



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

Agenda

Date: Friday, 16th May, 2025
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room, Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way,
Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BG

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. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January 2025 as a correct record.

Contact: Sam Jones
Tel: 01270 686643
E-Mail: samuel.jones@cheshireeast.gov.uk

4. 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.

Part Two - Other Functions of the Committee

5. Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington Business Plan 2025 - 2026 (Pages 9 - 32)

To consider a report requesting approval of the proposed Budget and Business Plan for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, including Marketing Cheshire, for 2025/26.

6. Devolution Work Programme and Budget 2025/26

Verbal update / report to follow.

Part One - Shareholder Functions of the Committee

7. Joint Committee Forward Plan (Pages 33 - 38)

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

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 31st January, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

PRESENT

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)
Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair)

Councillors H Mundry, M Gorman, Shore and Flaherty

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Philip Cresswell, Executive Director – Place, Cheshire East Council
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer,
Cheshire East Council
Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer, Cheshire East Council
Delyth Curtis, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Steve Broomhead, Chief Executive Officer, Warrington Borough Council
Paul Clisby, Director of Law and Governance, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Park, Director of Growth, Warrington Borough Council
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 Morecroft, UNISON North West's Regional Convenor

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2024 be approved
as a correct record.

26 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

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

27 ENTERPRISE ZONE

The sub-committee considered a report which set out the findings of an independent assessment of Enviroo's Business Case for £1,000,000 of Enterprise Zone Grant Funding and sought approval from the Joint Committee for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington to issue a grant funding offer and draw down funds aligned to a Grant Funding Agreement, from Councillor Nick Mannion.

The sub-committee were updated that the project reflected a significant opportunity within the region as the grant would allow for a state-of-the-art recycling facility to be constructed, creating jobs and promoting sustainable practices.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Approve the award of EZ grant funding to Enviroo of up to £1 million to support the delivery of a waste plastics recycling facility subject to the terms and conditions precedent set out in this report.
2. Note that the Chief Executive of ECW, in consultation with the Joint Committee leads for Place and Net Zero, will enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Enviroo on terms consistent with paras 15 and 16 of this report to implement the grant and monitor the terms of the funding agreement.

28 CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON JOINT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AMENDMENTS

The sub-committee received a report which detailed the formal response of each of the three Councils to the Joint Committee's request to amend the Terms of Reference for the Committee, from Councillor Louise Gittins.

Members noted that they would like to retain the name of Cheshire and Warrington in order to reflect the history of the town and the significance of it within the area.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note the agreement by each of the three Council's to amend the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee.
2. Note the amended Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee, detailed in Appendix 1.
3. Note the request from Cheshire West and Chester as detailed in the report, but agree that the name of the subregion be retained as Cheshire and Warrington.

29 DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER

The sub-committee received a report which provided details on the high-level impacts that the new devolution framework, outlined in the English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024, would have if Cheshire and Warrington councils formally decided to move forward with devolved powers and investment, from Councillor Hans Mundry.

The sub-committee were updated that Cheshire and Warrington had been invited to join the Devolution Priority Programme to create a Mayoral Strategic Authority by May 2026, which would hold devolved powers related to transport and local infrastructure, skills and employment, support for housing, strategic planning and economic development, regeneration, environment and climate change, health and wellbeing, public service reform and public safety. The funding level for Cheshire and Warrington would be determined following the Government's Spending Review in June 2025.

It was noted that the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee would not make decisions alone; all decision would be ratified by the three individual authorities independently.

Members were updated that, after 18 months, if effective governance and financial mechanisms had been demonstrated, Mayoral Strategic Authorities could apply for Strategic Authority Status.

It was request that options for Ex-Officio and Observer Membership of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee be considered and Members were informed that the Joint Committee were awaiting national guidance on this matter.

Amendments to recommendations 2 and 4 were proposed by Councillor Gittins and Seconded by Councillor Louise Shore:

2. Agree in principle that the named members of the Joint Committee detailed in this report will oversee the work with officers to develop priority themes for Cheshire and Warrington, before bringing all detail back to the Committee for strategic leadership and oversight, and delegate authority to the Chair, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to agree the involvement of any other officer and Members, and updates back such involvement being reported back to this committee to be noted.

