to be made. The system needs remodelling and Cheshire East could lead the way. Concern about the amount of money from our Council Tax that goes into Adult Social Care.	6
Is there also action being taken to reduce this growth in demand? You have to look at the underlying reasons instead of servicing the end product of said reasons. You need to look at why you expect an increased growth. Medical centres could help to reduce demand by ensuring that help is more quickly available before it becomes an emergency situation. Access to such services needs to be means tested.	6
The service is close to crisis. Adult services have been neglected for far too long. It's pretty impossible to access this for anyone who isn't highly complex and even then it's a battle. This requires a whole system approach, with robust procurement of services, governance and audit. Acute services are being brought to a standstill due to bottlenecks within acute wards.	5
In-house services are far too costly and should be reduced for a cash strapped local authority. Outsourcing is the most cost efficient especially as we move towards more care at home services. Giving care providers a realistic rate is absolutely vital to ensure they can remain in business.	5

Comments on Principle 3	No. of comments
How will the council find the workforce to fulfil these services? A lot of staff do not speak the level of English required to understand the needs of these adults, policies need to be looked at to ensure language skills are up to standard.	4
Support for My CWA. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].	4
Adults need to take accountability!! There are people in this world going through real hardship/wars. We should not have to support alcoholics nor drug users. While some can't work there are a large amount that don't want to work. The best way to support adults who are genuinely in need is by giving them the tools and education to lift themselves, not by giving them benefits so there is no incentive to lift themselves.	4
Means testing is key. Too many people hide assets to get access to funded care, especially where property is involved. Need to ensure the more affluent are not squirreling away their money to avoid paying for care when they can see poorer residents get the same level of care paid for by the council. We need to ensure our adult social care is given to those in need, not those who simply do not wish to work.	4
This principle contradicts other principles. This principle overlaps with Principle 1, and sits badly with Principle 4. How does this principle fit in with principles 2 and 3?	4
This sector is massively important and underfunded. Staffing is an issue, as it is across the sector. The salary that support staff are paid needs to be looked at – It costs much less to offer an attractive wage and retain staff than it does to continually have recruitment happening. Staff need appropriate training. Many of the bodies who provide services are at risk of failure.	3
Support for Space4Autism. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].	2
Do not create additional posts. There are already too many very highly paid staff, improve the efficiency of those already employed. When a company cannot afford more staff it does not hire them.	2
National government increases in the minimum wage for carers and the new NIC charges have exacerbated the financial situation enormously. Providers need significant increases to cope with additional employment costs and rising costs of care.	2
There needs to be a focus on preventing and delaying age-related loss of independence. Research suggests that around 30,000 older people across Cheshire East want to downsize but cannot do so, largely because of the lack of suitable properties in their neighbourhood. An older people's housing strategy, with clear links to the Local Plan, is desperately needed. Use technology to smarten processes & keep older people in their own homes for longer.	2

Comments on Principle 3	No. of comments
Central Government should fund this. The council should be leading a campaign to get this looked at centrally from government, just expecting a tax increase locally is not the answer. Get together with all the other councils.	1
Use less agency workers and employ more permanent staff.	1
Invest in adult care but not by putting it on the service user. Asking them to contribute over £100 a week means Cheshire East is failing as people cannot afford this.	1
Work with the 3rd sector / charity sector to deliver these services.	1
Delivering Services to meet rising demand and complexity of need is again a statutory responsibility of the LA. Why are you asking this in a public consultation? This is not an option in which the public have a voice.	1
Adult social care is a massive area and perhaps should be broken down into component parts so that funding can be more specifically directed.	1
An independent panel should assess and approve plans.	1
Senior managers need to properly set and manage the budget. Just because the service is statutory doesn't mean it should be spent without consideration of the impact.	1
Current residents with SEND in Children's Services will over the next 10 years move into adults services. SEND and Adult Services need joining up, and improvements at children's services levels are needed which result in reducing the impact and costs when some enter adults services.	1
Ensure more value for money from contractors.	1
The way society is going with IT and no human face to face interaction will create more mental health issues in future.	1

Principle 4 feedback

Feedback for principle 4 is summarised below. (Please note – similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, or an example comment has been included, with the number of comments shown in the right-hand column).

Principle 4: Delivering transformation projects – doing things differently, including better management of grants, fees and charges for services, and focusing on helping people with additional needs to live more independently for longer, helping to put the council on a more sustainable financial footing for the long-term.

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
General support. Supportive, as long as it is value for money. This has to be achieved within current budgets. Doing things differently, and therefore with less budget, is key. This should be done as a matter of course, rather than to need to spend lots of money on transformation experts or consultants. Why have such transformations not taken place already?	40

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
<p>Agreed the council must do things differently and become more efficient. Reduce senior management costs, improve staff productivity, stop conducting vanity projects; ensure value for money from contractors. Manage better with the resources you have, do the tasks which add value and not the 'nice to have' ones. Look at staff performance management.</p> <p>The council seems to have wasted so much money over the years on projects that are quite frankly embarrassing, such as the multi-storey car park in Crewe, HS2, the cycle path schemes. Long term cost reduction is good. As long as processes are clear, transparent and realistically costed.</p> <p>The spend for services need to be cost effective. Find ways to generate revenue. Do more to drive economic growth. Get investment here. Grow the revenue base to fund the social care. Set up your own services – It must be cheaper for the council to make a small profit on services rather than private providers make very large profits. Examine all departments and working practices to seek efficiencies and better management of all expenditure.</p> <p>The council takes decisions in virtual secrecy and does not involve residents.</p>	38
<p>Transformation is needed, as long as it is done properly. Just sort yourselves out! The council definitely needs to look at how budgets are managed. CEC has a reputation of failing to deliver and for going above budget. Better management is needed full stop, wastage is criminal in this council. Transformative projects need to be low cost no cost – there are ample efficiencies that the council can take without it impacting on budgets. You need to radically change the way you work and deliver – it is clear the council is incapable of continuing to deliver the range of services it is currently trying to deliver. Where something is lower priority stop the service and offer it to parish/town councils to deliver if they feel it is important. Reality must be addressed. You must change the mindset and do things better for less. Thinking outside box is useful.</p>	19

