

Corporate Policy Committee

Agenda

Date: Thursday, 1st February, 2024
Time: 3.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making and Overview and Scrutiny meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

For requests for further information

Contact: Paul Mountford

Tel: 01270 686472

E-Mail: paul.mountford@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2024.

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, set out in the [Constitution](#), a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the Committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes to speak; the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

5. **Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2024/25 - 2027/28 Provisional Settlement Update (Corporate Policy Committee)** (Pages 9 - 24)

To consider the proposals within the budget consultation relating to the Committee's responsibilities.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

Membership: Councillors C Browne (Vice-Chair), C Bulman, D Clark, J Clowes, S Corcoran (Chair), M Goldsmith, A Harrison, N Mannion, C O'Leary, J Pearson, J Rhodes, J Saunders and M Warren

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Thursday, 18th January, 2024 in Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor C Browne (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bulman, D Clark, J Clowes, M Goldsmith, A Harrison,
N Mannion, C O'Leary, J Pearson, J Rhodes, J Saunders and M Warren

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services
Phil Christian, Acting Head of Business Change
Josie Griffiths, Head of Audit and Risk
Sara Barker, Head of HR

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor R Chadwick

Owing to the adverse weather and travel conditions, a number of members were late arriving for the meeting. The Chair therefore adjourned the meeting for 15 minutes. The meeting resumed at 10.15 am.

The Chair welcomed the new Chief Executive, Mr Rob Polkinghorne, to his first meeting of the Corporate Policy Committee.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

63 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

64 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

65 **THIRD FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023/24**

The Committee considered a report on the third review of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2023/24.

The report highlighted the ongoing negative impact of high inflation, rising interest rates and increasing demand for services since the Council set its budget in February 2023. It detailed the important activities being undertaken to minimise the impact on services.

With the consent of the Chair, Councillor R Chadwick spoke as a visiting member in relation to the Notice of Motion at the December Council meeting, calling for an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review of the Council's forecast budget overspend. The Chair responded that he supported peer reviews in principle, having requested a review into organisational culture in 2020. However, he felt that the new Chief Executive should be given time to consider the matter first. He also stressed that a peer review would not be concluded in time for the Council's budget to be approved.

The Vice-Chair added that a peer review was one of a number of options provided by the LGA. Whilst he endorsed such a process, it would take time to organise, given the need to co-ordinate the diaries of the peer members and officers.

The Chief Executive advised that a CPC review was a useful process and he had initiated discussions with the LGA. The lead-in time for a review was typically six months. It may be possible to start a review in about three months' time but this would depend on the availability of those to be involved. He was due to meet with the LGA again next week.

Councillor N Mannion, as Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee, advised that the Sub-Committee had discussed the matter at length at its meeting on 11th January.

Members noted that the third financial review was forecasting a budget overspend in 2023/24 of £13m, an improvement of £5.7m since the second review. However, it was also noted that a £13m deficit would virtually eradicate the Council's remaining General Fund Reserve balance of £14.1m, severely reducing the Council's ability to produce a balanced MTFs for the next financial year. Therefore, the Council would be exploring opportunities to increase the General Fund Reserve.

In response to a question from members, the Director of Finance and Customer Services confirmed that the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit currently stood at approximately £90m.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. notes the report of the Finance Sub-Committee on 11th January, 2024;
2. notes the factors leading to a forecast Net Revenue financial underspend of (£1.0m) against a revised budget of £41.7m (2.4%), for Corporate Policy Committee services;
3. notes the forecast and any further mitigations to be identified;
4. notes the in-year forecast Capital Spending of £10.6m against an approved MTFs budget of £12.8m, due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years, in respect of Corporate Policy Committee projects; and
5. notes the contents of Annex 1 and Appendix 3 of the report, and notes that any financial mitigation decisions requiring approval will be made in line with relevant delegations.

66 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on organisational performance for quarter 2 of 2023/24 against the priorities and vision set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

During quarter 2, there had been continued national challenges such as high inflation, cost of living pressures, and recruitment and retention challenges. Despite these challenges, there were some positive areas of performance, including improvements in children's services and progress in planning.

The Acting Head of Business Change undertook to provide a written response to the following questions by members:

- What was being done to address the high level of complaints not being responded to within prescribed timescales?
- What progress had been made to improve digital connectivity in rural communities?

