

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

20 March 2025

Performance Report – Cheshire East Plan, Quarter 3 2024/25

Report of: Karen Wheeler – Interim Assistant Chief Executive

Report Reference No: CPC/35/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

Decision or Scrutiny: Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide the Committee with oversight of organisational performance against the priorities and vision set out in the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25. The report covers Quarter 3 2024/25, 1st October 2024 to 31st December 2024. This report supports the responsibility of the Corporate Policy Committee to have a co-ordinating role across all committees and to exercise corporate oversight of outcomes, performance, budget monitoring and risk management.
- 2 The committee can comment on performance and direction of travel and consider any amendments in reporting, and/or additional data and intelligence that should be included.
- 3 Appendix 1 provides the detail of progress against the Cheshire East Plan priorities for Quarters 2 and 3, and Appendix 2 provides a summary of performance against the organisational health indicators.

Executive Summary

- 4 This report gives an update on delivery and performance against the priorities in the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 for Quarter 3 (October 2024 to December 2024) including progress since Quarter 2.

- 5 Appendix 1 of the report shows that there are 66 priority actions included within the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 and progress can be summarised as follows:

	Q2	Q3	
Green – on track	50	44	↓
Amber – mainly on track, some minor issues	9	8	↓
Red – off track with major issues	2	2	↔
Complete	2	4	↑
Not yet started	3	0	↓
To be updated	0	8	↑
	66	66	

- 6 Appendix 2 provides a summary of key organisational health performance indicators.
- 7 The Corporate Plan 2021-25 has three key themes - Open, Fair and Green. The Plan has been refreshed for 2024/25 to better reflect the financial context.
- 8 A new Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 has now been approved by full Council and will provide our residents, partners and the organisation with clarity of purpose and strategic direction aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The new Plan will commence from April 2025. A delivery plan will be created to set out the specific activity the council will prioritise and lead. It will be agreed by Corporate Policy Committee. Progress will be reported regularly with an annual review. Reporting on the current plan will continue with Quarter 4 2024/25 being reported to Committee in June 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on progress and performance against delivery of the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 in Quarter 3 2024/25.

Background

- 9 The Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 outlines three aims and 20 priorities for the Council aligned with the vision of being an “Open, Fairer and Greener Cheshire East”.
- 10 This report reviews progress with delivery and performance against the priorities and actions in the Cheshire East Plan and focuses upon a

“One Council” approach to performance management. This includes a balance of quantitative and qualitative data.

- 11 Appendix 1 of the report shows that there are 66 priority actions included within the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 and progress can be summarised as follows:

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- 12 Feedback from Corporate Policy Committee in November on the Quarter 2 report has been taken on board with a review of the RAG ratings applied to ensure consistency e.g. where action is yet to be taken and in line with other reporting. The Quarter 2 position is included alongside Quarter 3 so that Members can see the direction of travel.
- 13 The actions which are amber are set out below with an explanation and mitigating actions to be taken:

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q3 update
A1.1.3	Member training to clarify roles and responsibilities for decision-making within the committee system	Head of Democratic Services	New draft Member Development Strategy and report to go to Governance, Risk and Assurance Board on 12th March. CLT to have sight of the documents prior to the revised report (if changes are needed) being submitted to Audit and Governance Committee on 31st March.
A1.1.4	A clear and transparent budget setting process, where opportunities to inform and influence decision-making are clearly understood by stakeholders	Head of Finance	Strongly linked to the progression of the Transformation Programme and the development of change/ savings proposals, the budget setting process over a number of months included Member briefings and engagement, and consultation with external stakeholders. The process and briefings were also shaped and informed by the timing and nature of central Government's policy announcements and both provisional and final local government finance settlements. Whilst noting the generally challenging environment for the local government finance system nationally - and also both the scale of transformation change and further

