



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

Agenda

Date:	Friday, 30th May, 2025
Time:	10.30 am
Venue:	Council Chamber, Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

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 top of each report.

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with Cheshire East Council's Committee Procedural Rules and Appendix on public speaking, a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the Joint Committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the meeting should provide at least three clear working days' notice in writing in advance of the meeting and should include the question with that notice. This will enable an informed answer to be given.

Contact:	Sam Jones
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Part Two - Other Functions of the Committee

4. Devolution Work Programme and Budget 2025/26 (Pages 3 - 20)

To consider a report on the devolution programme and cost plan for 2025/26.

5. Devolution Timeline: Latest Guidance and Information

To follow.

Part One - Shareholder Functions of the Committee

6. Joint Committee Forward Plan (Pages 21 - 24)

To receive an update and seek direction on the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Forward Plan.



OPEN

30 May 2025

Devolution Work Programme Highlight Report, Future Work Planning and Cost Plan

Report of: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme Steering Group

Report Reference No: JC/03/25-26

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No
Cheshire West and Chester	No
Warrington	No
Cheshire East	No

Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks to update the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee in its role as the overarching Devolution Programme Board on progress across the Devolution Work Programme, as agreed at its meeting on 31st January 2025.
2. Since the January meeting of the Committee, Cheshire and Warrington has been included in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, as announced by the Secretary of State on 5th February 2025. As a result of being included in the Priority Programme, some aspects of the agreed Work Programme have changed, including the impacts of the recently concluded Government-led Devolution Statutory Consultation. These are explained within the report.
3. Cheshire and Warrington's continuation within the Devolution Priority Programme is subject to the outcome of the Statutory Consultation and decisions by each of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Authorities. The

timeline for these are outlined in a separate report. It is necessary to agree provisional plans, budgets and funding in advance of a final decision, as tight delivery timelines will mean preparatory works will need to commence before those decisions are made.

Executive Summary

4. Following the announcement of Cheshire and Warrington as part of the England Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), the Government confirmed an initial outline timeline which will have some impacts across the previously agreed (31 January 2025) local programme. These are explained within the report. It should be noted that the date for a potential future Mayoral election on 7 May 2026 has not changed.
5. The report details progress to date against the agreed programme, which overall has been good. These are detailed within the report, with issues and risks highlighted.
6. Tight delivery timelines mean preparatory works will need to commence before the Secretary of State decision on the Statutory Consultation and Council decisions from the Local Authorities within Cheshire and Warrington. The report identifies headline tasks and an associated cost plan.
7. Three core funding allocations, totalling £1.275m, are available to support the devolution process within Cheshire and Warrington subject to final approval by Government and local Councils. These do not rely on use of any additional local funding sources, beyond the initial £250k allocation already approved by the Joint Committee in January 2025.
8. To ensure financial assurance as we move forward, a financial framework setting out principles for approval of expenditure is detailed for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee is recommended to:

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.

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| 5. Agree that other identified funding (Subregional Funds/additional EZ funds) can be made available to fund devolution programme costs on an interim/temporary basis, within the overall approved budget of £1.275m. |
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Report Detail

9. As previously noted, it is recognised that meeting the overall timescales to work towards a Mayoral Combined Authority by 2026 will be challenging. It is also recognised that this process is subject to Secretary of State decision following the recently concluded Government-led Statutory Consultation process and decisions of the three Local Authorities in Cheshire and Warrington.
10. Timescales mean that early development work has needed to be undertaken ahead of final decisions. This report summarises progress to date following the Joint Committee's approval in January 2025 to proceed with an initial work programme, resourcing and programme structure. Whilst this was initially approved to the end of March 2025, due to the impacts of the recent Statutory Consultation, pre-election period in Cheshire West and Cheshire and recent information now shared on the anticipated DPP timeline from the Government, Growth Directors in consultation with Chief Executives agreed to extend the budget period to the Joint Committee in May 2025. All budget commitments in this intervening period have been reviewed and managed by the Devolution Steering Group. These are detailed in Table 2 below.
11. At the end of March 2025 Cheshire and Warrington Leaders received confirmation from Government that, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation and the Secretary of State being satisfied that the relevant statutory tests have been met, Cheshire and Warrington will be eligible for £1million of Mayoral Capacity Funding in the financial year 2025-2026.