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the organisational performance in quarter 2 of 2023/24.

67 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER - ASSURANCE REPORT Q2 2023/24

The Committee considered an update report on the activity of the Council's Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 2 2023/24.

The report set out at tables 1 and 2 the strategic risk scores and directions of travel. Full details of individual risks were set out in Appendix A.

The Chair placed on record his thanks to the relevant officers for the progress made with children's services.

The Chief Executive advised that he was sighted on the issue of leadership capacity and would be speaking to the Head of HR on how to recruit the right people.

Members asked if the impending inspection of children's services should be included as a risk item. The Head of Audit and Risk undertook to feed the suggestion back to the relevant team.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. notes the position of the Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 2 2023/24 in respect of the content, description, scoring and risk management activity outlined; and
2. approves the recommendation of the Finance Sub-Committee (7th September 2023) that the strategic risks of the wholly-owned companies be included in a separate category of the Council's Strategic Risk Register from Quarter 3 2023/24.

68 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25

The Committee considered a report which outlined the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 for the Corporate Policy Committee to recommend to Council.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the changes to the 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement as outlined in section 10 of the report; and
2. recommends to Council:
 - (a) that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be approved; and
 - (b) that for the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25, any in-year changes be approved by the Monitoring Officer and published accordingly.

69 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed its work programme for 2023-24.

The Director of Governance and Compliance advised that a special budget meeting of the Committee had been scheduled for 1st February. He asked that members raise any questions with officers in advance to ensure that a response could be provided at the meeting.

With regard to the items for the Committee's meeting on 13th February, the Director advised as follows:

- CP/67/23- 24 'Approving the draft Corporate Plan' – This would be an update on the development of a new corporate plan for Cheshire East.
- CP/70/23- 24 'Appointment of Members to Independent Remuneration Panel' – the officers wished to defer this item to a later date as the Committee would be receiving a report at this meeting by the IRP on a targeted review of members' allowances.
- Notice of Motion on Corporate Peer Challenge – a report was to be added to the work programme for this meeting.

Councillor J Clowes asked when the Conservative Group should submit its proposed amendments to the budget for consideration. The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that any proposed amendments should be submitted to the special budget meetings of the relevant service committees. The budget proposals of individual service committees would then be co-ordinated in a report to the Corporate Policy Committee on 13th February for recommendation to full Council on 27th February. Thus, there were further opportunities to influence the budget and submit proposed amendments at those subsequent meetings, provided officers received the amendments in sufficient time to consider them.

RESOLVED

That the work programme, with the proposed amendments, be noted.

70 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the General Appeals Sub-Committee meeting on 12th December 2023 be received and noted.

71 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the urgent decision taken under Procedure Rules 2.10 and 2.11 by the former Chief Executive on 29th November 2023 to accept a grant for the Local Authority Urgent and Emergency Care support fund 2023/24.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.24 am

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)

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OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

Thursday, 1 February 2024

Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2024/25 - 2027/28 Provisional Settlement Update (Corporate Policy Committee)

Report of: Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)

Report Reference No: CP/35/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: (All Wards);

Purpose of Report

- 1 The Corporate Policy Committee is being asked to provide feedback, as consultees, on the development of the Cheshire East Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28. Feedback is requested in relation to the responsibilities of the Committee.
- 2 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out how the Council will resource the achievement of the Corporate Plan and the budget change proposals within that report are subject to consultation and approval on an annual basis.
- 3 Developing the MTFS requires a wide range of stakeholder engagement. Members are key stakeholders in their capacity as community leaders and also have specific responsibilities as decision makers in setting the Council's budget.
- 4 All feedback will be collated and provided as evidence to the Corporate Policy Committee on 13 February 2024.
- 5 Final approval of the 2024/25 budget will take place at full Council on 27 February 2024 following recommendation from the Corporate Policy Committee.

