

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Wednesday, 6th August, 2025 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town
Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)
Councillor M Gorman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Clark, J Clowes, L Crane, T Dean, S Gardiner, M Goldsmith,
D Jefferay, C O'Leary, J Rhodes, J Saunders and F Wilson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive
Karen Wheeler, Interim Assistant Chief Executive
Ashley Hughes, Executive Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Philip Cresswell, Executive Director of Place
Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children's Services
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer
Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services
Professor Rod Thomson, Interim Director of Population Health
Jo Wise, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager
Tom Moody, Director of Transport and Infrastructure
Nikki Bishop, Democratic Services Officer

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Gardiner declared, in relation to agenda item 8 – Knutsford BID Proposal, that he was a Knutsford resident and Knutsford Town Councillor, and knew many of the BID Board members, including the Chair. Cllr Gardiner confirmed other than voting for the Knutsford Town Council annual budget which approved a line of expenditure to fund the preliminary work of the BID, he had not been involved in any further discussions or decision-making. Prior to the consideration of the item, following advice from the Monitoring Officer, Councillor S Gardiner confirmed that he would not participate in the debate nor the vote on this matter and would leave the meeting room.

Councillor T Dean declared, in relation to agenda item 8 – Knutsford BID Proposal, that he was a Knutsford resident. Councillor D also declared that he was a Board Member of the Tatton Park Board. Prior to the consideration of the item, following advice from the Monitoring Officer,

Councillor T Dean confirmed that he would not participate in the debate nor the vote on this matter and would leave the meeting room.

Councillor J Rhodes declared, in the interests of openness and transparency in relation to agenda item 8 – Knutsford BID Proposal, that she was a Board Member of the Tatton Park Board.

Councillor M Goldsmith declared, in relation to agenda item 8 – Knutsford BID Proposal, whilst he had been involved in the development of the Wilmslow BID proposal, he had not been involved in the Knutsford BID proposal. Councillor Goldsmith declared that he was also a Board Member of the Tatton Park Board and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, he would not participate in the debate nor the vote on this matter and would leave the meeting room.

19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

21 TRANSFORMATION PLAN UPDATE

The committee considered the report which provided an update on the Council's Transformation Plan, including revenue and capital expenditure, financial and non-financial benefits for 2024-25 and associated governance and decision-making arrangements. The Council's Chief Executive, Rob Polkinghorne, introduced the report.

Councillor Ken Edwards addressed the committee as a visiting Member and highlighted his concerns relating to the Council's Transformation Plan, particularly in light of the Best Value notice from Government. Councillor Edwards welcomed the report and the assurance from the Chief Executive to ensuring that the Corporate Policy Committee and wider Members were provided with regular comprehensive progress reports going forward. Councillor Edwards stated the importance of driving forward the Council's Transformation Programme and Improvement Plan at pace.

Councillor L Wardlaw addressed the committee as a visiting Member and asked several questions in relation to the Council's Transformation Partner and sought clarity on the steps the Council was taking to assure value for money from the services being provided. It was queried why comprehensive progress reports had not previously been provided to Members and which committee had oversight and scrutiny of the Transformation Programme, including the contract with the Council's

Transformation Partner. Councillor Wardlaw queried the role of the Leader and Deputy Leader in relation to the transformation mobilisation plans and if the Leader and Deputy Leader were aware of the fees associated with the Transformation Partner. Finally, Cllr Wardlaw queried when officers had become aware of the £5m fees associated with the Council's Transformation Partner and where exactly this had been referenced within the Full Council report from July 2025.

The committee welcomed the report and agreed that whilst regular comprehensive updates had not been provided to the committee, that there was a strong commitment to doing so going forward. The committee agreed that this was a positive step-forward and that the focus of the committee should now move from process to outcomes, to enable the committee to effectively measure the success of the Transformation Plan. It was confirmed that the committee, and Members, would be provided with clear cashable and non-cashable savings, along with milestones relating to delivery to enable Members to hold officers to account. The committee agreed that future reports should provide assurance and set out clearly the overall costs and benefits (including economic) of transformation as well as timeframes for when key decisions would come forward. It was also requested that Members be provided with the underpinning data and assumptions used to forecast the savings outlined in relation to digital transformation. Officers committed to providing a written response and/or an update at a future Committee meeting.

The committee sought assurance in relation to contract management and the steps being taken to ensure value for money from the Council's Transformation Partner. It was clarified that there were regular meetings with the Council's Transformation Partner and formal contract management measures in place relating to invoices and deliverables against the contract.

A friendly amendment was proposed and accepted by the committee in relation to Recommendation 3, as summarised below.

1. Agree that the committee receives a progress update on delivery of the Transformation Plan, financial and non-financial benefits, for quarter 1 *(and provisional Q2)* 2025/26 and alongside the first financial review (quarter 1) in October 2025

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Corporate Policy Committee

1. Note and comment on the delivery of the Transformation Plan in 2024/25 including expenditure, financial and non-financial benefits.
2. Note that Service Committees will be the decision makers for relevant transformation business cases that propose a significant change in

Council policy and inform the budget setting process with Corporate Policy Committee providing oversight and decision making for the overall transformation plan, budget and MTFS as set out in the Constitution.

