

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	2 December 2021
Report Title:	Mid-Year Review of the Corporate Plan and Performance Reporting Update
Report of:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** The Council's Corporate Plan is a key strategic document for the Council, setting the vision and objectives for the whole organisation. The Corporate Plan for 2021-2025 is an ambitious plan, agreed by Council in February 2021 and it promotes the vision of an Open, Fair, Green Cheshire East.
- 1.2** Officers have undertaken a review of progress made in delivering the Corporate Plan as at 30 September 2021. The report is intended to help the Committee make an initial assessment of how the aims, vision and priorities of the Corporate Plan are being delivered and highlights areas of risk challenges and good practice.
- 1.3** The context for the Corporate Plan and for this review is one of ongoing significant challenges. The Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, plan for the recovery from it, and continue to deliver essential services to residents. Demands and expectations on councils are increasing as society opens up, particularly from residents and customers. There are particular challenges, for example, in relation to increased demand in adults and children's social care, disruption to supply chains, staff shortages and recruitment in key areas and increased costs, for example energy which impact on delivery.
- 1.4** The progress report is shown in Appendix 1. To further assist the Committee, a summary of progress and future activity is given in paragraph 3.3 below.
- 1.5** The Mid-Year review of the Corporate Plan should be read in conjunction with the Mid-Year review of Finance, also on this agenda.

- 1.6** The approach to performance reporting was tailored to the Cabinet/Scrutiny governance model. Council-wide reporting was part of the Mid-Year and Three-Quarter Year Reviews to Cabinet and Corporate OSC. Directorate level reporting was to the relevant the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. As we have moved to the committee system, the directorate-level reporting has moved 'as is' to Service Committees to ensure Member are still able to review performance.
- 1.7** In development, alongside the mid-year review of the Corporate Plan, officers are working on a new approach to improve the Council's performance reporting and data management processes. This will support decision-making. This has not progressed as quickly as we had hoped, for a variety of reasons including officer capacity and technical issues with the IT platform. However, it is envisaged that improved strategic reporting will enable the earlier identification of areas where performance is not on target and provide an opportunity to mitigate the impact or refine the approach.
- 1.8** It is also important to ensure that accountability for performance exists at all levels of the organisation – individually as well as collectively for strategic and / or cross cutting issues. Providing improved visibility of performance will ensure that accountability is embedded into the culture of the Council and can enhance the link between the Corporate Plan, directorate, service, and team plans and individual appraisals.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to note progress in delivering the Corporate Plan and highlight any areas of risk, challenge, and good practice.

3. Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1** This report is part of the Council's commitment to being open and transparent.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1** Not appropriate.

5. Background

- 5.1** The current Corporate Plan was approved in February 2021 and is the key strategic document for the Council, setting the vision and priorities for the whole organisation.
- 5.2** The 2021-2025 Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan was developed by the Cabinet of the time and promotes the following vision - An **Open, Fair, Green** Cheshire East.

5.3 It also proposes that, over four years (2021-2025), the Council will focus on the following three main priority areas:

- **Open** - We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses, and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East.
- **Fair** - We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents.
- **Green** - We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency, and drive sustainable development.

5.4 A “taking stock” review of the Corporate Plan has provided an opportunity to assess progress made to date on delivering the key priorities of the Council. This is captured in detail in Appendix 1.

5.5 The Review is to ensure that actions and projects are kept within the parameters of the agreed strategic aims and priorities.

- Use the information collected to show the public benefit the Council is having and
- Keep under review internal and external changes which may require adjustments to the Council’s Plan or affect the ability of the Council to achieve its Corporate Plan aims.

5.6 The implementation of the plan coincides with a period where the Council is still dealing with the implications of Covid 19. This continues to have a profound impact across service areas and is therefore reflected in this first Review.

5.7 Summary of progress and future activity

Open

- the Committee system was introduced in May 2021 after significant work and co-operation by Members and Officers. Urgent decision-making and activity relating to the pandemic was uninterrupted by the change in governance. Decision-making at all levels of the council continued in a timely manner.
- The financial outturn for 2020/21 was an overall underspend and an increase in reserves.
- Our workforce has shown great adaptability, flexibility, and resilience during the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.
- The health and wellbeing of our workforce has continued to be a high priority. Staff feel well supported and informed, evidenced by two positive Pulse Surveys.
- A new Workforce Strategy has been approved which continues to support a positive culture in the workplace. There is more to do including rolling out an approach to hybrid working, tackling recruitment, retention, and skills gaps and on the future office estate.

- A new Customer Experience Strategy has been approved which is re-setting expectations and improving consistency, responsiveness, and quality. There is much more to do in terms of improving standards and culture.
- A review of strategic partnership and developing a borough-wide approach to locality working is still to be undertaken.

Fair

- The Council's culture of improving outcomes for children and young people has been recognised externally through inspections, including SEND and children in need.
- The Early Help response during Covid has and continues to support children and families in challenging circumstances.
- Fostering Services have been brought in-house, allowing more children to be supported in the borough.
- There is more to do in terms on tackling the inequalities gaps in health outcomes exacerbated by Covid.
- More work will be undertaken to re-shape services for children and services to meet changing demographic needs, mindful of cost pressures.
- The pandemic has brought increases in contacts and referrals across adult's social care, on top of system-wide pressures which existed before Covid.
- The proportion of adults receiving direct payments has increased as long-term residential and nursing care provision has reduced.
- There are significant pressures in domiciliary care delivery and in the care market more generally and there is much more to do in terms of a planning for a more sustainable position.
- There are significant changes in terms of the developing an Integrated Care System (ICS) for Cheshire East and planning for the impact of other legislative changes. Significant effort will be required to work with the ICS.

Green

- Good progress is being made on the Carbon Neutral Action Plan. Crewe Heat Network is progressing with funding secured and the main contractor appointed to begin work in the new year. A programme of work is underway to reduce emissions from the Council's buildings, funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
- The Planning Service is experiencing a combined impact of significant increases in the volume of live applications, in particular householder applications, more enforcement and complaints and resourcing and recruitment challenges. We are working with Capita to provide additional capacity. The new ED Place is leading a deep dive review to inform a service improvement plan.

- Town centres are facing challenges in line with national trends and prevailing economic conditions. Positive work has been done with partners on establishing regeneration frameworks for our major towns and investment in the public realm. Successful bids have been made to secure external funding totally £37m to support town centres and high streets.
- The council has distributed over £11m of grants to businesses experiencing disruption due to the pandemic.
- Good progress has been made on regeneration projects. For example, Crewe Market Hall opened successfully and has been shortlisted for two industry awards.
- The Highways Service is experiencing large demands in customer enquiries and requests, set against limited capital and revenue budgets for the networks size. Measures have been introduced to streamline the customer journey and there is more to do to develop a customer satisfaction improvement plan, as part of the new Customer Experience Strategy.
- The road network has an increasing number of category 1 defects where safety repairs are required, resulting in budget pressures.
- Congleton Link Road is open. Poynton Relief Road, Crewe North West Highways Package, Middlewich Eastern Bypass and A555 Dualling are all progressing to construction contracts.
- The pandemic continues to be disruptive in terms on working practices, income and public transport patronage.
- New pressures include global and national supply chain disruption leading to significant price inflation and delays in obtaining material and products. In addition, skilled resources, e.g., HGV drivers are in short supply.

5.8 New performance arrangements

The approach to performance reporting has been tailored to the Cabinet/Scrutiny governance model. Council-wide reporting was part of the Mid-Year and Three-Quarter Year Reviews to Cabinet and Corporate OSC. Directorate level reporting was to the relevant the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. As we have moved to the committee system, the directorate-level reporting has moved 'as is' to Service Committees to ensure Member are still able to review performance. However, officers are working to improve performance reporting to inform both strategic and operational decision making, in particular to identify where there are areas of good and poor performance, risk, and opportunity.