Programme highlights to May 2025

12. All devolution programme management is now in place and operational, with the support of a small programme team drawn from the three Councils and ECW. Regular programme management meetings are in place to manage the overall delivery to programme, risk and to ensure expenditure is minimised where possible.
13. A number of specialist 'workstreams' are now operational and starting to consider detailed requirements and implications of a Combined Authority, devolution powers and investment. As previously agreed, these have focused on engagement, governance, finance, workforce and identified priority themes and competencies, including transport, skills, housing and development.
14. The thematic workstreams are exploring the specific benefits that devolution could bring to the residents, communities and businesses of Cheshire and Warrington – as well as the implications of implementing them. Having now moved beyond the Statutory Consultation period, engagement is increasing with Members, stakeholders, businesses and residents to ensure that the potential new powers and investment for Cheshire and Warrington will deliver

maximum impacts. Whilst the final details of devolved programmes and investment won't be known until after the June 2025 Spending Review, continued investment and powers are expected across:

- a Housing and brownfield land development
 - b Investment in local growth – including town centres and commercial development
 - c Additional opportunity for skills, education and training for the future and current workforce
 - d Investment in transport, to support the maintenance and improvement of the local highways network, supporting bus services and keeping fares down
 - e A 30-year Investment Fund, allowing the flexibility to support locally driven priorities.
15. The Government has now published clearer expectations in terms of outline governance of a future Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, and the areas where local partners will be responsible for developing overall organisational design and constitutional arrangements. The Governance Workstream is focusing its current work on developing outline options for local consideration. These will be shared and explored with Members and key stakeholders over the coming weeks to ensure that a potential future Combined Authority best reflects the situation across Cheshire and Warrington to ensure an optimum governance model. Alongside this, the Workforce Workstream has been liaising closely with Trade Unions and starting to consider the implications for the future workforce.
16. A communications and engagement plan is also now operational. This has been focused on effective communications whilst the Statutory Consultation was live (and taking account of the recent pre-election period). A comprehensive engagement programme has now gone live with a number of events and bespoke opportunities across Cheshire and Warrington for direct local engagement in conversations around devolution.
17. Engagement continues with Members across all three Local Authorities, via the identified thematic leads, individual Council cross-party Devolution 'Member Reference Groups' and Task Groups as well as 'All-Member' briefings. Cross-Council, cross-party Member sessions have been held to further explore the opportunities and impacts of devolution.

Exception Reporting and Risk

18. There are changes to the initial programme timeline reported in January 2025 that should be noted;
- a The Government's Statutory Consultation started on 17th February 2025 and ended on 13th April 2025. This commenced later than was planned

in the original programme. Account had to be taken of an unplanned for by-election which necessitated consideration of pre-election restrictions. This pushed back some of the programme including the engagement delivery plan and the timeline of the anticipated 'decision gateway' points to seek approval to proceed from each of the Councils. This is now expected to be in July 2025, following the Secretary of State's decision on whether Cheshire and Warrington have met the statutory tests within the consultation.

- b Detailed guidance has only just been received from Government which outlines the anticipated nature of content and timing across the devolution powers, this is also subject to the Spending Review in June 2025. Close working with Government officials endeavours to ensure that the requirements for 2026 can still be met – and there remains confidence that this can be achieved.

- 19. A full risk register is in place for the Programme. At this stage, all risks remain within tolerance levels.

