

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 30th May, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Sankey
Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor K Shore (Co-Chair)

Councillors M Gorman, J Flaherty

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire East Council
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer,
Cheshire East Council
Peter Skates, Director of Economy and Growth, Cheshire East Council
Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer, Cheshire East Council
Delyth Curtis, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and
Chester Council
Steve Broomhead, Chief Executive Officer, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Park, Director of Growth, Warrington Borough Council
Sandra Rothwell, Programme Director, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution
Programme
Philip Cox, Chief Executive, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
Steve Purdham, Chair of Business Advisory Board
Damon Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire Police and Crime
Dan Price, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Police and
Crime
Joanne Moorecroft, UNISON North West's Regional Convenor

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Gittins and
Hans Mundry.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest other than those already on file.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

The public speaking procedure was noted. There were no public speakers.

4 DEVOLUTION TIMELINE: LATEST GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Members received a report concerning the latest guidance and information
from Central Government on the Devolution Timeline, from Councillor Nick
Mannion.

The Joint Committee were updated that there were a number of key decision points ahead on the journey to devolution for Cheshire and Warrington:

1. The Secretary of State to make an announcement, following the government's statutory consultation period, in early – mid June 2025 as to whether Cheshire and Warrington had met the government's statutory tests to move towards devolution.
2. The Spending Review would be concluded on 11 June 2025, which would detail the funding offer for priority devolution areas, would be announced at this point.
3. Details of the devolution agreement specific to Cheshire and Warrington which would detail the devolved powers and functions and the initial funding package to be expected from government, including the 30-year investment fund.

It was noted that, whilst a formal decision from the Secretary of State was pending, following the closure of the statutory consultation period, early site of the anticipated timeline was necessary to allow for the Cheshire and Warrington Councils to plan effectively. It was noted that plans would need to be completed as early as July 2025, as a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority could be completed as early as January / February 2026, with Mayoral elections on 7 May 2026.

Dan Price, Police and Crime Commissioner, noted the positive news regarding the amount of external funding which would be received as part of the devolution process.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note the latest overall anticipated timeline of the Devolution Priority Programme.
2. Note the potential impacts on the local decision-making timeline for each council in Cheshire and Warrington.

Councillor Karen Shore joined the meeting at this point.

5 DEVOLUTION WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET 2025/26

Members considered a report on the devolution programme and cost plan for 2025/26, from Councillor Karen Shore. The Joint Committee were updated that it was necessary for Council's to agree a provisional plan and associated budget to allow for preparatory work to continue ahead of the government's expected formal announcement.

It was noted that the three Councils were promoting the devolution programme, and a small programme team were in place to supporting it; to date focus had been on communications and engagement, governance, finance, work force, and priority themes (transport, skills and housing).

It was noted that each of the three Councils had a cross-party devolution reference group set up, as well as regular all-member briefings. There was also support from the Business Advisory Board, and a series of public “pop-up” events had been held over Cheshire and Warrington.

Members were updated that officers had sought a budget position which would ensure that there would be no direct call on Council budgets and that costs were only incurred where necessary. It was noted that at the end of March 2025, confirmation was received that, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation, Cheshire and Warrington would be eligible for £1 million of Mayoral capacity funding for the remainder of the financial year, and that the costs of running a Mayoral election could be fully reimbursed by the Combined Authority.

It was noted that three core funding allocations totalling £1,275,00 were available to support the devolution development process from January 2025 to March 2026, as follows, and the total cost of delivering devolution in Cheshire and Warrington could be fully met from these:

1. £1 million from central government
2. £250,000 allocation approved by the Committee in January 2025
3. £25,000 capacity grant from the Local Government Association

It was noted that there were other potential funding streams available.

It was noted that Unison would be listed as a Key Stakeholder going forwards, and that workstream dates and leads would be published shortly and shared with Unison colleagues.

Members requested a detailed breakdown of the communications and engagement budget of £250,000 detailed in Appendix 2 and officers committed to providing a written response to this.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note progress to date across the Devolution Work Programme, particularly the exception reporting and impacts on timeline.
2. Endorse the financial principles for the management of the Devolution costs and budgets as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Agree that the recently announced external funding streams (£25k grant from the Local Government Association and £1m from the Government Capacity Grant) be considered available to support the local implementation of devolution.
4. Approve the creation of a budget of £1.275m to support the delivery of the activities outlined in this report to devolution in Cheshire and Warrington, to be fully funded by external grants (£1.025m) and previously approved use of Enterprise Zone (EZ) retained business rates (£0.25m), with funding released on a phased basis as the delivery milestones are met.

6 JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that were discussions ongoing regarding the reports on the forward plan, given devolution timeline and upcoming decisions from central government.

It was noted that 27 June 2025 was a Civic Day in Warrington so Members and Officers would be unable to attend a Committee meeting on this date.

RESOLVED:

That the reports on the Forward Plan be adopted and approved.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 10.55 am

Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor K Shore (Co-Chair)