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q3 update
			Exceptional Financial Support required for the 2025/26 year – the process concluded with a budget being set by Council on 26 February 2025. A similarly robust process will be required, commencing early in the new financial year, to manage delivery of the transformational change; and also develop further proposals to help build balanced budget projections for the medium term, from 2026/27.
A1.3.3	Deliver the savings set out in MTFS 2024-28 proposals within the agreed timescales to contribute to a balanced the budget and build sustainable reserves	Head of Finance	The Third Financial Review (FR3) as reported to the January cycle of service committee meetings showed a latest forecast overspend of £18.3m; this was an improvement of Second Financial Review, by some £1.8m, but reaffirmed the likelihood of the Council needing to take up Exceptional Financial Support, in the form of capitalisation direction, of up to the £17.3m requested, in order to balance the 2024/25 financial year, and protect remaining reserves levels. The detail reporting in FR3 showed that a number of savings items had been achieved, or positive progress made; but the overall outturn will reflect additional demand/ costs, particularly in adults and children's social care.
A2.3.3	Update the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy	Head of Service Early Help and Prevention	The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP) Strategy and Strategy Delivery Plans will be consulted on following the CE Domestic and Sexual Abuse Board meeting on 4 Feb 2025. These have been coproduced and codesigned with the following subgroups: 1) Joint Commissioning 2) Early Intervention/Prevention 3) Community Engagement 4) Survivor Voice The draft strategy will form the basis of a whole service review to be conducted during 2025/26, looking at the whole domestic abuse and sexual violence offer in Cheshire East.
A2.4.2	Prioritise care experienced adults as part of our recovery work to improve employment and training opportunities.	Head of Service: Cared for Children and Care Leavers	We now have 5 Care Leaver ambassadors – they have been attending a number of activities and meetings to help shape the service. There is an improved offer for work experience and apprenticeships and we are offering increased sessions around employment in the care leaver hubs.
A2.4.3	Deliver the priorities of the Cared for children	Head of Cared for Children	The workstreams for the cared for children and care leaver strategy are all operational and priorities are being identified for each of

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q3 update
	and care leavers strategy 2022-26	and Care Leavers	these. There is a clear process for care leavers aged 21+ to access support. We have a tracker in place to ensure that we are recording contact with young people aged 21 to 25, with management oversight and allocation to a Personal Advisor where this is identified as being necessary. The work around accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 is part of a project group and we have already seen an increased offer of suitable accommodation. However, there is further work to do in this area. Lifestory training has been commissioned and will be part of our ongoing offer to ensure that cared for children and care leavers understand their journey and decisions made. Our Care Leaver Ambassadors have been involved in a range of activities to ensure that there is collaboration and involvement in service development.
A3.1.1	Develop and begin consultation upon 'New style' Local Plan Strategy	Head of Planning	New NPPF and change to housing figures published 12 December which will lead to significant unplanned development ahead of a Local Plan. Updated Local Development Scheme required early Q4 but still significant uncertainty of actual process for 'new style' plan with further guidance not due until later in 2025. Local Plan project and associated governance established. Update to Environment and Communities Committee planned for March 2025.
A3.6.1	Deliver actions to achieve the objectives of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan 2027 (updated timescale)	Head of Environmental Services	Progress against capital grant funded initiatives continues to be excellent. Due to a variety of factors officers have recommended that the interim 2027 Council carbon neutral target is removed, and focus is instead on the already committed 2030 carbon neutral with minimum offset. As such the associated capital funded initiatives will be re-considered against this with the focus being on investments to addressing baseline carbon emissions from the likes of the corporate estate and fleet.

14 The actions which are red and not meeting target are:

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q3 update
A2.7.1	Deliver the Kingsbourne Academy primary school in Nantwich	Head of Education	The delivery of this primary school has been further delayed due to the ongoing legal issues. Discussions are underway and we expect to achieve a resolution imminently. We will then be in a position to confirm the opening date for the new school. In the interim, we are working with local schools to ensure that provision for school places is available within the locality.
A3.5.3	Continue to pursue a compensation package following scrapping of HS2 Phase 2	Programme Director HS2	Letters sent to the new Rail Minister and Secretary of State but no offer of potential compensation.