Future Work Programme

- 20. Further to the Work Programme Report agreed by the Joint Committee in January 2025, work continues via the Devolution Programme Management structure which is providing assurance across the programme, budget and risks.
- 21. Through engagement with workstream leads the tasks have been assessed that will need to be undertaken, the capacity needed to undertake that work and existing capacity which is already available. Those needs are estimates and are likely to need to be updated as further information becomes available from central government later in the year. However, there is confidence across overall scope and budget envelope to achieve this.
- 22. At a headline level, tasks for 2025-6 relate to:
 - a Ensuring an informed devolution decision can be made
 - b Engaging with residents, businesses and partners over processes and priorities
 - c Developing strategic business plans for the new body
 - d Creating and mobilising a new combined authority
 - e Preparations for a mayoral election
- 23. How these align to the latest Government timeline is explored in a separate report to be presented at this meeting.

Cost Plan

24. Costs associated with these tasks would only be incurred as and when necessary to enable decisions and/or to ensure any new Combined Authority is able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Steps are being taken to minimise any costs and risk exposure prior to any council decisions being made in early summer (July 2025). The outline cost plan reflects the need to carry out some preparatory works but must also be sensitive to the timing of any local or national devolution decisions. Expenditure will only be committed in advance of those decisions if absolutely critical to meeting wider timetables, or to support the process of making an informed local decision.
25. It should be noted that the cost of the Mayoral election which would be held in May 2026 would be ringfenced and fully reimbursed by the Combined Authority on its inception.

Financial Framework

26. A financial framework document has been developed to help ensure consistency and equity over the charging of development costs to this programme. It is recognised that, should the devolution programme progress through to the creation of a new Combined Authority in early 2026, there will be significant resourcing requirements. These are set out in the report and summarised in Appendix 2. The financial framework outlined in this report and at Appendix 1 sets out core principles to clarify what costs will be eligible for recovery from designated devolution funding, and where that wouldn't be appropriate. It also sets out how such costs will need to be approved, processed, evidenced, monitored and reported upon, to provide a clear trail of budget responsibility for the Joint Committee and any successor shadow or combined authorities. This will ensure that the three Councils and ECW can recover development costs from the agreed devolution budget outlined in this report.
27. The Joint Committee are asked to endorse the adoption of the principles set out in Appendix 1 for the onward management of any preparatory/delivery costs associated with the devolution programme.

Funding Sources

28. Three core funding allocations, totalling £1.275m, are available to support the devolution process within Cheshire and Warrington subject to final approval by Government and local Councils. These do not rely on use of any additional local funding sources, beyond the initial £250k allocation already approved by the Joint Committee in January 2025.
29. The main funding would come from the Capacity Grant that MHCLG has recently confirmed will be made available for areas creating a new Combined Authority in 2026. This funding is to support any locally incurred implementation costs and has been confirmed at £1m for 2025-26. The funding will be made available on confirmation that the statutory tests have been met and council-led decisions to proceed are confirmed.

30. That is supplemented by further grant funding from the Local Government Association (£25k) and the existing approval to utilise £250k from the ECW Enterprise Zone balances for sub-regional activity.
31. In addition to these sums there are two local funding sources that could be made available to support devolution, should it prove necessary, but are not required to deliver existing implementation plans. The ECW Business Plan has approval (16 May 2025) to earmark a further £500k from the Enterprise Zone reserves to support sub regional priorities, and a surplus balance of £160k is available from within existing Sub Regional Programme Office funding.
32. While these additional funds are not being committed, they can provide a source of temporary funding for any costs that need to be incurred before the Capacity Grant is fully confirmed. Such costs would be reimbursable from the Capacity Grant if and when relevant devolution milestones are met.
33. All funding sources are set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Confirmed and Likely Devolution Funding 2025-26

Funding Source	Status	Availability	Total £'000	Description
Core Funding Allocated to Support Devolution				
ECW Enterprise Zone (EZ) funds	Approved January 2025 Joint Committee	Immediate	250	From available ECW EZ retained business rates
Local Government Association	Grant received in March 2025	Immediate	25	LGA grant to support devolution work
MHCLG Capacity Grant	Allocation confirmed in April 2025. Release subject to confirmation of devolution approval to progress	Likely October 2025	1,000	Funding of £1m confirmed for 25-26 subject to Government and local decisions.
Sub Total			1,275	
Wider Funds – Available to Support Devolution (if needed)				
Sub Regional	Funds available. Alignment to support	From May 2025	160	Residual balance on sub-regional funds