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
<p>Transformation cynicism. Transformation projects always cost a hefty upfront fee to save in future, and then that saving never materialises. The problem with transformation projects is they always cost more than budgeted. How long this will take and how much wasted money will it take? Just get on with delivering what you have got. We've heard all this before, why should we believe it now? Without fundamentally changing the financial governance and financial controls of the council, this principle is largely meaningless. This is wishful thinking. Without proper oversight, transparency, and a fair process, this initiative is doomed to fail and will only deepen inequalities rather than provide sustainable financial solutions. I would like the council to be on a more sustainable footing but I think the transformation plans are not going to support that. Who is leading the change – beware of “snake oil salesmen” who promise the world but are never around when it comes to picking up the pieces. Doing things differently means taking a more capitalist view of running the council and that will never happen in a local authority.</p>	15
<p>More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. How long will this take, how much will it cost? There is too much information listed to be able to comment. This principle is too vague and all-encompassing to be a single principle. This principle needs rewriting in plain English – it reads as 2 separate things: delivering transformation projects; and focusing on helping people. Say what you mean. We need clarity, sizing and priority of the problems that need resolving first and hard benefits of doing so, to ensure focus. "Transformation projects" feels like yet another buzz term which means nothing in reality. "Delivery" is the key term - Can the council do that? What is a “transformation project”? This sounds like jargon and is meaningless.</p>	13
<p>Reshape services to meet the needs of the many not the few. [Repetition of comments made for principles 1 and 3].</p>	12
<p>Stop raising Council Tax. Don't raise it above 4.99%. You should be able to manage these costs without having to ask for extra funding above the 4.99% limit. People cannot survive with taxes always going up.</p>	10
<p>Supporting independent living is an obviously good choice for those with additional needs and the local authority. Services which keep those who can more independent is a must. It is pleasing that independent living for people with additional needs is to be an area for focus.</p>	8
<p>General opposition. The council has had long enough to do things differently and constantly fail.</p>	7

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
<p>Consultation comments: Proper consultation is needed. Have co-production with families at an early stage to share ideas, focus on needs and formulate plans. Open plans to public opinion at all stages of a project to ensure you are heading in the right direction. Things like this survey are great. Ask the residents and respect their opinions. Not like the refuse collection poll! Front line staff should be consulted to understand where real life changes can be made which improve front line work rather than a top-down approach. Previous changes are now being undone as they didn't work, despite front line staff advising of this from the start and experienced staff left the authority leading to increased use of agency staff. True engagement with staff is needed as previous consultations with staff and residents has been disingenuous which has led to a lack of engagement. Stop wasting money on consultations in which you ignore any views of the residents. There are too many consultations which cost money.</p>	6
<p>Commissioning: Have qualified tender writers who are paid on achievement of targets to get as much money in through grants etc. to benefit as many as possible. Get a proper team of managers who know how to negotiate contracts for a proper price instead of rolling over and being ripped off wasting our money. Too many care companies are jumping on this to make a profit.</p>	3
<p>Town Centre transformation is needed.</p>	3
<p>The council has to invest in staff.</p>	3
<p>The phrase "better management" suggests the council is aware of unsatisfactory management, and if so those responsible should be named, shamed and sacked. This statement implies that grants have been badly managed in the past. What have you been doing up to now and why should taxpayers have any confidence that your "Eureka" moment will lead to change?</p>	3
<p>Why are you trying to reinvent the wheel all the time? How many times can you transform, into what this time, butterflies? You continue to fail with this – how many times!</p>	3
<p>Social care should be central government and NHS funded.</p>	3
<p>Charges for fees and services should vary according to the availability of facilities such as Waste and Leisure services. Some towns have both of those facilities which are of high quality whereas a few others have none or have facilities of lower quality which is very unfair and discriminatory.</p>	2
<p>Support for My CWA. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].</p>	2

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
" Living more independently " must not be used as a smoke screen for reducing or ceasing to deliver care. Do not set vulnerable adults up to fail and then tell them they were not eligible for the services or support they may need.	2
Transformation is never easy , in other sectors it is called "Insolvency Practitioner". Transformation almost always demands cost increases in years 1 and 2. This is a challenge, but the solution is redundancies in these years to free up the funds to invest in improvements to systems.	2
Merge back with Cheshire West and Chester Council to reduce duplication.	1
Go for a Mayor deal and get more devolved funding.	1
Transforming the way we travel would make a difference.	1
Support for the use of AI to reduce costs.	1
Adults need to take responsibility for their own care , councils must stop molly-coddling people.	1
It is wrong that the elderly who have paid into the system all their life should pay for social care as opposed to adults who choose to have children getting free SEN support. Parents should be made to contribute to SEN.	1
Concern that the top jobs are advertised as silly salaries, if these are being paid out then the results need to be outstanding. Some of the titles are questionable.	1
Better management by who? The same people who have repeatedly demonstrated they can't manage budgets effectively?	1
You have no real understanding of who the residents in genuine need are, meaning that once again, it will be those who play the system who benefit the most.	1
Is it really effective to bring services back in house when appropriate staff cannot be recruited and better results and outcomes can be achieved by commissioning appropriate specialist 3rd party suppliers?	1
Your aspirations outstrip the actual finances. You have to go back to basics and then build from there. You cannot tax your way out of problems that just kills growth and it is that growth that will allow (in time) some services to return. You can't afford projects unless they deliver a financial return in year 1.	1
What are councils throughout the country doing as this is a UK wide issue?	1
The transformation projects should have independent expert ethics and compliance review.	1
Transformation changes must be embedded in the organisation at all levels.	1
Cooperative working with Town and Parish Councils must become a reality and not a vague aspiration voiced by leaders.	1

Comments on Principle 4	No. of comments
Use the newly announced government funding to help people stay in their own homes.	1

Principle 5 feedback

Feedback for principle 5 is summarised below. (Please note – similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, or an example comment has been included, with the number of comments shown in the right-hand column).

