

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	17 January 2023
Report Title:	Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director Place
Report Reference No:	EG/27/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to update the Economy and Growth Committee on the work of the Cheshire and Warrington (C&W) Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (SIGC) in response to the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Q Abel and seconded by Councillor M Houston at the full Council Meeting of 14th December 2022.
- 1.2.** The report recommends that the Economy and Growth Committee endorses the final report of the SIGC and the key priorities and acknowledges the actions set out within it for delivery by various stakeholders, funding permitting.
- 1.3.** The actions within the SIGC final report support the Corporate Plan priority outcomes of both Fair and Green as defined in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** The C&W SIGC was set up by the C&W Sub-regional Leaders' Board in November 2020. The purpose of the SIGC is "to act as a catalyst for and provide advice on the delivery of a programme that will realise C&W's ambition of becoming the most sustainable and most inclusive sub-region in the UK".

- 2.2.** In September 2022 the SIGC released its final report 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' setting out its conclusions on the key priorities and actions needed to support the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive C&W economy. The report summary is in Appendix 1 and a link to the full report and additional information is included in background papers.
- 2.3.** In response to the report, the C&W Leaders' Board requested that an early-stage delivery plan be drafted setting out what could potentially be achieved in the short to medium term.
- 2.4.** This plan was presented to Leaders' Board on 30 September where a recommendation was approved to progress the actions as set out in the plan and for officers to progress the production of a more detailed delivery plan addressing the remaining SIGC's recommendations. A summary analysis of the actions in this early-stage delivery plan is in Appendix 2.
- 2.5.** The meeting of full Council on 14 December 2022 referred a Notice of Motion to the Economy and Growth Committee. The Motion proposed that:
1. Cheshire East Council notes and acknowledges the report and recommendations of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission.
 2. That the Council's Economy and Growth Committee be asked to consider the report and to determine the Council's response to the recommendations.
- 2.6.** The final report presented by the SIGC provides an important and independent insight into the issues across the subregion, noting areas of good practice and gaps in activity and the projects and initiatives identified should be the subject of focus. However, action can only be taken when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.
- 2.7.** The resultant recommendations coming out of this study are wide ranging, significant in number, in some instances aspirational, requiring further investment in feasibility or business cases, either in kind or funded, to attract both central government funds and private sector investment.
- 2.8.** Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objective before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.9.** The C&W LEP provides the secretariat for the SIGC and it is expected that the LEP will continue to be the lead organisation coordinating delivery. However, it is recognised that delivery of these recommendations will take co-operation across all stakeholders within the sub-region including the C&W LEP, the 3 LAs, Town Councils, business leaders, third sector partners and

residents. Where there are existing sub-regional groups and structures, these groups may be tasked with the strategic leadership of the key priorities where they cover the same areas.

- 2.10.** If any of the proposals are to be built into Cheshire East Council priorities, they would need to be further developed and worked up into business cases to consider both the environmental benefits and the financial implications, along with a set of metrics that would allow effective management and measurement of success. We would need to understand more about how these ideas could be funded, what may be the processes of bidding for or raising the required financial resources and what financial governance and assurance requirements would be put in place regarding decision making and delivery prior to any further commitment.
- 2.11.** Sub regional officer groups are being set up to look at delivery of the early-stage delivery plan, considering resourcing, implementation and monitoring of progress. Beyond this, there will need to be further review of the remaining recommendations and the Leaders' Board has requested that the officer group should produce a detailed delivery plan considering these actions. There is an expectation that the delivery plan will be an organic document that will evolve and change in line with need.
- 2.12.** Officers continue to work with partner organisations and other stakeholders to explore opportunities to secure external funding and take these recommended actions forward.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** That the Economy and Growth Committee endorses the final report of the SIGC 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington', noting the priorities identified to be taken forward as and when suitable funding opportunities arise, and resources allow.
- 3.2.** That Committee endorse Town Councils being requested to consider the SIGC findings and recommendations, with a view to supporting any actions which they can help to implement.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** Cheshire East Council recognises the need for sub-regional and national co-operation in challenging areas such as net zero and levelling up.
- 4.2.** Cheshire East Council supports the aims of the commission, for Cheshire and Warrington to be the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK to help address inequality and climate change.
- 4.3.** Cheshire East Council supports the implementation of challenging targets to encourage momentum.
- 4.4.** The report provides good intelligence to support future funding, investment and bidding opportunities

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The Economy and Growth Committee could choose not to accept the report and its recommendations.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	<p>Cheshire East Council would be out of step with the remainder of the sub-region.</p> <p>Failing to address issues such as inequality and climate change would have a detrimental effect on the residents of Cheshire East.</p>	<p>This presents a reputational risk to the council.</p> <p>This presents a risk to the councils core objectives to be open, fair and green.</p>

