

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 25th July, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Warrington Town
Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

PRESENT

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)
Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Shore, Flaherty, M Goldsmith and Matthews

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Delyth Curtis, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Sandra Rothwell, Programme Director, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Philip Cresswell, Executive Director of Place, Cheshire East Council
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer, Cheshire East Council
Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise, Cheshire East Council
Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer, Cheshire East Council
Steve Park, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Hunter, Director of Place, Warrington Borough Council
Paul Clisby, Director of Law and Governance, Warrington Borough Council

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Joanne Moorecroft, UNISON North West's Regional Convenor
Damon Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire Police and Crime
Gemma Southern, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Police
Philip Cox, Chief Executive, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologie for absence were received from Councillors Michael Gorman and Hans Mundry. Councillors Mark Goldsmith and Denis Matthews were present as substitutes.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 16 May 2025 and 30 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

10 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

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

11 GET CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON WORKING PLAN

Members received a report concerning the programme of work which supported economic development across Cheshire and Warrington, from Councillor Shore.

Members were updated that the government launched a “Get Britain Working” White Paper on 26 November 2024, which outlined how it would get economically inactive adults to gain and sustain employment, aiming towards a national employment rate of 80%, and a recommendation of the paper was for each local area to produce its own plan of what it wished to achieve.

It was noted that the plan would outline the vision for Cheshire and Warrington and the short-term priorities, and would work closely with the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB). The project would be coordinated by Cheshire West and Chester Council, and a Cheshire and Warrington Task Group, which contained representatives from the three local authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions, the ICB and Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington would be set up. It was noted that the high-level priorities document would be shared with stakeholders over the coming months to ensure that it met the needs of all. The final plan was required to be submitted by the end of September 2025.

It was noted that there were key issues identified which impacted employment, and trade unions were interested to be involved in the project.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee agree to:

1. Note the information in this report.
2. Note and confirm that Cheshire West and Chester Council (as recommended by Growth Directors) will:
 - a. Accept the £150,000 from DWP to develop and publish the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan.
 - b. Lead on the development, stakeholder engagement and submission of a Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan to DWP, working in partnership with a commissioned appropriate consultancy service.

c. Act as Lead and Accountable Body for the new Get Cheshire and Warrington Working programme, an activity that directly responds to an identified economic priority of the sub-region.

12 DEVOLUTION NATIONAL POLICY UPDATE

Members received a report which informed them of recent government policy and strategic announcements which highlighted potential economic growth and devolution impacts and opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington, from Councillor Mannion.

Members were updated that on 11 June 2025 the government had concluded its multi-year spending review which outlined the focus of government investments up to 2030, and set out the triggers for key national strategies and a number of investment packages which were specifically focussed on devolved areas.

It was noted that the government had committed to support “High Potential Sectors and Clusters” across the country, which would be of interest to Cheshire and Warrington, and an English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill was introduced on 10 July 2025, which built on the English Devolution White Paper and set out how the government intended to provide the tools to deliver devolution.

It was noted that, subject to relevant Council approvals, Cheshire and Warrington would be set to become a Mayoral Combined Authority in 2026, with a Mayoral election in May 2027, shifting to a Mayoral Strategic Authority in 2026. It was likely that from May 2027, the voting system for Mayoral elections would be via a supplementary vote system. It was noted that a 30-year investment fund, as well a greater control of existing funds was likely to be available to Cheshire and Warrington.

It was noted that there could be issues surrounding the borders of Cheshire Police and other blue-light services with regards to the boundary of Cheshire and Warrington.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee agree to:

1. Note the latest developments in UK policy and investment linked to economic growth and devolution.
2. Note the potential impacts for future economic growth planning and devolution in Cheshire and Warrington, with further detailed reports to follow as subsequent work develops.

13 DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME: UPDATE REPORT

Members received a report which informed them of the Joint Committee's role as the overarching Devolution Programme Board and its progress against the agreed Devolution Programme and budget, from Councillor Gittins.

Members were updated that, on 17 July 2025, Cheshire and Warrington passed the governments statutory devolution tests and were able to progress towards individual council decisions at Council meetings in September 2025, ahead of the Mayoral Combined Authority being set up in early 2026, with Mayoral elections in May 2027.

It was noted that the first Workboard Engagement meeting was held on 11 July 2025 with Union and local authority HR attendees.

Members were updated that a PR campaign had been undertaken, a devolution ambassador programme and social media campaign had been launched, and work to improve community engagement was underway, which had resulted in widespread outreach. It was noted that there would be a further PR campaign ahead of Council meetings in September 2025.

It was noted that officers were working to minimise spend on the programme, and working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Governments ahead of Council decisions in September 2025.

It was noted that Unison had concerns which would be followed up outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee agree to:

1. Note the latest overall anticipated timeline, including local decision making, of the Devolution Priority Programme in Cheshire and Warrington.
2. Note progress against programme delivery – including latest budget position and risk register.
3. Consider the Ministerial statement relating to the Devolution Priority Programme that was made on 17th July 2025 (the date of publication of this report).

14 FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 11.10 am

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)