Programme Office	devolution process being progressed			administered by Warrington BC
ECW Enterprise Zone funds	Approved 16 May Joint Committee	May 2025	500	Second tranche of EZ retained business rates funds
Total			1,935	

Phase 1 Costs/Funding - to May 2025

34. This covers the period up to the national and local decisions as to whether to progress devolution in Cheshire and Warrington. This decision-making process will be initiated by the Joint Committee from late May and is expected to conclude with Council approvals in mid-July 2025.
35. Activities in this period are being carried out at risk and will need to be funded from local resources as there is no guarantee of external funding if devolution does not progress and these costs would not be recoverable.
36. Activities in this period include initial preparation of the sub-region's case for devolution, local engagement activities and assessment of the potential impact of devolution to inform the local decision-making process.
37. The estimated total cost of this work to the end of May 2025 is £295k. Funding for this is provided from the £250k approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2025. The £250k is the devolution specific share of a larger £350k made available from the Cheshire and Warrington Enterprise Zone (EZ) funds held within the ECW Budget, with the remaining funding supporting wider subregional activity, including work on the Fair Employment Charter and sector development work such as culture, creative industries and life sciences.
38. This funding has been supplemented by a small grant of £25k from the LGA to support devolution work. In addition, the Sub Regional Programme Office (SRPO) has reserves of £160k remaining and, subject to necessary approvals, this will be made available to support the Devolution work programme.
39. The estimated cost of activity during this initial period is £295k and it is proposed that these costs are initially funded from the sources as set out in table 2 below:

Table 2 – Phase 1 costs January to May 2025

Phase 1 Costs and Funding		to Mar 2025 £000s	Apr-May 2025 £000s	Total Phase 1 £000s	Remaining Balance £000s
Costs	(see appendix)	63	232	295	
Funding					
LGA	Grant	25	0	25	0
EZ	Approved in				
Funds	Jan	38	212	250	0
SRPO	Existing Funding	0	20	20	140
		63	232	295	140

40. A fuller breakdown of the costs for each stage by workstream is included at Appendix 2.
41. Should the Joint Committee recommend the continued progression of the devolution programme at its meeting on 27th June 2025, the decision-making process across all three Councils will not be complete until mid-July. Therefore, some additional costs above those identified in Table 1 are likely to be incurred in June and early July. These costs are expected to remain well within the available SRPO funds (£140k) and the recently approved EZ sub-regional funding, pending the confirmation and receipt of Governmental Capacity Funding.

Phase 2 Costs/Funding - June to September 2025

42. The next phase of activity covers the period between confirmation of the Government intention to rollout devolution in this sub-region (May/June) and a final decision being made by Councils once the more detailed devolution proposal and funding packages are outlined. Should either the Councils or Government not support progression to this phase, the majority of these costs would not be incurred.
43. Key tasks during this period would include detailed consideration of the emergent government proposals and funding streams for any combined authority, review of the legal framework such a body would work within and development of sub-regional strategies for the initial areas of combined authority responsibility.
44. The progress of these tasks will be dependent on the timing of MHCLG decisions and the release of further information on future funding streams following the planned comprehensive spending review. The estimated cost to

carry out this element of the work programme for the period June to September 2025 are in the region of £325k. A contingency of £75k has been allowed for to cover cost and timing risks, raising the projected costs to £400k. It is proposed that this cost will ultimately be met from the already announced £1m Government's Capacity Funding Grant earmarked for Cheshire and Warrington.