- 5.9** The future arrangements will enable us to answer key questions such as: are we delivering what we said we would do; are we improving, how do we compare to others, what are our customers telling us, are we improving value for money, what do we need to change.

5.10 Providing consistency to the data collection, storage, and presentation of performance across the Council is key, providing an approach which improves quality, accountability, and transparency. To improve data access, we will use the Power BI platform, which presents data interactively and fully integrates with other features of Office 365 and the user desktop. Power BI can be connected to a variety of existing data sources (such as case management systems in social care, as has been undertaken within the Adults' and Children's' Directorates). Our initial Council wide approach for performance reporting will be to look to utilise source systems where possible and the Enterprise Data Warehouse, to develop a single view of the truth, aligned with the principles of Master Data Management and Information Assessment Data Management. However, there is likely to be a period of mixed method whilst development work is progressed.

5.11 A define phase to develop the data capture tool and PowerBi dashboard is therefore proposed. This will allow:

- Utilisation of our current infrastructure to combine and connect different data sources (such as local authority case management systems, but could also include information from partners too, such as health data).
- Utilisation of the software, which we already have, to help us to visualise the data in an attractive and accessible way
- Managers and staff to explore pathways through their own data, so they can discover the most important factors driving trends and improve data quality where appropriate
- Utilisation of the integration and collaboration features which allow our staff to share what we discover with the right people easily and quickly.
- The infrastructure to automatically update dashboards and analytics, so that we have the most up-to-date picture of what is going on as possible without the need for labour intensive manual work to update a report.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 Consultation was undertaken to inform the Corporate Plan in 2020/21. This can be found via this link:

[Corporate Plan Engagement 2021 - 2025 - Full report \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/corporate-plan-engagement-2021-2025-full-report)

7. Implications

7.1 Legal Implications

The mid-year review of the Corporate Plan or proposed change of performance management and reporting do not have any direct legal implications, all data is anonymised and does not breach the General Data Protection Regulations.

7.2 Finance Implications

- The Corporate Plan and the MTFS are sister documents. This review has highlighted financial pressures and challenges, both as a result of the pandemic and due to the prevailing national economy.
- There are no direct financial implications of this report, it should be read in conjunction with the Mid-Year Review of Finance.
- Following the define phase of the move towards and improved performance reporting system, there is the assumption that some additional development will be needed to allow the design and development to be undertaken. It is envisaged that if required, a High-Level Business Case will be submitted, to provide funding to deliver this work. The requirement for financial performance reporting will continue.

8. Policy

The Corporate Plan is a key policy document for the Council

9. Equality

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Corporate Plan and is available via this link:

https://files.smartsurvey.io/2/0/O0WZO35M/Corporate_Plan_EIA_v_v0.3_22.10.2020_.pdf

10. Human Resources

The review references the vital role our staff play in the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities. Paragraph 3.3 refers to the new Workforce Strategy and more to do including rolling out an approach to hybrid working and tackling recruitment, retention, and skills.

11. Risk Management

Key projects and priorities in Corporate Plan informed by the Council's Strategic Risk Register. This is kept under regular review and reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.

12. Rural Communities

The Corporate Plan sets out the priorities for rural communities.

13. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

As referenced in paragraph 3.3, the Council's culture of improving outcomes for children and young people has been recognised externally through inspections, including SEND and children in need.

14. Public Health

The context for the Corporate Plan and for this review is one of ongoing significant challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council, working with its partners, continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, plan for the recovery from it, and continue to deliver essential services to residents.

15. Climate Change

The Corporate Plan makes 'green' an explicit priority for the Council. Good progress is being made on the Carbon Neutral Action Plan.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Phil Christian phil.christian@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686414
Appendices:	Corporate Plan mid-year review
Background Papers:	The Corporate Plan 2021- 2025