3. Agree that this Committee receives a progress update on delivery of the Transformation Plan, financial and non-financial benefits, for quarter 1 (and provisional Q2) 2025/26 alongside the first financial review (quarter 1) in October 2025.
4. Agree that the approach to a new overarching Corporate Improvement and Delivery Plan includes transformation.
5. Agree that the Corporate Improvement and Delivery Plan is a standing item for quarterly progress updates from October 2025 aligned to financial reporting going forward.

22 TASK AND FINISH GROUP: HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND ABUSE OF COUNCILLORS - FINAL REPORT

The committee considered the final report of the Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation Task and Finish Group which was established in January 2025 to consider the issue of harassment, abuse and intimidation faced by Elected Members.

The committee welcomed the report and thanked the Task and Finish Group and officers for their work. The committee agreed that the findings from the Member Survey were concerning and that the detailed support identified by the Task and Finish Group would go some way in supporting Members impacted by harassment, intimidation and abuse.

The committee agreed that the recommendations set out within the report should be implemented as quickly as possible and that Members also needed to consider how they could build their own resilience and build mechanisms to protect themselves. It was important that training for Members was right and included key themes such as managing social media accounts, building resilience to taking action against individuals that were abusive and understanding when it was appropriate to contact the Police.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Corporate Policy Committee

1. Note the findings of the Member Survey (Appendix 1).
2. Approve the Councillor Incident Reporting Form (non-emergencies) (Appendix 2).

3. Agree that the Head of Democratic Services be appointed as the Council's Nominated Officer for councillors dealing with harassment, abuse and intimidation and approve the supporting role description (Appendix 3).
4. Approve the Councillor Safety Protocol (Appendix 4) and note that this will be available on the Members Hub.
5. Agree that Cheshire East Council reaffirms its commitment and support to the principles of the LGA Debate Not Hate Public Statement.
6. Agree the role profile (Appendix 5) for the Member Champion: Councillor Safety and note that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council will appoint a Member to this role.
7. Agree that the proposed training, as set out in paragraph 6.12.7 of the T&F Group report, be added to the Member Training and Development Plan.
8. Agree that the principle of lone working devices being made available to those Members who wish to have one subject to the cost implications being considered and developed further by the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee and Chair of the Task and Finish Group.
9. Subject to the resolution of recommendation 8, approve that the Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to proceed with required procurement and contractual processes in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee and the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

23 DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2024: COMMERCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The committee considered the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024, recommended to the committee by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Annual Report was focussed upon the impact and influence of the commercial determinants of health (CDoH) which was increasingly becoming one of the major drivers of ill-health.

The committee welcomed the report and the proposal to use existing and new powers to reduce the harmful impacts of CDoH and/or to introduce a health in all policies approach to improve the wellbeing of the population.

The committee noted the proposal for Cheshire East to develop its own Position Statement on CDoH, which would set out its commitment to improving residents' health and wellbeing by counteracting the negative

influence and impacts of CDoH. The committee queried if this would be aligned to the proposed Cheshire and Merseyside Position Statement on CDoH. It was confirmed that work would be approached in a coordinated manner, and done in collaboration with other authorities across the region however it was important that Cheshire East also moved forward in its own right to make a difference, locally.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Corporate Policy Committee

1. Approve the development of a Cheshire East Position Statement on Commercial Determinants of Health (CDoH), setting out the council's commitment to improving residents' health and wellbeing by counteracting the negative influence and impacts of CDoH.
2. Approve the council's Public Health team working with partners across Cheshire and Merseyside to produce a Cheshire and Merseyside Position Statement on Commercial Determinants of Health.
3. Approve the exploration of using planning powers and the local plan to restrict the density of unhealthy commodity industries in Cheshire East, particularly in areas where existing rates of deprivation and health inequalities are higher.
4. Approve the exploration of using cumulative impact assessment(s) and licensing powers to reduce the overall impacts of alcohol use and harm.
5. Approve the exploration of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to sustainably and effectively address the underlying causes of health inequalities.
6. Approve the promotion, development and delivery of interventions and projects (e.g. The Bread-and-Butter Thing), to provide as many residents as possible with healthier food ingredients and meals, and reduce reliance on cheaper, processed products that are higher in fat, sugar and salt.
7. Note that forthcoming recommendations will be considered by Corporate Policy Committee and/or other service committee(s) as required.

The meeting adjourned for a 10-minute break at 19.10pm and reconvened at 19.20pm.

24 KNUTSFORD BID PROPOSAL

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillors S Gardiner, T Dean and M Goldsmith left the room.

The committee considered the report which provided an updated on the emerging draft Knutsford Business Improvement District (BID) proposal. Groundwork CLM had formally notified the Council of its intention to instruct Cheshire East Council, on behalf of the Knutsford BID Steering Group, to put a proposal for a Business Improvement District (BID) in Knutsford to a ballot. The proposed BID would focus on Knutsford town centre but was also tentatively proposed to extend into Tatton Park.

The committee noted that there were now two BIDs in Cheshire East (Wilmslow Town Centre and Crewe). It was proposed that the Knutsford BID followed the same process and decision-making route of those previous BIDs.

The committee agreed that it was important to improve the connectivity between Tatton Park and Knutsford however queried the financial impact this would have on the Council. It was clarified that if the levy remained at 2% as set out within the draft BID proposal, based on current rates for value of Tatton Park, a levy of approx. £1,700k would be paid. This would also be paid for other hereditaments within the BID area for which the Council would be levy payer. It was anticipated this would total £5.5k annually.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Corporate Policy Committee

1. Agree that the Executive Director - Place notify the BID proposer of the Council's intention to recoup all reasonable costs associated with the Knutsford Business Improvement District and officers shall recover reasonable charges for the associated services provided by the Council.
2. On receipt of the Knutsford Business Improvement District (BID) final proposal:
 - a. The Chief Executive as Returning Officer and "Ballot Holder" shall check the BID proposal against the requirements set out in the BID Regulations, and subject to the BID proposal meeting the necessary requirements, shall make all necessary arrangements for the BID proposal ballot to take place, and for the results of the ballot to be counted and declared on behalf of the BID proposer.
 - b. The Executive Director for Place shall take a further report to the Economy and Growth Committee outlining the detail of the final BID proposal and seeking any necessary further authority to respond, including a decision as to how the Council should vote in the ballot.
3. That subject to a "yes" vote at ballot; the Executive Director for Place shall ensure a final review of the BID proposal is undertaken

and shall determine whether there is any cause to veto the proposals having regard to all relevant matters as prescribed by the BID Regulations; and following that determination shall either confirm that the Council will not veto the BID proposals or serve a notice to exercise a veto.

4. That subject to a “yes” vote at ballot, and the Executive Director of Place confirming that the Council will not veto the BID proposals:
 - (a) The Council’s Monitoring Officer shall make necessary arrangements for the completion and updating of such legal agreements as they consider necessary to facilitate the BID, including agreements ensuring clarity around baseline service levels within the BID area, and clarity of arrangements for collection and management of the BID levy.
 - (b) The Council as billing authority shall make necessary arrangements for billing, collection and enforcement of the BID levy and its transfer to the body responsible for the Knutsford BID.

25 WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor S Gardiner and M Goldsmith returned to the meeting. Councillor T Dean did not return.

The committee considered the Work Programme. The following was noted:

- It was requested that consideration be given to adding ‘Risk’ as a standing item onto future agendas.
- It was requested that the provisional figures for Financial Reporting Period 2 be shared in October, when the First Financial Review report 2025-26 was due to be considered.

26 MIDDLEWICH EASTERN BYPASS - 2025-26 GRANT ALLOCATION ACCEPTANCE

In accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair had agreed that the item (Middlewich Eastern Bypass – 2025-26 Grant Allocation Acceptance) should be considered as an item of urgent business as it could not wait until the next scheduled meeting of full Council / the Highways and Transport Committee.

The committee queried the costs and risks of any additional borrowing associated with the project. It was clarified that, to avoid the need for any additional borrowing on top of what had been approved in the MTFs, the use of other ringfenced transport funding should be utilised, including the recently announced Local Transport Grant and capital receipts. It was confirmed that there was funding within existing budget to cover risk.

Acceptance of the grant and estimated costs of the scheme would be reported to the Finance Sub Committee and a decision to approve a Supplementary Capital estimate put to the Corporate Policy Committee, to formally recommend to Full Council.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Corporate Policy Committee

1. Authorise the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer to:

- a. accept the initial DfT Capital Grant allocation of £23,475,881 towards the MEB.
- b. sign and return the 25/26 grant Letter by the DfT deadline of Wednesday 13 August 2025.
- c. certify the acceptance of the final business case approval as included in the letter dated 8 July 2025

2. Authorise the Executive Director of Place to confirm in writing that the Council accepts the conditions of the final business case approval (Active Travel Requirements) as included in the letter dated 8 July 2025.

3. Note that:

- a. further Grant allocations are expected in 2026/7 and 2027/28 and acceptance of these will be subject to future decisions;
- b. the acceptance of the grant and current estimated cost of the scheme will be reported to Finance Sub Committee, and a decision taken at this committee to approve a Supplementary Capital estimate before being recommended to Full Council.
- c. a report will be taken to a future Highways and Transport Committee to seek the necessary approvals to commence construction once an updated target cost estimate is known and the Scheme is proven to be affordable.
- d. A decision to not accept the grant would mean accumulated costs of c.27M would be written to the General Fund making the budget illegal due to insufficient resources to fund expenditure.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and concluded at 7.45 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)