Principle 5: Addressing new external costs, such as the increase in National Living Wage which can mean that the services the council commissions from external providers, including many adult social care services, cost more.

Comments on Principle 5	No. of comments
<p>Opposed to the council using external providers. Don't use external providers. The problem with external provision of services is the council can become hostage to providers who charge what they want because there is no alternative council run provision, external contractors are renowned for 'ripping off' public bodies. Care home owners pay poor wages to staff and cream off the profits. Many providers can charge what they want, we need more rigorous scrutiny to make sure we get value for money. The way services are procured means whole system doesn't get the right services to the right people. The ridiculous use of outside contractors to do the work of employees on "long-term sickness" needs to stop.</p> <p>Why not bring some 'in-house', refuse to pay exorbitant costs, or reduce dependence upon them. There should be careful consideration of inhouse provision if appropriate. Cutting council run social care services can be a false economy, how much has really been saved by closing Hollins View and The Stanley Centre?</p>	36
<p>Stop wasting money, on unnecessary projects, be more efficient. Reduce the size of administrative staff. Have a review on just how many staff you actually need given nearly all services are cut. Have a pay freeze on all staff. Look into reducing the number of staff & managers you have & work smarter/ more efficiently. Cut wages of the highest earners. Productivity, efficiency and accountability are the watchwords of any service. Make jobs more accountable for their actions there is currently no accountability in any job role in Cheshire East. I do not support using external factors, such as the increase in the National Living Wage, as justification for higher costs without proper scrutiny of how funds are being managed. Fully cost projects before starting and be held accountable if they are not completed and tax payers money wasted. Reduce your bureaucracy.</p>	29

Comments on Principle 5	No. of comments
<p>The council has no choice but to pay the National Living Wage if it wishes to comply with the law. National Government sets the NLW. This question doesn't make sense because the council has no choice but to follow the law about NLW. The National Living Wage is essential for low-income households, it's a bitter pill we must swallow for the greater good. People need to be paid for the work they do at the right rates. This should have been anticipated and budgeted for.</p>	19
<p>The current national government has put this in place with no additional budgets. Labour's National Insurance tax raid and increases in the National Minimum Wage are going to have a devastating effect on the local care economy, as it will simply become impossible for many care organisations to continue providing care. Cheshire East already pays well below the average cost per hour for many adult social care services. The extra costs will just mean many care providers giving up or being unable to recruit. Government generating income from local government. It's a joke. Central Government agreed this, why should local communities have to pay? This should be funded by national government, CEC is broke. CEC and other LAs must lobby Government to meet the costs and impacts of their October budget decisions on council services - unless they want LAs to fall over.</p>	18
<p>General support for this principle, as long as it is clear and transparent.</p>	13
<p>This is the same situation in all sectors. All businesses should plan for changes to external costs as part of good business practice and financial planning, I'd hope the council were doing this anyway as part of their day to day? The council has to manage within its means. Literally every employer in the country has the same challenge. A business would have to balance the books, you consistently raise Council Tax and have done so to the maximum allowable amount.</p>	12
<p>Stop raising Council Tax. Cap Council Tax at 4.99%. We already pay a lot for poor quality services. We do not get anywhere near the pay-rises required to sustain the Council Tax & other stealth tax increases. We cannot continue sustaining these year on year additional council costs, for less and less services.</p>	10
<p>More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. What does this mean? Are you going to try and not pay the National Living Wage to staff? How can anyone answer this without proper information? This is typical council waffle - "addressing new external costs"? What do you mean by "address"? Doing less? How can you deliver this within existing budgets? I would clarify this principle & state "identifying all potential cost increases and opportunities to reduce the impacts, incorporating both into budget planning process".</p>	9
<p>General opposition. We need to focus on the services that are used by all residents. The council is delusional.</p>	9

Comments on Principle 5	No. of comments
Improve the performance management of contracts with external providers to ensure quality standards are being met, that user satisfaction is high, that they are efficient and effective and provide value for money. Ensure tender processes are transparent, thorough and offer value for money. It feels like we are still in a process of giving tender awards to people who are “known” to the council, not those who offer the best value for money.	6
Budget reform: Any budget should work on a worst case scenario to ensure adequate funding. The council appears to be continually over optimistic regarding raising money, saving money and spending which ultimately increases levels of uncertainty. Reduce what you do to focus on priority services, let Town and Parish Councils step up to deliver the discretionary services their areas want/wish to fund. If your basic overheads go up you need to shed your overhead elsewhere. Town and Parish councils should be allowed to commission local services for which CEC has responsibility.	4
Cut wastage. The council needs to look at how poorly it has managed the budget for the last few years. The residents have absolutely no confidence that the council will correctly use any money to deliver any meaningful improvement. Residents do not support this approach until the council has reallocated existing funds more appropriately. The council should not be increasing bills to recoup money spent unwisely or on projects the local community haven’t approved. The council needs to be more open and transparent about how this will be funded.	3
High earners in the council (£50k and above) to have no increase in salary for 2025 , and those very high earners >£80k should have no increase for multiple years. Pay executives less which would mean more for those on minimum wage.	2
You expect miracles out of your staff.	2
You cannot look after everyone and everything it is unrealistic and not fair on everyone else’s sky rocketing Council Tax payments. You have to be realistic you cut staff or service altogether.	2
This isn't a principle but is standard budget planning.	2
We need to absorb these costs without pushing external providers to the brink. An extra burden on these providers will only lead to poorer services.	1
Learn from others who are already handling these rises.	1
Increase taxes if necessary to cover these increased costs.	1
No uplift on grant funding to the suppliers? We will just have to cut staff once again.	1
An independent panel should assess and approve plans.	1

Comments on Principle 5	No. of comments
Concern that the increase in wages and National Insurance costs are going to have a detrimental effect on the services that the council provide when you are short of money before these increases.	1
Savings can be made by reduction of in-house services with costly on costs such as enhancements for weekends and pensions, absence etc.	1
Opposed to constant increases in National Living Wage.	1
Encourage families to use Direct payments to employ PAs rather than using agencies.	1
Tighten up on the concept of more complex needs. Needs are not more complex than 50 years ago. It's an excuse.	1
Help people to help themselves. Impersonalisation creates apathy, the lack of care, and detachment. Adult social care is mirroring the breakdown in society. As you know taxpayers are funding young male immigrants to live in grand hotels, let them do something to help adults in social care in exchange.	1
Support for My CWA. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].	1

Principle 6 feedback

Feedback for principle 6 is summarised below. (Please note – similar responses have been summarised into a single comment, or an example comment has been included, with the number of comments shown in the right-hand column).