4. Involve and collaborate in principal with those Members and officers identified in Table 1 (relevant Cabinet Members and Council Committee Members), Business Advisory Board members as well as the Leaders Board to co-produce the thematic content in the context of the Devolution White Paper and ensure alignment with local priorities and delegate authority to the Chair to involve other Members and officers in line with the authority set out in recommendation 2.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Agree in principle that the named members of the Joint Committee detailed in this report will oversee the work with officers to develop priority themes for Cheshire and Warrington, before bringing all detail back to the Committee for strategic leadership and oversight, and delegate authority to the Chair, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to agree the involvement of any other officer and Members, and updates back such involvement being reported back to this committee to be noted.
3. Engage with officers via these theme areas over the coming weeks to shape and develop thematic content outlined in this report, aligned to the Devolution White Paper and which are likely to form a future Devolution Agreement.
4. Involve and collaborate in principal with those Members and officers identified in Table 1 (relevant Cabinet Members and Council Committee Members), Business Advisory Board members as well as the Leaders Board to co-produce the thematic content in the context of the Devolution White Paper and ensure alignment with local priorities and delegate authority to the Chair to involve other Members and officers in line with the authority set out in recommendation 2.
5. Ensure Joint Committee Members to continue to work with their own council's cross party member working groups and reference groups to shape and develop the areas of thematic content in the context of the Devolution White Paper.
6. Further shape subregional priorities with a series of all-Member sessions across the three Councils in Spring/Summer 2025.
7. Engage directly with stakeholders and communities through consultation events held across programme delivery.

30 DEVOLUTION WORK PROGRAMME

The sub-committee received a report which detailed the proposed Devolution Work Programme for Cheshire and Warrington, from Councillor Michael Gorman.

The sub-committee were updated that to ensure continuity, there was a request to extend the rotation of the current Chair of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee by a further 12 months to May 2026.

Members were updated that the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee would act as the Programme Board for the Devolution Programme, any formal decisions from the Joint Committee would be recommended to the three Council's for approval and regular meetings would take place with Council Leaders and Chief Executives, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Chair of the Business Advisory Board. A Devolution Steering Group would be established to make operational decisions, which would comprise of Growth Directors, Programme Team, workstream leads, and would oversee all operational programme delivery.

Members were updated that in the first quarter of 2025, there would be 5 priority activities:

- Communications and engagement
- Governance
- Workforce
- Finance
- Local Growth Plan

The importance of Trade Union engagement in the process was noted.

An amendment to recommendation 3 was proposed by Councillor Hans Mundry and seconded by Councillor Nick Mannion:

3. Approve the initial implementation workstreams, with the addition of a workforce development stream, to include full engagement with trade unions, consideration of good practice from other areas and, the headline priorities for all workstreams between January and March 2025.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Approve the programme management reporting structure as outlined in the report, noting that the Joint Committee will receive detailed and regular reporting across all elements of the work programme for direction and oversight.
2. Note the anticipated overall programme timeline.
3. Approve the initial implementation workstreams, with the addition of a workforce development stream, to include full engagement with trade unions, consideration of good practice from other areas and, the headline priorities for all workstreams between January and March 2025.
4. Approve the devolution programme budget to March 2025 as outlined in the report and note the anticipated future budget to March 2026 which will be brought back to the Joint Committee in detail at its February 2025 meeting.

5. Approve initial programme costs to March 2025 as detailed in the report, including the use of a Programme Director.

6. Request each of the Councils of Cheshire East (CEC), Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) and Warrington (WBC) amend the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Terms of Reference to extend the rotation of the current Chair (CWaC) for a further 12 months to May 2026 and amend accordingly the dates for the following rotations by the same period namely CEC until May 2028, WBC until May 2030 and that it then continue in that rotation.

31 JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

Members received an update and sought direction on the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Forward Plan, from Councillor Louise Gittins.

Members were updated that the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee did not intend to modify any health, fire or police boundaries within the area, and the sub-region would not be impacted by the population size restrictions within the Government's White Paper, and assurances had been sought.

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting commenced at 10.03 am and concluded at 10.50 am

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)

OPEN

16 May 2025

**Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington –
Budget and Business Plan 2025/26**

Report of: Acting Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), Cheshire East Council

Report Reference No: CWJC/17/24-25

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

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report sets out for approval by the Joint Committee the proposed Budget and Business Plan for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) including Marketing Cheshire (MC) for 2025/26. The plan is attached in **Appendix 1**.
- 2 These documents have been prepared in consultation with Growth Directors and finance colleagues from Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East and Warrington councils and requires the approval of the Joint Committee.

Executive Summary

- 3 This report sets out the budget and business plan for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) including Marketing Cheshire (MC) for 2025/26; a company jointly owned by three local authorities (CEC, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Council).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the Budget and Business Plan for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) including Marketing Cheshire (MC) for 2025/26.
2. Delegate authority to accept additional income for programmes already being delivered by ECW should it be made available, to the ECW CEO, in consultation with CEC Finance Manager and the appropriate lead member of the Joint Committee (JC) on the understanding that any sums agreed will be reported to the next JC.
3. Agree that if ECW receives more commercial income during the year than currently budgeted, it can deploy this in consultation with Growth Directors and the CEC Finance Manager on projects of up to £100k that will strengthen C&W's ability to deliver the sub-regional vision.
4. Note that for any additional items of funding offered to the sub region, outside the scope of ECW programme, it will be for the Joint Committee to consider how it wants those funds to be deployed.
5. Note that ECW will be transferring to the North East Combined Authority the remaining NP11 assets it holds.

Report Detail

- 4 The attached proposed budget for 25/26 has been prepared on a 'business as usual' basis, taking no account of the sub-region's devolution programme. In practice if agreement is reached on devolution, the Government Statutory tests are met and the CA progresses, ECW staff will be working alongside LA colleagues on devolution throughout 2025/6. There are also likely to be consequences for ECW as a company. These will both be covered via papers submitted to the JC by the devolution programme team.

ECW Income

- 5 ECW's income comes from a wide range of sources including grants from central and local government, specific project and programme grants, retained business rates, and Marketing Cheshire's commercial activities. Many of these are subject to change during the year and the budget is therefore based on reasonable assumptions about income and expenditure. These will be firmed up in-year as funding is confirmed.
- 6 In previous years LAs have contributed towards ECW costs via annual subscriptions, reflecting a requirement from central Government for match

funding for its contribution. In 2024/5 the Government provided £240k towards core funding for ECW. No such funding will be provided in 2025/6 and the LA contributions towards ECW's costs of just under £42k pa each will also cease. Reductions in ECW's budget have been made to reflect the end of the LA funding.

ECW Proposed Expenditure

- 7 Around 80% of ECW's expenditure relates to grant funded programmes which must meet the conditions set by the provider of the grant. These include the Skills Bootcamp programme, the Careers Hub, the Growth Hub and work on decarbonisation funded by the Department for Energy Security. There is therefore little flexibility in the way this funding is used.
- 8 There is more flexibility in the way locally generated income (principally retained business rates from the Enterprise Zone programme) can be used. This funding is used pre-dominantly to cover the costs of ECW's strategic economic planning activity. The budgets for these items which has been kept in line with those for 2024/25.
- 9 The proposed budget for strategic work includes:
 - Undertaking consultation on and completion of the sub-region's Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy;
 - Management of the Enterprise Zone, including completion of the grant to Enviroo which will enable the establishment of the plastic recycling site at Protos in Ellesmere Port
 - Work to strengthen the Cheshire Science Corridor as a location for the innovation sector and on capturing and spreading the economic benefits of decarbonisation
 - Working with the three LAs on strategic transport planning; providing £200k to fund Place Marketing work by Marketing Cheshire, including funding the sub-region's presence at the annual UKREiIF real estate investment conference
 - The provision of a £500k fund to cover the costs of other sub-regional work that the JC would like to undertake, increased from £350k in 2024/5.
- 10 The proposed budget also includes a now confirmed allocation of £9 million from the Department for Education (DfE) for the Skills Bootcamp programme. This represents a more than threefold increase from 2024 25 in recognition of the C&W programme's position as best performing in England.

Marketing Cheshire

- 11 Marketing Cheshire's budget enables it to undertake a wide range of activities to promote Cheshire and Warrington as the healthiest, most sustainable and growing economy in the UK. In 2025/6 this will include the completion of a feasibility study into the creation of a Film Office in C&W which would promote

the sub-region as a location for film and television productions alongside further work with hoteliers on a possible “Accommodation Business Improvement District” (ABID) for Chester. If the ABID is approved it could generate an additional £1 million a year to support and market Chester’s visitor economy. In the meantime the proposed budget includes an extra £50k compared to 2024/5 for Marketing Cheshire from locally generated income.

Additional In-Year Income

- 12 Government departments have historically often provided ECW with additional funding to expand or commission specific projects as part of existing programmes. Where that occurs, the Joint Committee is asked to delegate permission to ECW’s CEO, in consultation with CEC Finance Manager and the appropriate lead member of the Joint Committee to accept these sums and to enter into the associated contractual variations. Where the Government or other grant providers offer funding for entirely new programmes it is proposed these are brought to Joint Committee to consider how they will be delivered in the sub-region.
- 13 This request is particularly relevant to work ECW is undertaking on part of the Government’s Regional Skills Pilot programme, which is exploring approaches to tackling skills shortages for local home retrofit work. During 2024/5, the NW Net Zero Hub provided two grants to ECW totalling £180k for initial work on this programme and depending on the results it is anticipated DESNZ will offer an additional £900k to pilot ways of providing the necessary training. This additional sum is not included in the current budget but the if the JC is happy to agree the process described in para [12], ECW will be able to take on the project.
- 14 ECW has a number of sources of income that are subject to some degree of commercial uncertainty, including income generated by Marketing Cheshire, income from capital balances, and income from the Enterprise Zone. Cautious assumptions have been adopted in the proposed ECW budget, but this means we have not been able to commission work, for example, to strengthen our intelligence and understanding of C&W’s economic strengths and weaknesses. In the event ECW receives more commercial income than budgeted, we are seeking the JC’s agreement that ECW, in conjunction with the Growth Directors and Cheshire East’s Finance Manager, can commission projects of up to £100k that contribute to the delivery of the sub-regional Vision.