6. Background

- 6.1. The SIGC was set up as a task and finish group to run for 2 years with the aim of providing an entirely independent view and taking evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including residents, businesses, academics, interest groups and young people.
- 6.2. Secretariat is drawn from the C&W Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with support from the 3 Local Authorities (LAs) within the C&W sub-region. It is chaired jointly by Cllr Sam Corcoran, Leader of Cheshire East Council, and Robert Davis, Chief Executive of EA Technology.
- 6.3. The work of the SIGC is split into 4 key themes which are reflected in the report: Inclusive Economy, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Land Use, and Net Zero. For each of these themes, the SIGC has developed an evidence base for C&W's current position, a vision representing where the Commission believes the sub-region should aim to be and a set of recommended actions needed to realise the vision it has set out. (Further information is available via a link in the background information).
- 6.4. The C&W LEP has developed an early-stage delivery plan for the C&W Leaders' Board. A small number of actions have been selected for the plan following a review exercise undertaken by the C&W LEP which looked at what recommendations LAs and C&W LEP are already delivering or planning, and which ones have potential funding opportunities.
- 6.5. Appendix 2 provides a short summary and analysis of SIGC Early Stage Delivery Plan 2022-24. The delivery plan includes 5 projects which the Leaders' Board considers to be 'eye-catching' and should be prioritised with

a further 4 actions included to help demonstrate progress. The 5 projects to be championed by the Leaders' Board initially are:

- 6.5.1** Progressing towards the development of a Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter
 - 6.5.2** A feasibility study into pan Cheshire farms anaerobic digestion investment project to further the decarbonisation of dairy
 - 6.5.3** Facilitating investment to improve the natural environment for biodiversity, health, and climate
 - 6.5.4** Delivering skills for the green economy
 - 6.5.5** Formal inclusivity assessment to be piloted on Shared Prosperity Fund projects
- 6.6.** Leaders' Board is looking to LA officers to support sub-regional discussion on the potential resourcing and implementation of these actions and more comprehensive analysis of when and how SIGC's other recommendations can be taken forward.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** The SIGC has undertaken a wide consultation process, socialising the recommendations with local stakeholders through a combination of face to face and virtual channels and a targeted online survey.
- 7.2.** The final report, taking account of the consultation process has been completed and presented to Leaders' Board.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1** If the Committee is happy to endorse the recommendations and the priorities and actions contained within the report; this will perhaps have implications for commissioning which may then feed through into how projects and contracts are shaped. Apart from this, it is felt that there are no other implications that require comment.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1** The SIGC Final report identifies projects and initiatives which should be the subject of focus as and when sources of funding become available. They do not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at this stage.

- 8.2.2** Any projects that are brought forward will require a High Level Business Case that has been fully assessed, that is affordable both from a capital and revenue perspective and meets the Council's objectives before being considered for approval as a capital project in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.2.3** It is noted that some of the recommendations within the report are already in train and fully funded and can therefore be promoted as 'quick- wins'.
- 8.2.4** However, in the main, the recommendations relate to initiatives that are currently unfunded, with implications on partners for delivery, particularly on the Local Authorities within the sub-region. Councils are already stretched in terms of revenue and capital resources, and consequently any proposals would need to demonstrate their benefits, before commitments are made and projects are formally approved in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.2.5** If any of the proposals are to be built into Council's priorities and financial plans, they would need to be further developed and worked up into business cases to consider both the environmental benefits and the financial implications, along with a set of metrics that would allow effective management and measurement of success.
- 8.2.6** It will be important to understand how the initiatives can be funded, what are the processes of bidding for or raising the required financial resources, and what financial governance and assurance requirements would be put in place regarding decision making and delivery.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1** Cheshire East Council already has commitments to be carbon neutral for its own operations by 2025 and for the borough by 2045.
- 8.3.2** The theme and priority areas of the report are a close match to the ambition of Cheshire East Council and can be folded into policy as it is developed in the future.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1** The report champions equality and inclusion and provides tools that will be piloted by the LEP or other C&W LAs and may then be adopted by Cheshire East Council.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1** There are no human resource implications anticipated as a result of the recommendations within the report at this time.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1 There are no implications to the Council's risk management or risk register as a result of these recommendations.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1 Sustainable land use is a key theme of the report.

8.7.2 The priorities listed in the report include unlocking the economic potential of rural areas and helping farms to decarbonise.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1 Enabling equal access to opportunities and more inclusive approaches should have a positive impact on young people, particularly those leaving care.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1 Sustainable and inclusive growth and a commitment to net zero policies will have a positive impact on public health within the borough and the subregion.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1 One of the themes within the report is net zero. Support for the priorities within the report will have a positive impact on the carbon emissions of the borough and therefore climate change.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' Report Summary Appendix 2 – Summary and analysis of SIGC Early Stage Delivery Plan 2022-24
Background Papers:	'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' further information and full report: Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission - Cheshire and Warrington

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