Principle 6: Looking for other ways to change services to reduce costs, avoid costs, or increase income.

Ideas for reducing costs, avoiding costs, or increasing income	No. of comments
<p>Reduce staff wages / improve staff productivity. Reduce senior management and Councillor costs. Lose 20% of the administrative headcount. Start by not having so many people on more than £100k, and big bosses not taking the 2.5% increases. The council appoints someone on high salary then they leave soon after with a nice full bank account having achieved little. Anybody earning above £50,000 per annum needs to take a pay cut, regardless of job title. Reduce the management layers, re invest the savings into front line. Get rid of all DEI positions. Have a management restructure.</p> <p>Stop working from home with immediate effect; Cancel free car parking for employees; Cancel reimbursement of professional fees for employees; Make employees attend office 80-100% to manage workload; Reduce working day to 35 hours - lowers salaries therefore saving; Reduce holiday entitlement to 28 days aligning with other authorities; Reduce flexitime allocation; Reduce staff turnover ratios; Reduce use of agency staff.</p>	41
<p>Improve council efficiency. Stop wasting money, stop spending money on vanity projects; learn from past mistakes; cut red tape and unnecessary waste; focus on key priorities; rein in spending on SEND services; Stop wasting my council tax on events and grants e.g. free childrens face painting at Sandbach market; 30k on the bowlers composting toilet; Christmas lights switch on ceremony with DJ and fire eaters; paying the cheshire mascots to prance around Sandbach; £10k spent on queens jubilee screen at the rugby club.</p>	32
<p>General support for this principle.</p>	24
<p>Reshape services to meet the needs of the many not the few. All of the principles focus solely on the vulnerable, there is no mention of any improvements that would benefit all residents. The range and quality of services currently provided is already very poor, and so these should not be further reduced, you have already cut essential services so they are useless. Taxpayers want to see all services we all use to function, before looking at non-essential services for the few.</p>	24

Ideas for reducing costs, avoiding costs, or increasing income	No. of comments
<p>This principle is a “no brainer”. Why are you asking whether you should do this, are you not doing this every day? If you're in a management position, this is what you should be doing all the time, this is a non-negotiable item. “Reducing costs” and “avoiding costs” is not really something you need to consult on. If this is the level of leadership at the council; it is not surprising that the budget is strained. It is an insult to anyone who has ever run a business, or managed a budget. Business is ever evolving....when a business stands still it fails. It is a staggering admission that "looking for other ways to change services to reduce costs, avoid costs, or increase income" has not been ingrained into your organisation and the way it is run. As “principles”, these six items are pretty poor.</p>	20
<p>Stop raising Council Tax. The council needs to work within the budget it has, increasing income has been exhausted. Council Tax is too high just for having our bins collected. The solution should not be that the taxpayer just ends up being charged more! Avoid all unnecessary costs, and keep any increase to council payers to the minimum possible, council tax is already extremely high.</p>	15
<p>Random money savings ideas: Speeding fines can bring revenue; Bad driving from tail gators should be charged; Poor parking can be fined; Look at people on benefits who are unable to get jobs support immediately to find work do not rely on them to do so; Stop support for these until working again; Support Crewe businesses to help shops relocate back to Crewe town centre; Allow garden waste charge to be collected by direct debit monthly to increase uptake and make more affordable for residents; Chase and enforce council tax avoidance and non payment; Make car parking free; Reduce costs for Crewe Hall and Tatton Park; Offer the parents of SEN children a minimum wage plus fuel costs to transport their own children to school thus would free up quite a lot of money; Increase delivery of services with Town and Parish Councils to reduce costs; recruit volunteers to help maintain parks and green spaces; sell all assets that are not being used; make all car parks pay and display; stop transferring highly valuable commercial property/assets to local town councils for free, sell these properties on the commercial market;</p>	11
<p>Stop conducting vanity projects. Stop any project which does not have a measurable (£) improvement; stop any/all art projects; stop annual celebrations which are council funded; stop wasting money on multi-storey car parks which lose money every day; stop wasting money on things like Edsential; stop investing in local playgrounds when there's already one there; stop the completely unnecessary work done on Mill Street in Crewe where the road was closed for months; stop the new Cheshire Archive building in the same town that no-one actually asked for.</p>	10

Ideas for reducing costs, avoiding costs, or increasing income	No. of comments
Improve medium to long term strategic planning. Think outside the box. Change is most likely come from a substantial reorganisation, painful in the short term and likely to affect some services but resource can always be added again in 2-3 years once the budget has been balanced. Adopt the 5S, continuous improvement, six sigma approaches on how you make improvements. Work smarter not just ring fencing and doing the same thing but reducing budgets elsewhere. The council appears risk adverse, multiple layers of accountability ultimately leads to delays in accessing and providing services and increased costs long term. Short term spending for long term gain needs to be considered rather than reactive short-term savings but long term negative impacts both financially and in terms of staff turnover.	7
Stop use of consultants.	7
Bring more services back in house , outsourcing went too far. Reduce the extortionate cost of contractors such as Ringway Jacobs for tidying up verges and green spaces which could be done by town wardens, town rangers, volunteers or just minimised. Ditch "Everybody", take leisure service back in house. Ensure value for money from contractors.	7
Start listening to residents. There are so many complaints about the council and nobody listens. As the council doesn't listen to anybody it will do what it wants. Charging for green bin collection and introducing food bins and fewer waste collections is universally unpopular, 80% of residents against it but went ahead anyway, so why waste time filling this in!	5
More information needed before meaningful comments can be made. What does this principle mean?	4
General opposition to this principle. The council currently see this as the one and only principle – cutting services left right and centre to provide the absolute lowest possible service that can be delivered. Please stop cutting services.	4
Stop development in Cheshire East. Freeze all new build planning applications, you have already demonstrated that you cannot support the current level of residents and infrastructure, it is poor management to allow any other project which will increase demands on all services in the future. With so much housing being built in the county, the developers should be held to account to contribute to the infrastructure including funding and building schools, dentist, doctors, flood defences etc.	4
Reduce costs generally.	3
Reduce future care costs. Focus on prevention otherwise the council will have an even bigger statutory services cost moving forward. Reduce care costs, better assess individuals claiming social care needs.	3