Table 3 – Phase 2 June to Sept costs 2025

Costs and Funding to Final Decision		Phase 1 Up to May 2025 £000s	Phase 2 Jun- Sept 2025 £000s	Total Costs to Final Decision £000s
Costs	Cost Estimate	295	325	620
	Contingency	0	75	75
		295	400	695
Funding				
EZ Funds		250	0	250
LGA Grant		25	0	25
Capacity Funding*		20	400	420
Total		295	400	695

45. During the early phases of work there is still the potential that the devolution process could be stopped or delayed, as final approvals will only be confirmed in the autumn once the Secretary of State agrees to move to the parliamentary process creating a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. This may impact on the ability to utilise the Capacity Grant, so alternative funding needs to be identified in case the devolution process is halted.
46. Following the confirmation that this is a legitimate use of such funds, it is therefore proposed that phase 2 costs are initially funded by the additional £500k of EZ funds approved as part of the ECW Business Plan for 2025-26 and the £160k available from the existing Sub Regional Programme Office funds. If devolution does progress these funds would then be reimbursed from Capacity Grant Funding.

Phase 3 Costs/Funding - October 2025 to March 2026

47. Should the proposals pass through the local and national approval gateways at the end of both Phase 1 and Phase 2, then the £1m Government Capacity Funding will be granted alongside near certainty (subject to the Parliamentary process) that devolution will be implemented in Cheshire and Warrington and a new Combined Authority will be created from early 2026.

48. At this point any outstanding work linked to the creation of the new Combined Authority would be progressed. This would include production of initial strategic plans and priorities, creating the governance structures for the new body, setting up necessary business systems, addressing any transitional HR/TUPE impacts, considering impact on any legacy bodies and preparation for a forthcoming mayoral election process.
49. The costs for this phase of activity are the least certain as they will be significantly impacted by the final form of any devolution offer, and the speed at which a new Combined Authority would be expected to take on its full range of responsibilities. As a result, cost estimates are dependent on a number of working assumptions and these assumptions may change as work progresses. However, initial indications are that this six-month phase of work will incur costs of £487k.
50. This cost estimate assumes that a new Combined Authority would go live by mid-March 2026, should the new authority go live earlier then the costs incurred before the CA comes into being would be slightly reduced.
51. The approach to funding these phase 3 costs would replicate the approach followed in phase 2, with all costs funded from Governmental Capacity Funding for the creation of the Combined Authority. Through this approach the local bodies and taxpayers would be insulated from any costs linked to the creation of the new Combined Authority, beyond the initial setting aside of funding from the Enterprise Zone Reserve.
52. The costs of the Mayoral election which would be held in May 2026 are excluded from these figures, underpinned by the assumption that any election costs incurred before the formation of the Combined Authority, will be ringfenced and fully reimbursed by the Combined Authority on its inception.
53. Total set up costs across the three phases are estimated at £1,107k, and available funding from the Government's Capacity Grant, the LGA grant and initial EZ funds totalling £1.275k. The Joint Committee is therefore asked to approve a total budget for the Devolution set up costs of £1.275m, compromising the estimated expenditure of £1,107k and a contingency of £168k to provide flexibility and funding for any unforeseen costs.

Table 4 – Phase 3 - October 2025 to creation of new Combined Authority

Costs and Funding to Final Decision		Phase 1 Up to May 2025 £000s	Phase 2 Jun- Sept 2025 £000s	Phase 3 Oct-Mar 2025/26 £000s	Total Costs £000s
Costs	Estimate	295	325	487	1,107
	Contingency	0	75	93	168
		295	400	580	1,275
Funding					
EZ Funds		250	0	0	250
LGA Grant		25	0	0	25
Capacity		20		580	1,000
Funding			400		
		295	400	580	1,275

Reasons for Recommendations

54. As the Programme Board for the Devolution Programme, the report sets out a 'highlight update' noting key escalation and risk points.
55. The report sets out an overarching programme and cost plan to enable the programme to continue, whilst incurring the minimum costs before the first 'gateway point' – i.e. Secretary of State decision.
56. Subject to final decisions, the budget is to be fully funded by external grants (£1.025m) and previously approved use of Enterprise Zone retained business rates (£0.25m), with funding released on a phased basis as the delivery milestones are met.
57. Approving the principles within the financial framework (appendix 1) will support a transparent assurance framework to provide a clear trail of budget responsibility for the Joint Committee.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board (BAB)