Executive Summary

- 6 Financial strategies underpin how Cheshire East Council will allocate resources, achieve the Corporate Plan and provide in the region of 500 local services every day. The strategies must be affordable, based on robust estimates and balanced against adequate reserves.
- 7 Committees are responsible for overseeing the achievement of the Council's priorities contained within the Corporate Plan. Resources for the 2023/24 financial year, including Revenue, Capital and Reserves were allocated by the Finance Sub-Committee in March 2023, following the budget Council. All resources are allocated to a specific Service Committee or the Finance Sub-Committee.
- 8 The reports received by Committees in November 2023 set out the indicative budget envelopes for Committee budgets for 2024/25. The reports recommended that officers work with Members to develop further proposals to enable budgets to be set within each envelope for 2024/25.
- 9 The indicative budget envelopes for 2024/25 for all Committees were set as follows:

	2023/24 Original Approved budget	2024/25 Revised indicative budget envelope* *	2024/25 Roll forward proposals	2024/25 Target growth/ savings	2023/24 Pay inflation shortfall	2024/25 Overall Committee target
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults and Health	136.3	137.7	+6.1	-5.5	+0.8	+1.4
Children and Families	79.1	89.0	+2.9	+6.4	+0.6	+9.9
Corporate Policy	41.0	41.2	+1.0	-1.2	+0.4	+0.2
Economy and Growth	25.0	27.0	+2.4	-0.7	+0.2	+2.0
Environment and Communities	48.3	47.2	-0.3	-1.6	+0.7	(1.1)
Highways and Transport	11.0	12.3	+1.5	-0.4	+0.1	+1.3
Finance Sub (Central)	12.4	18.4	+6.1	-	-	+6.0
TOTAL	353.1	372.7	+19.6	-2.8	+2.8	+19.6

Note 1 - Full list of budget proposals for 2024/25 is included at Appendix A

Note 2 – there may be roundings present in the table totals and when compared to Appendix A due to the presentation to one and three decimal places respectively.

** virements between Committees during 2023/24 will revise the figures for the 2024/25 permanent budgets and will be set out within the MTFs budget report.

- 10 Work by members and officers has been undertaken since these meetings to put forward key change proposals for 2024/25 that help to align budgets to these targets, exceeding targets wherever possible.
- 11 The key budget change proposals are contained within the Budget Consultation survey which was launched on 9 January 2024. The consultation is due to run until 28 January 2024. Feedback received up to the close of 22 January will be shared with all members as soon as is available.
- 12 The budget items identified in the consultation were insufficient to ensure long term financial viability for the council. It is therefore necessary to raise additional income or reduce expenditure further and additional general themes/options were put forward in the consultation for consideration of how to achieve this. The consultation proposals are summarised in the table below:

Proposal details included at Appendix A	Overall Committee target £m	Budget change proposals (growth) £m	Budget change proposals (savings) £m	Shortfall (-) / exceeding (+) target £m
Adults and Health	+1.4	+10.8	(9.7)	+0.3
Children and Families	+9.9	+15.6	(5.7)	-
Corporate Policy	+0.2	+2.5	(5.2)	+2.9*
Economy and Growth	+2.0	+4.9	(1.6)	(1.3)
Environment and Communities	(1.1)	+8.2	(8.2)	(1.1)
Highways and Transport	+1.3	+5.8	(1.0)	(3.5)
Finance Sub (Central)	+6.0	+14.6	-	(8.6)
Finance Sub (Funding)	-	-	(18.2)	(1.4)
TOTAL	+19.6	+62.4	(49.6)	(12.7)

*includes cross cutting savings proposal of £3.2m relating to agency and overtime costs which will be apportioned across service committees

- 13 Committees should aim to put forward additional change proposals to either meet or exceed their committee target to ensure that an overall balanced position for the Council can be recommended by Corporate Policy to full Council on 27 February 2024.
- 14 The Provisional Local Government finance settlement was received on 18 December 2024. There was no material impact on the target funding envelope for the Corporate Policy Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee are being asked to:

- (a) Recommend, for the meeting on 13 February 2024, all proposals within the budget consultation, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, for inclusion in the Council's budget for 2024/25.
- (b) Identify further budget change proposals, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that could assist in presenting an overall balanced budget to Council for 2024/25.

Background

- 15 The Council's financial resources are provided from a combination of local taxes, government grants, investment returns on assets and other direct contributions from individuals or organisations. Financial plans are based on estimated spending and income over the next four years and the report of the Chief Finance Officer brings Members' attention to the processes and risks associated with developing these estimates.
- 16 The Council aims to achieve value for money based on Economy (how much we pay for things), Efficiency (how well we use things) and Effectiveness (how we use things to achieve outcomes). Public feedback and internal and external scrutiny create the necessary framework to hold the Council to account for achieving these aims.
- 17 All councils are legally required to set a balanced budget each year and the immediate focus will be on balancing the 2024/25 financial year rather than on the whole medium term as has been the case previously. This reflects the extremely challenging circumstances all councils are facing currently.
- 18 The budget consultation is based on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25. This was released on 18 December 2023. The final settlement is expected in early February 2024 with a debate by Members of Parliament in the House of Commons expected in mid-February (after the publication date of this report to Committee) to agree the final position.
- 19 The provisional settlement set out the Core Spending Power for the authority, based on the assumption that council tax will be increased in line with the maximum allowable before a referendum would have to be

held (4.99%). Some of the grants included in the Core Spending Power calculation are ringfenced for use within the relevant service. There was no material impact on the target funding envelope for the Corporate Policy Committee.

- 20 Any changes made as a result of the engagement process and further debate will be reported to Members at the Council meeting on 27 February 2024.

Consultation and Engagement

- 21 This report forms part of the consultation process for Members on the budget setting for 2024/25. Each committee will receive a report covering their own area of responsibilities.
- 22 All feedback from each Committee will be presented to the Corporate Policy Committee. That Committee will then make recommendations on spending and income estimates for 2024/25 to the full Council meeting on 27 February 2024.
- 23 This report and other committee meeting debates will form part of a series of engagement events with wider stakeholders to gather opinion and collate feedback on the final budget for 2024/25.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 24 In accordance with the Constitution, Committees play an important role in planning, monitoring and reporting on the Council's finances. Each Committee has specific financial responsibilities.
- 25 The Council's annual budget must be balanced. The proposals within it must be robust and the strategy should be supported by adequate reserves. The assessment of these criteria is supported by each Committee having the opportunity to help develop the financial proposals before they are approved by full Council.

Other Options Considered

- 26 The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced annual budget taking regard of the report from the Chief Finance Officer. As such options cannot be considered that would breach this duty. Any feedback from the Committee must still recognise the requirement for Council to fulfil this duty.
- 27 There is no option to "do nothing". The Council has statutory obligations to provide certain services, which would be unaffordable if the Council failed to levy an appropriate Council Tax.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 28 The Council should have robust processes so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 29 The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council on an annual basis and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and communities. Monitoring and managing performance helps to ensure that resources are used effectively, and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.
- 30 Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council. If spending associated with in-year delivery of services is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves.
- 31 The requirement to use reserves to fund annual spending is not sustainable. The unplanned use of financial reserves will therefore require the Council to deliver a greater level of future savings to replenish reserve balances and reduce the level of risks associated with the development of the Reserves Strategy in future.
- 32 The risk associated with the scale of the current financial challenges, in line with many councils in England, is that the Council could act illegally, triggering the requirement for a Section 114 report from the Chief Financial Officer. Illegal behaviour in this context could materialise from two distinct sources:
- (a) Spending decisions could be made that exceed the available resources of the Council. This would unbalance the budget, which is unlawful.
 - (b) Spending decisions to restrict or hide pressures could be made that avoid an immediate deficit, but in fact are based on unlawful activity.
- 33 The consequences of the Council undermining a budget with illegal activity, or planned illegal activity, is the requirement to issue a s.114 report. Under these circumstances statutory services will continue and

existing contracts and commitments must be honoured. But any spending that is not essential or which can be postponed must not take place.

- 34 Further consequences would be highly likely and could include the appointment of Commissioners from the DLUHC, and potential restrictions on the decision-making powers of local leaders.

Policy

- 35 The existing Corporate Plan and the refreshed plan due to be approved later in 2024 will drive and inform Council policy and priorities for service delivery. The priorities and actions may have direct policy implications and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

An open and enabling organisation
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 36 Under the Equality Act 2010, decision makers must show “due regard” to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
 - (c) Foster good relations between those groups.
- 37 The protected characteristics are age, disability, sex, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.
- 38 Having “due regard” is a legal term which requires the Council to consider what is proportionate and relevant in terms of the decisions they take.
- 39 The Council needs to ensure that in taking decisions on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Budget that the impacts on those with protected characteristics are considered. The Council undertakes equality impact assessments where necessary and continues to do so as proposals and projects develop across the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The process assists us to consider what actions could mitigate any adverse impacts identified. Completed equality impact assessments form part of any detailed Business Cases.