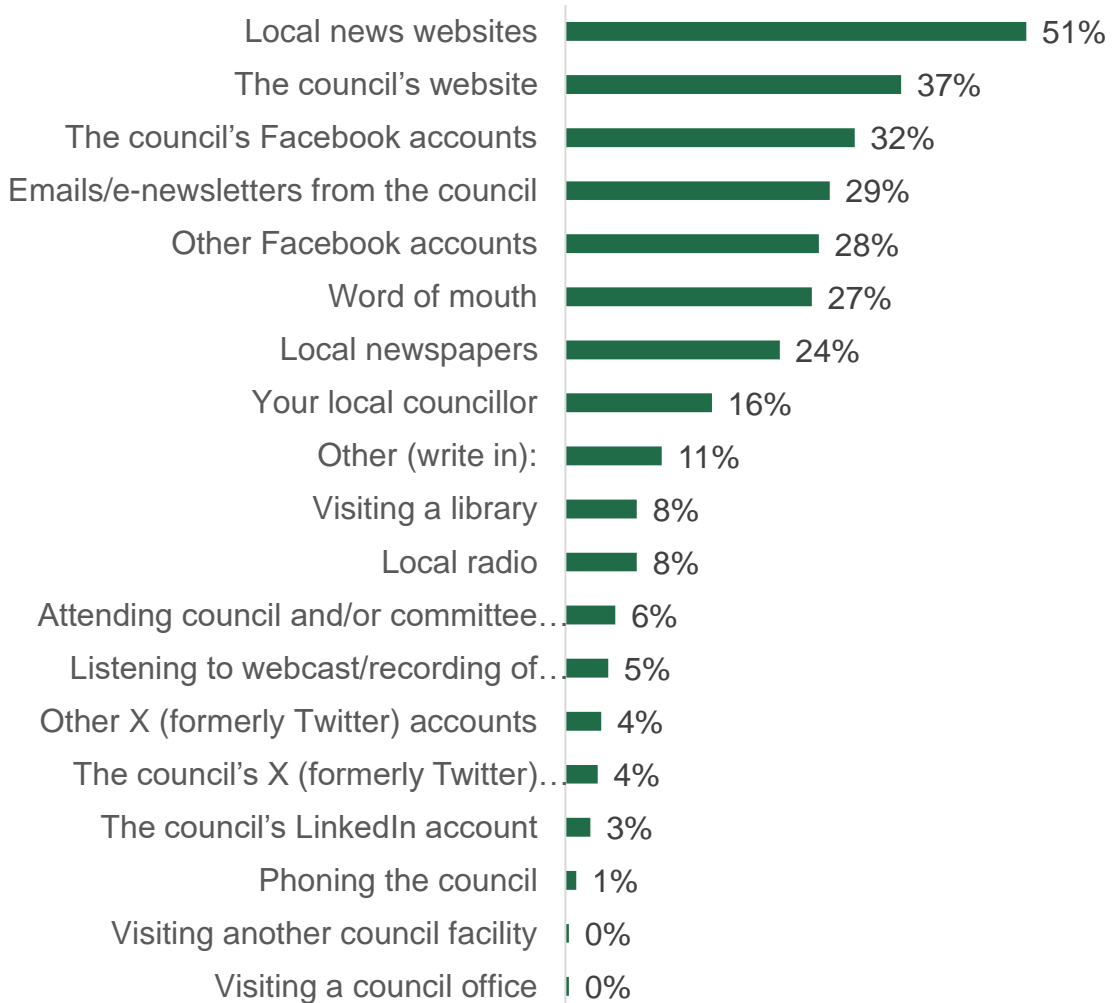
Ideas for reducing costs, avoiding costs, or increasing income	No. of comments
Bring in better council financial control and checks and balances on the budget. All spending should be scrutinised and this should have the involvement of residents along with board or panel. Call in local government specialists.	3
Review what other councils are doing and do the same.	2
Support for My CWA. [Repetition of comments made for principle 1].	2
Combine CE & CW&C to reduce costs. Give towns back to Town Councils.	2
Stop paying for hotels for illegal immigrants.	2
Abandon all net zero overheads including all staff and policies.	1
Charge residents in those towns with better services more.	1
Reduce what you do to focus on priority services, let Town and Parish Councils step up to deliver the discretionary services their areas want/wish to fund.	1
Elected representatives have become over involved. The elected representatives should set objectives and budgets and then withdraw. The officers should be left to implement and deliver the plans, and the officers must be fully accountable for the delivery. The officers should make the decisions without needing to refer to Council and Committees.	1
Pensions should be changed in line with the private sector to money purchase schemes.	1
There is overlap here with principle 4. This principle seems to be the same thing.	1
Do not borrow money to cover funding shortfalls.	1
File a section 114 notice. I see nothing for my Council Tax other than a bin collection, and even under emergency measures I'm sure that would remain. If I'm really lucky might even stay at a black bin collection every two weeks.	1
What a joke CEC is! Please start operating like a proper council that is interested in the local community rather than finding more and more ways to cut services and increase costs. Sort yourselves out please CEC before the local residents decide enough is enough!	1

Keeping informed and getting involved

Receiving information about council services now

The most common ways respondents currently get information about council services include: local news websites (51%), the council's website (37%), and the council's Facebook accounts (32%).

How do you currently get information about council services?

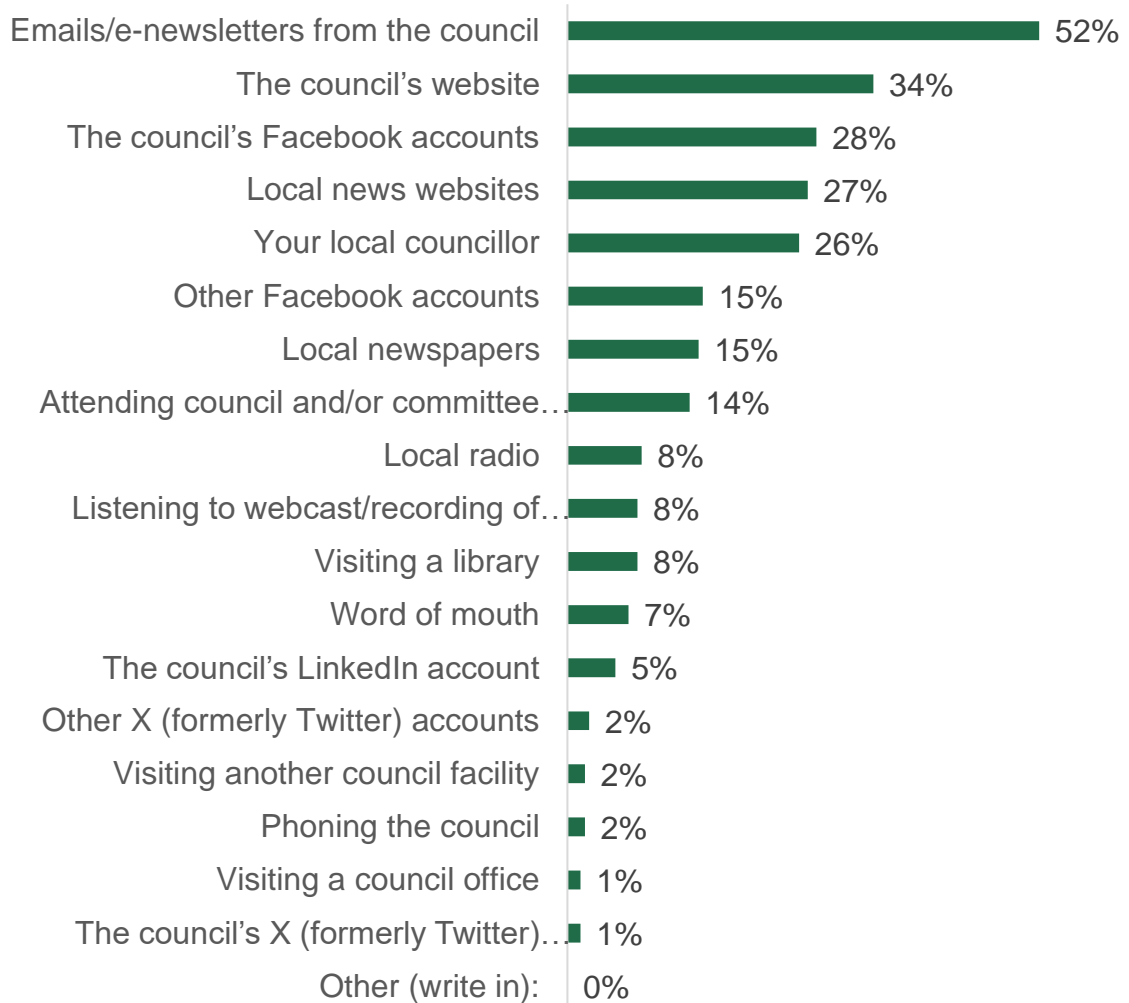


Number of responses = 252

Receiving information about council services in future

The most common ways respondents would prefer to get information about council services in future include: emails/newsletters from the council (52%), the council's website (34%), and the council's Facebook accounts (28%).

How would you prefer to get information about council services in future?



Number of responses = 206

Getting involved

Just over half of respondents, 52%, would be interested in joining a community panel to discuss and inform the council's services, policies and priorities.

This includes 25% who would definitely be interested, and 25% who would like to find out more before deciding.

Would you be interested in joining a community panel to discuss and inform the council's services, policies and priorities?



Email and public comment feedback

In total 9 emails and public comments were received as part of this engagement.

The contents of the emails and public comments are summarised in the table below, with all 9 responses published verbatim further down. Responses have been redacted where necessary to protect the anonymity of the respondent.

Summary of content	No. of comments
Extremely detailed budget savings suggestions	Email 1
Opposition to increases in Council Tax	Emails 2, 3, 4 & 5
Opposition to the instalment of dishwashers in council offices	Email 4
Opposition to cuts to My CWA funding	Emails 6, 7 & 8
Suggestion to bring highways maintenance in-house	Public comment 1

Email response #1

Please find attached and below, my suggestions for the upcoming financial review and allocation of funds for your consideration.

Based on my review, here's a high-end breakdown of the estimated total savings and revenue increases:

* Total Estimated Savings: Approximately £31.3 million per year.

* Total Estimated Revenue Increases: Approximately £32 million per year.

Please note: These are high-end estimates, and the actual savings and revenue generated may vary, depending on the successful implementation of the proposed strategies and the specific circumstances of Cheshire East Council, and your ability to implement.

Kind regards

Key Areas for Budget Consideration

1. Enhancing Service Delivery

Focus on High-Impact Social Services:

Current Situation: Significant allocations for Adult and Children's Services (£96.9m-£115.4m and £159.1m-£161.1m respectively).

Recommendations:

- Invest in early intervention programs to reduce demand for high-cost, reactive services.
- Utilize technology to improve social worker case management efficiency (estimated savings: £1m/year).
- Target Savings: £3m/year from reduced demand and improved efficiency.

Transformation Projects:

Current Status: Included in the Transformation Plan with limited detail.

Recommendations:

- Expand digital services to automate processes (e.g., customer service). (Estimated setup cost: £2m, annual savings: £0.5m from year 2).
- Establish clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for all transformation projects to ensure they deliver expected benefits.