58. The Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board (CWBAB) strongly supports the progression of devolution for Cheshire and Warrington and recognises the strategic opportunity it presents for local business growth and competitiveness. We welcome the inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme and endorse the ambition to establish a Mayoral Combined Authority by May 2026. We believe this is essential to unlocking transformative powers and investment in transport, skills, innovation, and place-making. The CWBAB therefore supports the clear work programme and cost plan outlined in this report, including the necessary investment in communications, programme management and stakeholder engagement. We recognise the tight delivery timescales and commend the progress made to date and urge continued momentum to deliver devolution at the earliest possible opportunity.

Other Consultation and Engagement

59. Communications and engagement is a critical part of the programme and stakeholders across Cheshire and Warrington will be fully informed of the process and how they can get involved. Key stakeholders include our residents, communities, businesses, council staff, Members, MPs, the voluntary and community sector and others identified through a detailed stakeholder mapping exercise.
60. The communications and engagement approach will ensure a broad and representative range of responses from across the region, including the views of people from different backgrounds, groups and organisations. A mixture of appropriate methods will be used to tailor to different audiences to help to reach as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. Barriers to engagement will be considered, such as accessibility, apathy and transport issues.
61. The results of the statutory consultation and feedback from the engagement programme will be critical elements in understanding the implications of devolution when councils make their decisions.
62. A series of Member engagement sessions are being run - building on the engagement to date via cross-party working groups across all councils.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

63. The governance workstream is supporting each programme phase, where appropriate, to ensure legally compliant governance structures and arrangements are established and implemented. The Joint Committee has the power under its existing Terms of Reference, Part Two, section 4, to approve the recommendations presented in this paper.

Finance implications

64. The financial implications are set out within the main body of the paper.

Risk Management

65. A full risk register is in place and managed via Programme Management, reporting monthly to the Devolution Programme Steering Group.
66. Some work may need to be undertaken at risk to ensure a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the impacts of devolution for Cheshire and Warrington is available to present to councils as part of their decision making. However, such expenditure will be minimised via a budgetary management approach which focuses on the key gateway council decision points (July 2025). To mitigate the risk of abortive expenditure and or funding gaps occurring, all workstreams will only commit essential and time critical expenditure before decision points.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

67. There are no immediate ED&I impacts. ED&I will be fully reflected in all outcomes across future Devolution Delivery.

Policy

68. Any devolution agreement would support the Cheshire and Warrington vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Gemma Davies, Chair, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Steering Group/ Director Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council Gemma.Davies@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Devolution Financial Framework - Key Principles Appendix 2: Summary of Cost/Budget
Background Papers:	Joint Committee Report 31 st January 2025: Devolution Work Programme.

OPEN**Devolution Financial Framework - Key Principles**

It is proposed that the following principles are used to govern and manage the finances of the devolution priority programme through to the Combined Authority go live date:

- 1) Only new additional expenditure (or backfill of existing staffing resources), will be funded by the programme budget. All four organisations will therefore be expected to absorb the cost of diverting some existing resources (primarily in-kind staffing) to support the programme.
- 2) Start-up expenditure must be minimised and, where possible, be delayed until after key gateway decisions have been made by the Councils i.e. until after the June/July in principle decisions to proceed and the September/October final 'go/no go' decisions.
- 3) Budgets will be managed and monitored as follows:
 - **Joint Committee** – will approve and monitor the overall programme budget and initial allocations to each phase of activity prior to the gateway decisions. Any changes to the overall programme budget must be approved by the Joint Committee.
 - **Officer Steering Group** – will approve manage and monitor the allocation of the overall approved budget to each workstream.
 - **Workstreams Leads** – will approve and manage all expenditure within their approved workstream budget and also within each phase. Expenditure must be approved by workstream leads and managed on a ring-fenced basis within the approved budget. A full audit trail will need to be maintained in respect of all expenditure.
- 4) Any potential overspends must be escalated by the workstream lead to Officer Steering Group (and if necessary Joint Committee) in advance of the additional spending commitment being made.
- 5) Wherever practical, non-staffing expenditure to support the programme should be channelled via Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW). This will provide a single point through which the overall cost of the programme can be monitored and managed.
- 6) If approved start-up costs are commissioned outside of ECW, then a quarterly exercise will be undertaken to collate them centrally within ECW. All expenditure must be managed on a ring-fenced basis in line with the

commissioning organisation's Finance Procedure Rules and relevant Scheme of Financial Delegation.