NP11

- 15 ECW, and the LEP before it, has acted as the host body for the NP11 pan-regional partnership of Northern LEPs. With the closure of LEPs, the Northern Mayors are discussing a new pan-regional partnership under the “Great North” brand and they have asked the North East Combined Authority (NECA) to take the lead on this proposal. With the support of Government officials,

ECW is in discussion with NECA about transferring NP11's remaining assets (around £150k cash, all of which was provided by the Government) to NECA. The timing of this transfer is uncertain and it has therefore been left out of the budget but will have no impact on ECW's activity in Cheshire and Warrington.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 16 The proposed budget allows ECW to deliver its obligations under grant funding agreements with the Government which account for 80% of its budget, and to continue its work towards the delivery of a sustainable, inclusive, healthy and growing sub-region.
- 17 There have been instances when ECW has either been offered additional funds to deliver extensions to contracted schemes or given the opportunity to apply for them, often at short notice. The current approach, which relies on the JC giving approval to bid for or accept sums above £100k has caused issues and a robust but agile approach outlined in paragraph [10] is proposed to avoid losing these opportunities.
- 18 The Budget will form the basis for in-year monitoring reports for ECW to the Cheshire East Council Finance subcommittee as ECW's accountable body; ECW Board of Directors, Growth Directors, MC Board and the JC.
- 19 Approval of the Business Plan is required by the JC to enable ECW to operate effectively, legally and to meet its contractual obligations.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing (ie not approve the budget)	ECW and MC would be unable to operate and meet its contractual obligations	Delayed delivery of at least some of the activities. Contractual obligations missed.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board (BAB)

- 20 The Business Advisory Board supports the proposed budget as a necessary step in ensuring the region is equipped to support and help navigate Devolution. The budget maintains critical skills and capacity at a modest investment, enabling the successful delivery of strategic priorities, including the sub-region's Growth Plan. While acknowledging the need for clearer alignment of objectives and broader marketing efforts beyond the Visitor Economy, the Chair believes that approving the budget is essential to maintaining momentum and safeguarding the timely implementation of the current Devolution process, ultimately driving sustainable economic growth across Cheshire and Warrington.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 21 The draft business plan has been completed by officers of ECW and MC who have also engaging with stakeholders in setting their targets and objectives for 2025/6.
- 22 The plan remains a living document, and delivery of the activities contained within it will entail further consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. The plan therefore reflects as far as is possible within the limitations of ECW and Marketing Cheshire resources, the priorities of those stakeholders.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 23 The Joint Committee acts on behalf of the three shareholding councils to undertake their respective shareholding activities. Its terms of reference provide for it to approve ECW's budget and business plan, any variations and to ensure it delivers against those matters. This report requests approval of the business plan in line with those terms of reference together with associated financial measures in relation to ongoing funding.
- 24 The Joint committee may wish to request a further report during this financial year to update on the budget position, taking into account the financial comments below and its role in monitoring that budget.

Finance implications

- 25 The financial projections set out in the ECW Business Plan have been reviewed by Finance Officers from the Council and ECW as part of the preparatory work being undertaken in advance of any devolution decisions. This did not identify any significant immediate financial risks that would prevent the approval of the ECW business plan for 25-26.
- 26 The funding assumptions are reasonable, and the budget has been prepared on a prudent basis. If anything, assumptions underpinning the budget are cautious as they don't presume any income from interest on their cash balances (recently this has been up to £0.5m pa but is expected to be lower in 2025-26). On that basis it is likely that the actual funding position for ECW will show an improvement on that presented in the Business Plan.
- 27 Looking beyond 2025-26 there are some longer-term pressures and issues to be considered and addressed:
 - a. **Sustainability of the ECW budget** – Changes in funding sources, including the withdrawal of some Council funding, mean that the ECW has become increasingly reliant on the use of Enterprise Zone (EZ) Retained Business

Rates to support its budget. This may create issues in future years for two reasons:

- i. EZ funds are currently being drawn down at a faster rate than they are being replenished, reducing the balance held in reserves by approx. £400k per year. At this rate the reserves would fall below the target level minimum level of £1.5m by 2027-28 and could be fully exhausted by 2030. To sustain current levels of activity a new funding source would need to be identified, or costs reduced in line with available funding.
 - ii. EZ retained business rate receipts can be volatile and in any one year the level of new receipts can be significantly reduced by appeals e.g. in 2023-24 receipts were approx. £800k lower than expected. A reducing balance on the reserve will reduce the level of resilience of ECW to unplanned changes in its income base.
- b. **Budget Prioritisation** - While most of ECW's income is ringfenced and must be used to support delivery of Government defined priorities, approximately 20% can be applied more flexibly against a range of locally determined competing priorities as set out in the report.

Looking forward, improvements could be made to strengthen the process undertaken to establish, evaluate and decide what to fund each year, and make these decisions more transparent and clearly evidenced. This should be underpinned by a clear evaluation of the effectiveness of existing activities in contributing to agreed objectives.

Risk Management

- 28 Financial risks are actively managed and mitigated and form part of the corporate risk report.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 29 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion factors are considered as each activity or element of the business plan is developed and performed.

Policy

- 30 The activities set out in the proposed business plan all contribute to the delivery of the sub-regional vision that C&W will be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the country.

Access to Information

Contact Officer:	Debbie Simpson, Interim Finance Director, ECW Email: debbie.simpson@cheshireandwarrington.com Steve Reading, Finance Manager Place and Corporate Services, Cheshire East Council Email: steve.reading@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 Budget and Business Plan 2025/26
Background Papers:	None

Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) DRAFT BUDGET 25/26

ECW role

Reporting to the Cheshire and Warrington local authorities, the role of ECW is to support Cheshire and Warrington's elected leaders to make C&W the healthiest, most sustainable inclusive and growing place in the country by

- Providing strategic economic planning
- Delivery of key government programmes; and
- Ensuring that a strong, independent business voice is reflected in the advice ECW provides to elected leaders

ECW is also responsible for promoting Cheshire and Warrington as a great place to visit, live , work, invest and study through Marketing Cheshire, which is an integral part of EVW and designated by Visit England as the sub-region's Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)

ECW's achievements in 2024/5 included:

- The 2024/5 Skills Bootcamps programme is on course to deliver 600 completed training courses. The success of the programme has led to DfE awarding C&W a 370% increase in funding for 2025/6.
- ECW created the new Net Zero North West partnership to deliver the NW Industrial Decarbonisation Cluster Plan and its £30bn pipeline of investment; delivering a public communications messaging framework and media playbook.
- Secured and launched the Regional Skills Pilot for the West Cheshire area to produce a skills mapping plan for transitioning workers in carbon intensive industries into clean energy roles, on behalf of the DESNZ Office for Clean Energy Jobs; putting C&W in line to receive a further £900k Green Skills funding
- We engaged with Transport for the North to ensure that they reflected and supported the priorities of the sub-region. This particularly included inputting the sub-region's views on rail service and infrastructure priorities in line with Growth Track 360 priorities.
- Set up, recruited and supported C&W's 21 member Business Advisory Board
- Provided business support and advice to nearly 500 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Supported all our 92 secondary schools in C&W to connect with local employers resulting in meaningful experiences of the workplace for over 12,000 young people.
- Worked closely with our local authorities to establish a more robust framework for identifying and working with young people at risk of dropping out of school.
- Secured Media Getaway, the largest travel media event in the UK outside London, for Chester for July 2025.
- After extensive elected member engagement, produced a first full consultation draft of C&W's Sustainable and Inclusive

- 25/26 Strategic Objectives

Proposed ECW activities and budgets 25/26

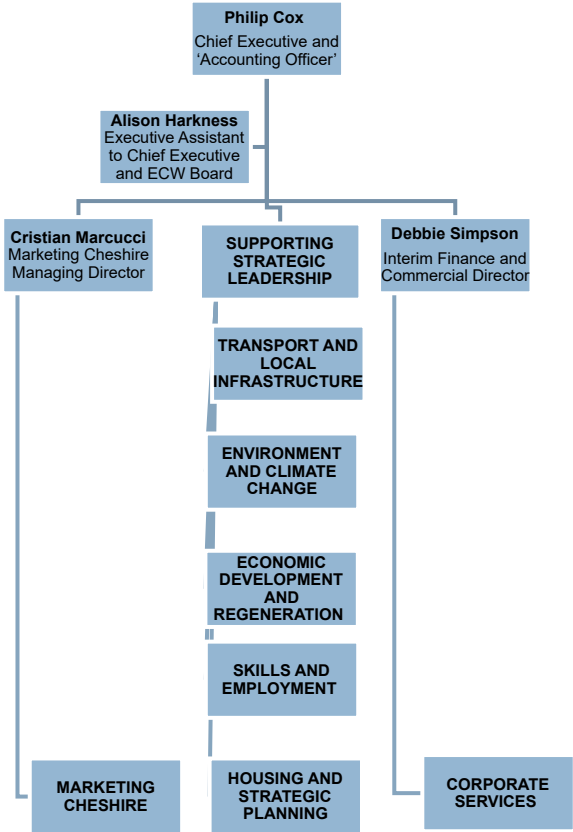
The proposed scope of activity in 25/26 remains very similar to that of 24/25, but the scale has changed, with a threefold increase in Skills Bootcamp Budget to £9m.

For the budget year 25/26, ECW is proposing 42 FTE and an operational budget of £13.5m It is also responsible for managing, on behalf of the sub-region, income from the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone expected to total £60million over its remaining lifetime.

It is anticipated that NP11, the pan-regional partnership for the North for which ECW acted as the host body, will transfer to North East Combined Authority early in 2025/6

Cheshire and Warrington’s position in the Government’s Devolution Priority Devolution Programme, may impact the scope of ECW activities during 25/26 but the extent of this will only be known as devolution programme decisions are made. ECW costs associated with devolution will be met from the devolution programme budget and agreed with the JC through that programme.

In-year, ECW often receives offers of additional funds for programmes already it is delivering. Sums are unpredictable, so only income where there is certainty of receipt have been included in the budget. ECW is seeking pre-authorisation to accept additional income, relating to existing programmes, should it be made available, subject to consultation with the Chair of the Joint Committee (JC), the relevant JC Theme Lead and the Accountable Body’s s.151 Officer on the understanding that any sums agreed will be reported to



ECW Strategic themes 25/26

To enable better mapping of activity and costs against sub regional priorities, ECW has set up a new set of strategic themes, with budgets aligned to JC theme leads:

1. Supporting strategic leadership through strategic economic planning
2. Transport and local infrastructure
3. Skills and employment
4. Housing and strategic planning
5. Economic Development and Regeneration
6. Environment and Climate Change
7. Visitor and Place marketing

These teams are supported by a Finance and Corporate Services division that provides HR, finance, accommodation and business support

Expenditure budget 25/26 'v' 24/25

To enable comparison with last year's budget, figures for 2024/5 and 2025/6 are presented below under their original 2024/5 budget headings.

£000	2025/26 BUDGET Income	2025/26 BUDGET Expenditure	2025/26 BUDGET Surplus/ (Deficit)	2024/25 BUDGET Income	2024/25 BUDGET Expenditure	2024/25 BUDGET Surplus/ (Deficit)
Skills Boot Camp	9,136	9,136	0	2,422	2,422	0
Growth Hub/KAM	389	372	17	298	296	2
Careers Hub	372	372	0	347	388	(41)
Insight	122	123	(1)	153	368	(215)
SEP	630	633	(3)	930	842	88
EZ Programme	230	230	0	200	197	3
Programme	53	53	0	54	50	4
NWNZ	144	144	0	166	207	(41)
EZ Projects	200	200	0	200	200	0
Corporate Services	666	617	49	463	241	222
Sub-regional work	500	500	0	350	350	0
ECW Totals	12,442	12,380	62	5,583	5,561	22
Marketing Cheshire	1,080	1,113	(33)	1,076	1,097	(21)
Totals	13,522	13,493	29	6,659	6,658	1

ECW group draft consolidated budget 25/26

There are two main changes to the 25/26 budget.

- 1) Tripling of Skills Bootcamp award to £9m; requiring additional staff and support to deliver the programme.
- 2) Ending LA subscriptions to ECW's budget. LAs were previously required to partially match Government core funding. The end of the latter has removed the need for the LAs to make these payments

Marginal changes to budget lines arise from:

- Salary uplift and increased NI contributions
- Loss of government capacity funding.
- Additional funding allocated to Marketing Cheshire to balance the budget.
- Changes in how salaries have been apportioned across programmes.

A £500k contribution from EZ funds has been included, to support sub-regional work. This is an increase from £350k in 24/25, when funds were used for Fair Employment Charter and devolution work agreed with the JC

	2025/26		2024/25	
INCOME				
Gov programme grants	9,631,733	Loss of £240k capacity grant	3,219,817	
EZ Retained rates - current year	1,826,650	overhead only	1,463,750	overhead only
EZ Retained rates - brought forward	500,000	Sub-regional pot	350,000	Sub-regional work
Supplementary funds	0		250,000	overhead
Commercial income	446,000	intent to increase income	425,000	
Other funding	317,000	loss of some MC income	552,924	included some EZ funding
				included LA match for government funding
LA grant	213,948	loss of some LA funding	375,150	management fee from NP11 which has ended
Overhead recovery	0		50,000	
Sub-total	12,935,331		6,686,641	
EZ Retained rates *	1,181,337	balance of rates receipts - current year	1,236,250	
EZ Retained rates - brought forward	300,000		0	included in Supplementary funds
Total	14,416,668		7,922,891	
EXPENDITURE				
Staff & related	2,873,716	includes salary and NI increases and removal of some vacancies	2,442,295	
Commissioned activity	814,983		743,623	**
Operating costs	608,330	includes rent	473,418	
Corporate services charge	0		0	
Governance /overheads	343,550		269,300	included rent
Sub-total	4,640,579		3,928,636	
Loan instalments	1,510,000		1,427,000	
Grant payments	7,765,860		2,091,102	
Sub-regional work	500,000		350,000	
Total	14,416,439		7,796,738	
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	229		126,153	
* Assumes similar level of EZ funds received to 24/25				
** 24/25 reforecast lowered the budgeted sum to £808k which included contingency for sub-regional activity				



Supporting Strategic Leadership (Strategic Economic Planning)

ECW will lead the development of and public consultation on the C&W Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES) and associated plans.

- Publish a consultation draft of the SIES in Spring 2025, and submit a final version for approval to the Joint Committee in Summer 2025
- Provide expertise and coordination to ensure C&W's priorities are reflected in regional cross boundary working and deliver leaders' priorities.
- Provide a high-level evidence base for Growth Plan leads.
- Provide a plan to develop the transformational sector economic opportunities that will deliver our growth plan objectives, including on life sciences, advanced manufacturing/reindustrialisation, energy sector development within the context of the Science Corridor, by September
- Work with Leaders, the BAB, and stakeholders to continue to promote fair employment in C&W and publish a Fair Employment Charter following the passage through Parliament of the Employment Rights Bill

Funding is primarily from EZ income, giving discretion over the activities undertaken. The budget for 25/26 has been kept in line with 24/25. Total budget £542k.

As well as staff working full time on strategic leadership activities; several staff have a proportion of their time allocated against this budget. £130k from this budget is used for sub-regional PR and marketing undertaken by Marketing Cheshire.



Transport and Local Infrastructure

During 25/26 ECW will continue to work with regional stakeholders to ensure alignment of strategic priorities and investment, and an integrated programme of transport improvements.

- Undertake preparatory work on a sub-regional transport strategy
- Provide strategic transport policy and strategy advice to the JC and key stakeholders and influence the development of integrated transport
- Provide expert input into the Growth Plan & development of a 10-year programme of transport investment.
- Work with LA colleagues as appropriate on the development of a narrative on how a CA would deliver better sub-regional outcomes for transport and what a Combined Authority would deliver
- Work with the three local authorities to review the opportunities of the Government's Better Buses Bill and commission work to develop potential solutions that would improve bus service provision across Cheshire and Warrington.
- Work with the three local authorities to develop a common sub-regional position on strategic transport issues such as the Liverpool to Manchester Railway.
- Engage with National Highways on Route Strategies to ensure they support local priorities, especially in terms of network reliability, resilience and capacity.

Funding is primarily from EZ income, giving discretion over the activities undertaken. The budget for 25/26 has been kept in line with 24/25. Total expenditure £208k.



Skills & employment (incl. Bootcamps and Careers Hub)

Continue to work with regional stakeholders to improve skills and employment outcomes in C&W. Activity must meet DfE's and/or CEC's grant conditions, milestones and deliverables.

- Deliver the Government's Skills Bootcamp and Careers Hub programmes in C&W; training places increasing from 640 to a minimum of 2,630, delivering the increase whilst remaining the best performing Bootcamp in the country.
- The Careers Hub will continue to support all 92 secondary schools in C&W to improve the careers education of their pupils, with an increased emphasis on a programme of teacher encounters with employers and the workplace.
- Work will be undertaken to embed employment, skills and education within the Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Strategy and associated Growth Plan alongside working with DWP to deliver a programme to tackle economic inactivity within C&W
- Working with LA colleagues and other partners, develop and implement a plan to take forward the economic inactivity and Youth Guarantee trailblazers
- Working with LA colleagues consider how what an Adult Skills Fund and non-apprenticeship adult skills functions would deliver if they were devolved to C&W as a single pot
- Work with DWP and LA colleagues on a C&W Get Britain Working Plan to significantly reduce the numbers of economically inactive people across Cheshire and Warrington
- Produce regular data and labour market intelligence

Costs for the Bootcamp programme are fully funded by DfE, Careers Hub is part funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC- a DfE agency) with two posts fully funded and four of the posts requiring 50% match funding using EZ funds. Total expenditure across whole programme £9,508k.



Economic Development & Regeneration

Continue to support SMEs within C&W through the Growth Hub, providing services and meeting targets mandated by the Government.

- Provide information, diagnostic & brokerage (IDB) support to 500+ businesses across C&W during 2025/6
- Develop and maintain a database of national and local business support offers.
- Provide 750+ referrals to business support providers during 2025/6.
- Support and provide the secretariat for the Business Advisory Board
- Develop a business growth roadmap.
- Gather the voice of business & input to the local growth plan.
- Promote international trade and act as the point of contact for inward investment enquiries.

Growth Hub activities are fully funded through government grant. Total expenditure £651k.



Environment & Climate Change

Take a lead role in delivering C&W's objective of achieving net zero by 2045 through the delivery of projects and programmes funded by central Government via the Northwest Net Zero Hub with all activity meeting DESNZ and NWNZ Hub grant conditions .

- Delivery of the sub-regional Net Zero programme, including the Northwest Net Zero Hub local and regional programme in C&W
- Working with industry and stakeholders to establish the Industrial decarbonisation project pipeline data and intelligence tool (PIP)
- Completion of Industrial Regional Skills Pilot Mapping Plan (£180k), and delivery of £900k skills interventions programme if confirmed by DESNZ
- Delivery of SPARK grant funding:
- Coordinating the stakeholder inputs and establishing the data for Local Energy Planning and Heat Network Zoning preparatory work
- Work with the private sector / Estates to develop the Anaerobic Digestion business case for the dairy industry and support the establishment of the future farming network.
- Develop a privately funded 'consumer hub'/one stop for residential decarbonisation by the end of Q2 2025/6
- Support delivery of the public sector decarbonisation scheme with schools and hospitals
- Support delivery of the Community Energy Grant Scheme
- Deliver funding on behalf of GB Energy
- Coordinate, scope and develop a subregional Net Zero (and potentially Environment) Plan/Roadmap focussing on local energy.

Activity is part funded through Government Grants . Total expenditure £144k.



Housing and Strategic Planning

Manage the C&W Enterprise Zone, seeking further opportunities to promote investment into the EZ, monitoring and supporting existing investments and maintaining oversight of receipts from the Zone. Work with the LAs to develop sub-regional housing and regeneration programmes .

- Co-ordinate the land and property aspects of sub-regional economic development
- Deliver a range of activities to foster collaboration and accelerate scientific discovery, technological innovation and business growth
- Promote the Cheshire Science Corridor and Sub-Region through Marketing Cheshire.
- Successfully deliver EZ funded projects - Vortex, Quadrant Phase 3 and Enviroo and securing additional private sector investment to deliver additional employment floorspace.
- Work with Enviroo to deliver financial close on its project in Q1 2025/6
- Monitor and manage retained business rate income.
- Secure additional private sector investment to deliver additional employment floorspace.
- Collaborate with key transport initiatives to maximise land and property potential including Liverpool-Manchester Rail and Crewe post HS2
- Provide the secretariat for the Cheshire & Warrington Housing Board and ensure its work is properly co-ordinated

Total expenditure £211k



• Marketing Cheshire inc Visitor Information Centre

Recognised by Visit England as the official Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for C&W, MC will collaborate with leaders and stakeholders to develop an aspirational plan for the next five years, the vision is that by 2029 Cheshire will be nationally recognised as an aspirational destination, where visitors can be assured of premium but accessible experiences built on unique heritage, a modern and sustainable approach, quality businesses and a warm welcome.

- Work with Destination Cheshire network to deliver high impact visitor marketing campaigns across C&W
- Deliver programme of strategic PR and Public Affairs activity, linked to priority areas
- Grow partnership and business account management, to provide research insights
- Organise and promote the C&W presence at UKREiiF
- Support the formation of Chester Accommodation Business Improvement District
- Deliver a new VisitCheshire.com website.
- Arrange, promote, and host the annual Marketing Cheshire Awards
- Arrange and promote Christmas 2025, Lapland UK and Chester Christmas Market
- Increase partnership and commercial income in 2025/6 by 10%
- Increase income and profitability at the Visitor Information Centre by 10%
- Provide visitor services through the Visitor Information Centre
- Establish a Cheshire Film Office

The 25/26 budget includes commercial income from VIC and additional EZ income, to ensure a realistic, achievable budget. Total expenditure £1,113k



Finance & Corporate Services

- Continue to provide support functions of finance, HR, IT and governance..
- Develop financial accounting and reporting processes
- Support as necessary the sub-regional devolution programme, ensuring ECW successfully migrates into any new post-devolution arrangements

Each delivery theme contributes towards ECW overhead, most drawn from grant management fees. The residual balance of costs being met through EZ. Total expenditure £616k

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
A	16 th May 2025	Cheshire West & Chester Council.	ECW Business Plan 25/26	To agree the ECW Business Plan 2025/2026.	TBC	Philip Cox	
A/B		Ellesmere Port Library Civic Way, Ellesmere Port CH65 OBG	Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG	Gemma Davies	
B	30 th May 2025	Warrington BC Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington.	Devolution 'in-principle' report.	To make recommendations to the three Councils to agree in principle to a Devolution Agreement with Government and to agree 'Shadow Combined Authority' arrangements.	Cllr LG	Gemma Davies	
			Devolution Work Programme and budget 2025/26	To confirm the devolution programme and cost plan 2025/26.	TBC	Gemma Davies	
A			ECW 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/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			
			ECW related business	TBC			
A							
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	25 th July 2025	Cheshire West & Chester 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		Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 OBG.	ECW related business				
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 to Cheshire and Warrington.	To agree recommendations to the three Councils for final consents for devolution to Cheshire and Warrington.	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 Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.	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	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	Devolution related business				
A		Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington.	ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	30 th January 2026	Cheshire East Council	Devolution related business				
A		Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Crewe.	ECW related business				
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr LG		
B	27 th February 2026	Cheshire West & Chester Council	Devolution related business				
A		Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, CH65 OBG.	ECW related business				

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
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			

This page is intentionally left blank