Capital Projects:

Current Borrowing: £375.2m (2025/26) to £449.6m (2028/29).

Recommendations:

- Defer or cancel non-essential projects to reduce debt servicing costs (e.g. £10m less borrowing = £1m/year savings).
- Prioritize revenue-generating projects like renewable energy installations (estimated setup cost: £5m, annual revenue: £0.7m).

2. Cost-Saving Measures

Contract and Procurement Review:

Current Challenges: Contractual inflation significantly impacts operational costs.

Recommendations:

- Centralize procurement to leverage bulk discounts (potential savings: £2m/year).
- Renegotiate contracts to reflect efficiency expectations (target savings: 5% of Children's Services budget = £4.8m).

Service Rationalization:

Current Data Limitations: Lack of detailed spending data for discretionary services.

Recommendations:

- Review and potentially reduce or eliminate services with low usage or minimal impact (target savings: £2m/year).
- Conduct cost-benefit analyses to justify the retention of all discretionary services.

Capital Financing and Borrowing:

Current Costs: £15.6m-£16.4m in borrowing costs.

Recommendations:

- Maximize the use of capital receipts (£6.8m in 2025/26) to fund projects, reducing borrowing needs.
- Prioritize grant-funded projects to replace £5m of annual borrowing.

Workforce Optimization:

Current Challenges: Rising National Living Wage and reliance on agency staff.

Recommendations:

- Limit the use of agency staff to critical roles (target reduction: £2m/year).
- Upskill existing employees to fill vacancies, reducing the need for external hires.

3. Revenue Generation Opportunities

Fee and Charge Review:

Current Situation: Fees and charges contribute significantly but may be below market rates.

Recommendations:

- Adjust fees to market rates for non-essential services (e.g., leisure facilities, parking) (target increase: £3m/year).
- Implement dynamic pricing (e.g., weekend parking fees) for high-demand periods (target increase: £1m/year).

Asset Capitalization:

Current Forecast: £6.8m in capital receipts.

Recommendations:

- Lease underutilized council-owned properties (target revenue: £2m/year).
- Sell non-strategic assets (target receipts: £10m over four years).

Improved Tax Collection:

Current Challenges: Uncollected taxes not fully quantified.

Recommendations:

- Invest in advanced analytics to identify and recover overdue council tax and business rates (estimated investment: £0.5m, potential additional revenue: £3m/year).

Partnerships and Grants:

Current Status: Unclear allocation for partnerships and grants.

Recommendations:

- Seek national grants for renewable energy and social care initiatives (potential grant revenue: £5m over three years).

4. Process Improvements

Enhanced Monitoring:

Recommendation: Utilize detailed dashboards for real-time budget monitoring to identify variances early (cost: £0.2m, potential savings: £2m/year).

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Recommendation: Involve local businesses in revenue generation planning (e.g. sponsorships for council-run events) (estimated additional revenue: £0.5m/year).

5. Additional Savings Areas

Resizing Demand-Led Budgets:

Current Situation: Significant allocations for Adult and Children's Services due to rising demand.

Recommendations:

- Invest in preventative care programs to reduce the need for high-cost placements (estimated savings: £3m/year).
- Introduce tighter eligibility criteria for certain non-mandated social care services (potential savings: £2m/year).

Streamlining the Capital Program:

Current Pressure: £375.2m borrowing in 2025/26, rising to £449.6m.

Recommendations:

- Defer or cancel non-essential capital projects (estimated savings: £5m/year in borrowing costs).
- Increase scrutiny on new capital requests (£55m over the medium term).

Corporate and Administrative Costs:

Current Budget: £28.9m in 2025/26.

Recommendations:

- Audit back-office operations to identify redundancies and outsourcing opportunities (potential savings: £1.5m/year).
- Explore shared services with neighboring councils (potential savings: £2m/year).

Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction:

Current Status: No specific allocations for energy-related improvements.

Recommendations:

- Invest in energy-efficient retrofits for council buildings (initial cost: £1m, annual savings: £0.5m).
- Implement renewable energy projects on council-owned land (estimated revenue: £1m/year).

Use of Reserves:

Current Reserves: £10m, insufficient for projected shortfalls.

Recommendations:

- Explore exceptional financial support options (e.g., capitalizing transformation costs).
- Increase efforts to replenish reserves through targeted asset sales (target: £5m over two years).

6. Additional Revenue Generation Areas

Maximizing Business Rates:

Current Revenue: £57.1m/year.

Recommendations:

- Develop incentives for new businesses to expand the tax base (potential increase: £2m/year).
- Review business rate exemptions to ensure alignment with policy objectives (potential recovery: £1m/year).

Tourism and Cultural Events:

Current Funding: Not detailed in the budget.

Recommendations:

- Partner with businesses to host large-scale events (potential sponsorship revenue: £1m/year).
- Introduce tourism-specific taxes (e.g., short-term accommodation fees) (potential revenue: £0.5m/year).

Public-Private Partnerships:

Recommendations:

- Establish partnerships for co-developing infrastructure projects (e.g., leisure facilities).
- Monetize council expertise by offering consultancy services to other councils (potential revenue: £0.5m/year).

Community Crowdfunding:

Recommendations:

- Introduce crowdfunding for community-based projects (estimated annual contribution: £0.5m).

Partnering with Electric Charger Companies:

Recommendations:

- Collaborate with EV charger providers to install charging stations in council-owned car parks.
- Explore revenue-sharing models, increased parking revenue, and government grants.
- Potential Revenue: £25,000-£50,000 annually from 50 chargers.

7. Risk Mitigation and Forward Planning

Addressing the DSG Deficit:

Recommendations:

- Address the growing Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit (£120.1m forecast for 2025/26).
- Engage with government for statutory override extensions or debt restructuring.

Transformation Plan Review:

Recommendations:

- Ensure transformation initiatives remain on track and deliver promised savings.
- Shift underperforming projects to alternative funding models.

Long-Term Financial Sustainability:

Recommendations:

- Ensure revenue-raising initiatives align with broader council objectives.
- Develop a 10-year financial roadmap incorporating projected demographic and economic changes.