- 7) Cheshire East Council will act as the host authority for receipt of Government funding e.g. MHCLG capacity grants, as a continuation of its role as the accountable body for sub regional activity. The funding would then be passed out to ECW (or other parties if necessary) to offset the approved costs being incurred.
- 8) A quarterly financial report of spend vs budget will be presented to the Joint Committee. This will be accompanied by a quarterly process to re-imburse organisations as required for all approved expenditure from the programme budget. All organisations will therefore be required to cashflow expenditure pending reimbursement.
- 9) Funding will be applied to support programme costs in the following priority order:
 - I) Government funding (subject to any attached conditions).
 - II) Other external funding e.g. LGA grant to support devolution work.
 - III) Sub Regional funding e.g. Enterprise Zone retained business rate funds or Sub Regional Office Programme Office.
 - IV) Council funding.

Appendix 2

OPEN

Summary of Cost/Budget

WORKSTREAM	PHASE1 Jan 25 - May 25	PHASE2 Jun 25 - Sep 25	PHASE3 Oct 25 - March 26	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£
Comms & Engagement	100,599	72,000	85,300	257,899
Finance	9,866	19,733	72,919	102,518
Governance	33,178	47,356	70,534	151,068
Growth	61,482	82,966	114,448	258,896
Project Management	74,303	73,232	98,648	246,183
Workforce	15,000	30,000	45,000	90,000
Contingency		75,000	93,435	168,435
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	294,429	400,286	580,284	1,274,999
FUNDING				
EZ Reserve	(250,000)	0	0	(250,000)
LGA Grant	(25,000)	0	0	(25,000)
Capacity Funding	(19,429)	(400,286)	(580,284)	(1,000,000)
	(294,429)	(400,286)	(580,284)	(1,275,000)

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JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2025/26

Version 16th May 2025

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
B	30 th May 2025	Warrington BC Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington.	Devolution Work Programme and budget 2025/26	To confirm the devolution programme and cost plan 2025/26.	Cllr Gittins (tbc)	Gemma Davies	
			Latest Devolution Timeline	To share the latest update from Government on the anticipated Devolution Timeline - noting its impacts for Cheshire and Warrington	Cllr Mannion (tbc)	Gemma Davies	
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	27 th June 2025	Cheshire East Council Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.	Get Britain Working Plan	To agree next steps for C&W Plan	Cllr NP	Gemma Davies/Hayley Owen	
			Connect to Work	To agree approach to Connect to Work in Cheshire and Warrington.	Cllr NP	Gemma Davies/Hayley Owen	
			Devolution related business	TBC			

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
A			ECW related business	TBC			
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	25 th July 2025	Cheshire West & Chester Council. Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 OBG.	Devolution related business	TBC			
A			ECW related business	TBC			
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	29 th August 2025	Warrington Borough Council Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sanket Street, Warrington.	Devolution related business	TBC	Cllr LG		
A			ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	26 th September 2025	Cheshire East Council	Devolution related business				

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
A		Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.	ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	31 st October 2025	Cheshire West & Chester Council	Devolution related business				
A		Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, CH65 OBG.	ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	28 th November 2025	Warrington Borough Council Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington.	Devolution related business				
A			ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	30 th January 2026	Cheshire East Council Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Crewe.	Devolution related business				
A			ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
B	27 th February 2026	Cheshire West & Chester Council	Devolution related business				
A		Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, CH65 OBG.	ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	27 th March 2026.	Warrington Borough Council Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington	Devolution related business				
A			ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction			