

Minutes of a meeting of the **Shared Services Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 27th June, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Wyvern House,
The Drumber, Winsford, CW7 1AH

PRESENT

Cheshire East Council

Councillors Jill Rhodes and Patrick Redstone

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Councillors Paul Donovan, Carol Gahan, and Karen Shore

Officer present

Cheshire East Council

Ashley Hughes, Executive Director Resources (S151 Officer)

Gareth Pawlett, Director of Digital

Julie Gregory, Acting Head of Legal

Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Simon Riley, Chief Operating Officer

Roger Davies, Head of Digital, Data & Technology

Catherine Salt, Senior Legal Manager, Corporate and Litigation

Shared Services

Mark Leah, Team Leader, Archaeology Planning Advisory Service

Paul Newman, Archives and Local Studies Manager

Chris Samuel, Emergency Planning Team Manager

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Jill Rhodes be appointed as chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Carol Gahan be appointed as vice-chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Warren.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present, and no questions had been submitted prior to the meeting.

7 SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS PLANS 2024-25 - END OF YEAR REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which provided a summary of the 2024-25 year-end performance for the Shared Service arrangements between Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council against agreed business plans for the Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, the Archives Service, Emergency Planning, the Transactional Services Centre, and ICT. The report included details on the budget position, priorities and objective and key performance indicators across all the shared services.

Overall, the performance of the shared services was in line with expectations, with most objectives and key performance indicators being met across all services. Most of the services were reporting a balance or underspend budget, with the exception of ICT who had an overspend of £0.562m due to a significant decline in the number of commissioned project/hours which led to a drop in income. Budget provision had been made by both Councils for this budget variance and plans were being taken forward, via the Gemini project to secure a sustainable position.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee note the Shared Services performance for 2024/25.

8 THE FUTURE MODEL FOR ICT: PROGRAMME GEMINI UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which provided a summary of the progress made to date on the Hybrid ICT Programme (Gemini).

Phase 1 of the Gemini Programme, initiated in May 2023, had focused on reducing the reliance on physical hosting infrastructure and moving towards cloud-based solutions, the separation of services including user

support, applications, architecture and security, and the design, build and migration of users into a new Cheshire West tenant.

Due to the success of Phase 1, it was now expected that the Phase 2 of the programme could be accelerated with potential for the project to conclude earlier with the separation of the retained shared service by end of March 2026, and the programme coming to a controlled end by July 2026, thus achieving on-going financial benefits for both councils more quickly.

The report recommended that ICT services should be fully disaggregated to give each council full control of their own service. Consultation with unions and staff was planned to take place between September 2025 and March 2026.

It was noted that the decision to move away from the Retained Shared Service model via delivery of the Gemini Phase 2 programme and the ultimate disaggregation of the Retained Shared Service for ICT would be taken by Cheshire East Council's Corporate Policy Committee and Cheshire West and Chester's Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee notes the progress made and current status of the Phase 1 Gemini Programme and recommends to the Cabinet of Cheshire West and Chester Council and the Corporate Policy Committee of Cheshire East Council, (subject to consultation with unions and staff), to approve a move away from the Retained Shared Service model by 2027 (or sooner) via the delivery of Gemini Phase 2 programme and the ultimate disaggregation of the Retained Shared Service for ICT.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.07 am

Councillor J Rhodes