Email response #2

How deep do you think our pockets are, I like many others are struggling with paying our bills as it is.

CEC is a beast that is out of control and we cannot be continually be asked to feed it, let's go back MBC [redacted]) I thought the idea of going to CEC was to be more competitive with services, I for one have not seen this.

I hope you do realise the impact this price increase is going to do to working class people. I for one is at my wits end.

Email response #3

I disagree with the proposed amount of increase in Council Tax for the next financial year. Staff pay was increased quite recently and I wonder whether this could have been afforded. With the loss of Winter Fuel Allowance for all except those on benefits many people are currently struggling. As a former Councillor, I am aware that this has had a serious effect on many just above the threshold. So whilst accepting the need for an increase, the proposal should stay within the Government guidelines and not be increased further.

The budget should be set and adhered to. I understand that this year this was not the case. One of the problems with the newish unitary Council, a disproportionate amount is going to Crewe rather than balanced between the three old Boroughs.

Similarly far too much has been wasted on HS2 which may never happen. This sort of extravagance causes the shortfall which would probably be far less without those payments.

Therefore I believe any increase should be no more than inflation, a budget set and adhered to.

Email response #4

CEC cannot expect their residents to pay the increase or support the loan request. CEC are not truthful and do not listen to its residents.

Can you confirm if rumours that Delamere house is to have dishwashers installed on every level for the staff to wash their cups in are true? Whilst rumours like this are heard, CEC credibility score will never rise.

Having moved to CE 25 years ago, I have seen a huge decline in Crewe particularly and the erection of the multi-story carpark is one of the most stupid things I have ever witnessed and the lady who keeps trying to defend this on TV needs removing.

The state of the refuse collection in some areas of Crewe is diabolical.

In addition, the sudden introduction of making CE part of a Devolution area is farcical and a 12 month consultation is not long enough but when we know that the outcome is already decided by our Labour MP and his pals is again contempt for your payees.

No, 9.99% is not acceptable. No to any further loans.

Do what your residents have to do.

Cut your expenditure.

Stop wasting money.

Stop bowing to Government and look after your residents.

No dishwashers in Delamere.

Email response #5

NO NO NO TO MORE THAN 5% AND THATS TOO MUCH.

HOW DO YOU EXPECT YOUR HARD WORKING OR RETIRED CITIZENS TO CONTINUE TO PAY FOR LESS SERVICES?

YOU WASTE OUR MONEY. PLEASE EXPLAIN WHERE ALL THE EXTRA COUNCIL TAX IS GOING FROM THE THOUSANDS OF NEW HOMES YOU HAVE BUILT IN CHESHIRE EAST.

YOU CANNOT FIX THE ROADS. YOU HAVE BUILT A MULTI MILLION POUND CAR PARK - FOR WHOM? FOR WHAT?

CREWE TOWN CENTRE IS LITTERED WITH FOREIGNERS USING OUR MONEY TO BUY ALCOHOL, CIGARETTES, DRUGS.

YOU SPEND MONEY ON FANCY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS - WHO FOR? NO ONE WE KNOW NOW VISITS THE TOWN CENTRE UNLESS ABSOLUTELY ENTIRELY NECESSARY.

YOU CHARGE FOR GARDEN BINS, BUT DO NOT COLLECT FOR THE FULL YEAR, YET WE HAVE GARDEN WASTE AND FOOD WASTE FOR THE FULL YEAR!?!? AT THE SAME TIME YOU ARE CLOSING TIPS.

WE SCORN CIVIL SERVANTS YET YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY. THIS IS A SAD FACT, AND IF YOU DON'T YET UNDERSTAND WHY WE ALSO SCORN INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY PROGRAMMES THEN YOU REALLY ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF TOUCH WITH YOUR COUNCIL TAX PAYING CITIZENS.

Email response #6

Please do not cut the My CWA funding. Its a vital service that has helped me no end. I am a healthcare professional and see how valuable the service is to my patients. Please do not cut funding to this vital lifeline.

Email response #7

Please do not stop funding the essential life saving work Cheshire Without Abuse do. Women and children will die as a result of your decision. Every week two women are killed as a result of domestic violence. We need this vital support offered by CWA.

CWA support with accommodation, trauma, counselling, advocacy, court and custody issues and so much more, also providing a safe space for women to tell their heart breaking stories. We are a family who respect and support each other through the terrifying and life changing experience of domestic abuse.

Without CWA we have nowhere to go, no support, no understanding of what we are experiencing and no idea of what services can help us heal, keep us safe and educated on what we have lived. We are alone with no hope.

Email response #8

Good afternoon,

Although I like many others understand the budget cuts, I genuinely think that you have made a very poor choice by cutting the Cheshire without Abuse funding. As

somebody who has used there service for both myself and my child and as somebody who has found myself in a position where I need to use their service again I am beyond shocked and absolutely appalled that somebody has made the decision to cut funding for domestic abuse. This really does need to be re-evaluated.

Engagement webpage public comment #1

The Council needs to seriously consider bringing highway maintenance in-house repair service very poor. Income generation by private companies for the council usually very poor. The Lane rental proposal was not understood and the funds generated were until recently going to a central fund hence council may lose money but the private company get paid. Usually council pays over the odds for services and the private company spends often waste millions in capital expenditures and drain the council of funds which should have been used on preventative maintenance schemes which extend life I can't remember the last surface dressing programme.

Council Committee feedback

Throughout January and February 2025 all council Committees debated agenda items on the Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2025/26 - 2028/29.

Details of each of these Committees are provided below, with links included to listen to the items or to view the meeting minutes.

Committee links	Date
Corporate Policy Committee	6 February 2025 (Item 49)
Finance Sub-Committee	9 January 2025 (Item 39)
Children and Families Committee	13 January 2025 (Item 69)
Economy and Growth Committee	14 January 2025 (Item 43)
Adults and Health Committee	20 January 2025 (Item 44)
Highways and Transport Committee	23 January 2025 (Item 6)
Environment and Communities Committee	30 January 2025 (Item 6)