- 40 The proposals within the MTFS include positive and negative impacts. A separate Equality Impact Assessment for the budget as a whole is routinely included in the full MTFS report each year.
- 41 The Corporate Plan's vision reinforces the Council's commitment to meeting its equalities duties, promoting fairness and working openly for everyone. Cheshire East is a diverse place and we want to make sure that people are able to live, work and enjoy Cheshire East regardless of their background, needs or characteristics.

Human Resources

- 42 Consultation on the budget change proposals will include staff. Any changes involving staff will be managed in consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

Risk Management

- 43 Cheshire East recognises that in pursuit of its objectives and outcomes, it may choose to accept an increased degree of risk. Where the Council chooses to accept an increased level of risk it will do so, subject always to ensuring that the potential benefits and threats are fully understood before developments are authorised, that it has sufficient risk capacity and that sensible measures to mitigate risk are established.
- 44 The Council also establishes a level of reserves that are adequate to protect the Council against financial risks, such as emergencies, which are not specifically budgeted for in individual years.
- 45 The Council will continue to be flexible about investing revenue funding in maintaining sustainable services and reflecting changes to the risks facing the Council. The full Budget Report will include a revised Reserves Strategy for 2024/25 to provide further detail on estimated balances and the application of reserves in the medium term.

Rural Communities

- 46 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

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

- 47 Budget change proposals and further mitigations that need to be identified which will affect the Children's area of the budget have been set out in the report to the Children and Families Committee.

Public Health

48 There are no direct implications for Public Health due to the nature of this budget being ringfenced.

Climate Change

49 The current Corporate Plan has a very strong environmental thread throughout with a specific aim for the Council to be ‘Greener’.

50 Budget change proposals which would affect the Council’s commitment of being carbon neutral by 2025 will be included in the relevant Committee report to which they relate.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Thompson, Paul Goodwin, Honor Field alex.thompson@cheshireeast.gov.uk, paul.goodwin@cheshireeast.gov.uk, honor.field@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A – Extract from Budget Consultation and Detailed list of proposals
Background Papers:	Outturn Report 2022/23 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 First Financial Review 2023/24 Second Financial Review 2023/24 Third Financial Review 2023/24

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Extract from Budget Consultation:

Corporate Policy Committee proposals

Details about the purpose and responsibilities of the Corporate Policy Committee can be found [here](#).

The Corporate Policy Committee Budget for 2023/24 is £41 million. Expenditure is forecast to increase by £2.5 million next year. This increase is split evenly between additional capacity requirements in Legal Service, support to the ICT needs of the Council and other inflation factors such as pay.

When reviewing the Council’s funding from 1 April 2024 Councillors agreed that the affordable budget for Corporate Policy could increase by £0.2 million. This means savings of £2.3 million would have to be identified. Pensions costs have reduced by £0.3 million, which still means savings of £2.0 million are required to mitigate the increasing expenditure. Managing large scale change presents financial risks, but the Council has very low reserves to protect against risk. The Council should therefore aim to over-achieve savings targets where possible.

A total of 7 savings proposals have been put forward from services overseen by the Corporate Policy Committee, totalling £4.8 million of savings for 2024/25, and brief detail of each of these proposals are given below.

More details of how these savings will be delivered will be presented in High level business cases that will be considered by committees in January and February 2024.

Proposal CP1: Reduce leadership and management costs

Reduce expenditure on leadership, supervision and associated support costs within Corporate Services. Savings are being achieved through temporarily leaving senior leadership posts vacant. Due to a reduction in senior employees, executive support should be similarly reviewed for senior staff across the Council, this includes removal of under-utilised support service budgets. Budgets associated with employees leaving the Council by mutual resignation will be removed from Corporate Services budgets where practical.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.5 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP2: Close the Emergency Assistance Scheme

Reduce the amount of money spent on emergency help for people, by closing the emergency assistance scheme. This scheme supports vulnerable members of society but no longer receives direct government funding.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.2 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP3: Reduce election costs and increase charges where possible

Ensure full cost recovery for all elections carried out by the Council on behalf of other organisations, including charging Parishes for all Parish related election costs. Cut overall election costs through an efficiency review that considers all aspects of the resources required for polling and counting of votes.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.15 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP4: Accelerate Digital and other ICT Transformation

Adopt a series of measures to maximise the use of technology:
- Accelerate digital transformation and realise the related savings in staffing, equipment and system costs.