- 15 The Quarter 3 organisational health performance report is at Appendix 2. This gives further details on progress made against delivery of the Cheshire East Plan during Quarter 3 of the 2024/25 municipal year.
- 16 There are 2,717 FTE staff in Cheshire East Council as at quarter 3, a reduction in the level reported in quarter 1 (2,829). The vacancy rate across the Council has increased from 14.24% in Q2 to 16.62% in Q3 2024/25.
- 17 The greatest level of vacancies are reported in Corporate (17.8%) and Children's (15.7%) directorates.
- 18 Levels of staff turnover have decreased from 5.5% in Q2 to 2.5% in Q3. However, following Q2 it was agreed with Human Resources that TUPE figures would impact actual figures for staff turnover. Figures for Q3 are provided without TUPE data. (31/12/24 explains the Q2 spike).
- 19 There has been an increase in the number of agency staff from 246 in Q2, to 267 in Q3 2024/25.
- 20 There has been a decrease in the variance between the forecast outturn and total net budget, decreasing from 5.1% in Q2 to 4.70% in Q3 2024/25. Full details of finance reporting period 3 is a separate item on the committee's agenda.

- 21 Service committees receive performance information on a regular basis through their subject matter expert officers, specific to the subject of the committee. This performance report offers an oversight of progress against the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan 2024/25 and should complement the more detailed performance and service specific dashboards that are considered at service committees.
- 22 The Corporate Plan 2021-25 has three key themes - Open, Fair and Green. Although the Cheshire East Plan has been refreshed for 2024/25 to better reflect the financial context, development of a new Plan for 2025 onwards has now been completed and will provide our residents, partners and the organisation with clarity of purpose and strategic direction aligned to a new operating model and MTFS.
- 23 The new Plan will commence from April 2025. A delivery plan will be created to set out the specific activity the council will prioritise and lead. It will be agreed by Corporate Policy Committee. Progress will be reported regularly with an annual review. Reporting on the current plan will continue with Quarter 4 2024/25 being reported to Committee in June 2025.

Consultation and Engagement

- 24 Consultation was undertaken in developing the Cheshire East Plan and priority actions within it.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 25 The Corporate Policy Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising performance against the strategic aims and objectives in the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25.
- 26 The performance management framework continues to be developed and seeks to provide a robust, customer focussed view of performance. Member input into this development is valued to ensure that performance management reports are of use.
- 27 Performance management is a tool to allow oversight of the Council's key activities and to enable transparency and understanding around where the Council is performing well, and what are the areas of challenge and improvement.

Other Options Considered

- 28 Not applicable.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

29 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

30 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from performance matters will be covered in other reports to respective service committees, including separate financial reporting in-year, as well as in further development and reporting of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as required.

Policy

31 This report demonstrates progress against all priorities within the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-25.

An open and enabling organisation.	A council which empowers and cares about people.	A thriving and sustainable place.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

32 The range of council activities covered in the Corporate Plan aim to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and the obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

33 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

34 Performance and risk are intrinsically linked. Where risks are identified, performance data can evidence the likelihood of the risk and can also show if risks materialise. The performance report identifies areas where performance is strong and areas for development and improvement. This supports the risk management process by providing the opportunity to review progress and identify areas for improvement and any necessary mitigating actions.

Rural Communities

35 The Corporate Plan aims to support greater inclusion for rural communities. In 2022/23 a Rural Action Plan 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)

- 36 Performance management of the priorities relating to children and young people and cared for children ensure that there is a focus on children receiving the best start in life and that we deliver on our commitments to children and young people in Cheshire East.

Public Health

- 37 This report supports our Public Health priorities using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Tartan Rug to ensure that we work with partners to address issues of poor housing, poverty, employment and education across urban and rural communities.

Climate Change

- 38 Performance against the Corporate Plan contributes to overall achievement of the net zero targets for the council and for the borough.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Karen Wheeler – Interim Assistant Chief Executive karen.wheeler@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – The Cheshire East Plan Progress and Performance Report Q3 Appendix 2 – Organisational Health Performance Report Q3
Background Papers:	Cheshire East Plan 2024/25