Appendix A – Corporate Policy Budget Consultation proposals

- Review the opportunity to introduce commercial advertising on the council website.
- Use more artificial intelligence to respond to customers.
- Make efficiencies from new ways of working to contribute savings from contracts and staff resource.
- Minimise spending on ICT devices and licensing.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.25 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP5: Enforce prompt debt recovery and increase charges for costs

Review the enforcement processes linked to payment of outstanding debts to increase the speed and percentage of income collected, whilst continuing the positive support of vulnerable debtors. Reduce overall costs through automation of processes. Increase charges to debtors to ensure this reflects actual costs of the debt collection process, thereby further reducing net costs to the Council

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.15 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP6: Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services

- Continue the review of current provision across workforce and organisational development to deliver differently with reduced costs.

Appendix A – Corporate Policy Budget Consultation proposals

- Across the board efficiencies from procurement and income generation including introducing more venues for registrar services.
- Cease all external design and printing.
- Remove school subsidies through price increases or service reductions.
- Savings through additional hybrid working practices.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.31 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal CP7: Reduce additional spending on staffing and agency costs

Aim to eliminate agency spending as far as possible. Reduce overtime or additional hours payments for employees. The impact of this approach across all services may reduce response times or flexibility in some areas but the intention is to reduce the cost of overheads that may be incurred above the costs normally associated with full-time permanent employment.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £3.2 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Detailed list of proposals:

Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
CP1	Reduce leadership and management costs	As per consultation extract	(0.540)
CP2	Close the Emergency Assistance Scheme	Reduce the amount of money spent on emergency help for people, by closing the emergency assistance scheme and signposting residents to alternative voluntary and charitable support resources. This scheme supports vulnerable members of society but no longer receives direct government funding	(0.220)
CP3	Reduce election costs and increase charges where possible	As per consultation extract	(0.150)
CP4	Accelerate Digital and other ICT Transformation	As per consultation extract	(0.250)
CP5	Enforce prompt debt recovery and increase charges for costs	Increase charges to debtors to ensure this reflects actual costs of the debt collection process, thereby further reducing net costs to the Council.	(0.150)
CP6	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services	As per consultation extract	(0.310)
CP7	Reduce additional spending on staffing and agency costs	As per consultation extract	(3.200)
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Pension Costs Adjustment	This item relates to pension contributions funded by the Council. Contributions can be reduced from 2023/24. This results from a successful financial strategy to secure stability in the funding of future pension liabilities. The effect is a reduction in overheads in pay cost budgets following a change in the employer's contribution rate confirmed by the Cheshire Pension Fund	(0.378)
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Mitigation of reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant	Mitigation of reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant received from the DfE.	+0.136

Appendix A – Corporate Policy Budget Consultation proposals

Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Pay inflation (including additional pay inflation required for 2023/24 shortfall)	This proposal includes incremental increases for eligible staff and nationally negotiated pay awards. Average increases are forecast at c.3% for 2024/25. This may not apply evenly across pay bands due to implications of the Living Wage. The proposal also recognises the additional impact of the higher than budgeted 2023/24 final pay award	+1.446
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Legal Services Capacity	Additional capacity in Legal Services to match increasing demand and manage workloads	+0.455
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	ICT Review 1	ICT Improvement programme – Delivery of an updated ICT Shared Services working model. This requires joint investment alongside Cheshire West and Chester Council (CEC £343,000). Savings are achieved from reduced resource requirements from 2025/26. Funding is also provided from capital investment. Additional funding of £84,000 is also required for Application Lifecycle Management (ALM). The benefits will be modern business systems that are secure, supportable and compliant. The Infrastructure Investment Programme requires £23,000 of investment to enable modern business architecture, including core infrastructure platforms that underpin and support innovation, frontline services and secure a modern workplace that is protected against increased cyber threats. Operational efficiencies from new ways of working will contribute savings from contracts and staff resource.	+0.450
Overall Committee Target			+0.239
Total growth proposals			+2.487
Total savings proposals			(5.198)
Exceeding against Target			+2.950