

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

3rd October 2024

Performance Report – Cheshire East Plan, Quarter 1 2024/25

Report of: Karen Wheeler – Interim Director of Policy and Change

Report Reference No: CP/33/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide the Committee with an oversight of organisational performance against the priorities and vision set out within the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25.
- 2 This report covers Quarter 1 2024/25 of the plan, 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024.
- 3 This report supports the responsibility of the Corporate Policy Committee to have a co-ordinating role across all other committees and to exercise corporate oversight of outcomes, performance, budget monitoring and risk management.
- 4 The committee can comment on performance and direction of travel and consider any amendments in performance reporting, and/or additional data and intelligence that should be included within performance management reporting.
- 5 Appendix 1 provides the detail of performance and progress against the Cheshire East Plan priorities and Appendix 2 provides a summary of performance against a number of organisational health indicators.
- 6 The Corporate Plan 2021-25 has three key themes - Open, Fair and Green. Although the Cheshire East Plan has been refreshed for 2024/25 to better reflect the financial context, development of a new Plan for 2025 onwards is now essential to provide our residents, partners and the organisation with clarity of purpose and strategic direction aligned to a new operating model and MTFs.

Executive Summary

- 7 This report gives an update on delivery and performance against the priorities in the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 for Quarter 1 (April 2024 to June 2024).
- 8 Appendix 1 of the report shows that there are 66 priority actions included within the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 and progress can be summarised as follows:

Green – on track	48
Amber – mainly on track with some minor issues	12
Red – off track with major issues	2
To be added	2
Not yet due	2

- 9 Appendix 2 provides a summary of key organisational health performance indicators.

RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

- Note and comment on progress and performance against delivery of the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 in Quarter 1 2024/25.

Background

- 10 The Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 outlines three aims and 20 priorities for the Council aligned with the vision of being an “Open, Fairer and Greener Cheshire East”.

Vision		
An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East		
Aims		
Aim 1 - An open and enabling organisation	Aim 2 - A council which empowers and cares about people	Aim 3 - A thriving and sustainable place
We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East.	We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents.	We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.
Priorities		
P1.1) Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making P1.2) Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation P1.3) Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation P1.4) Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough P1.5) Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered P1.6) Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents	P2.1) Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient P2.2) Reduce health inequalities across the borough P2.3) Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation P2.4) Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care P2.5) Support all children to have the best start in life P2.6) Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs P2.7) Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential P2.8) Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services	P3.1) A great place for people to live, work and visit P3.2) Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods P3.3) Reduce impact on the environment P3.4) A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel P3.5) Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all P3.6) Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

- 11 This report reviews progress with delivery and performance against the priorities and actions in the Cheshire East Plan and focuses upon a “One Council” approach to performance management. This includes a balance of quantitative and qualitative data.
- 12 Appendix 1 of the report shows that there are 66 priority actions included within the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 and progress can be summarised as follows:

Green – on track	48
Amber – mainly on track with some minor issues	12
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- 13 The actions which are amber are set out below with an explanation and mitigating actions to be taken:

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q1 update
A1.3.3	Deliver the savings set out in MTFS 2024-28 proposals within the agreed timescales to contribute to a balanced the budget and build sustainable reserves	Head of Finance	As part of the Strategic Finance Management Board (SFMB), the S151 Officer has established weekly meetings with Directorates forecasting overspends of 5% or more. The meetings hear and scrutinise the development and delivery of mitigating actions and monitor progress with regards to reducing spend pressures and bringing forecasts back into line with budget.
A2.3.1	Continue to embed our Restorative practice model	Principal Social Worker (Children)	Training has been provided to all staff in relation to Restorative Practice. Further support will be offered to Children's Social Care from Stockport, who are our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) under DfE support. They will provide additional refresh Restorative training to new leaders
A2.3.3	Update the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy	Head of Service Early Help and Prevention	Workshop held to begin this work. New interim DCS will act as strategic lead for the DA and SV board.
A2.4.1	Attract more foster carers to support Cheshire East children through the	Head of Provider Services	Cheshire East are active members of the Foster4 Board and have started to attend meetings. Further update on impact in Q2.

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q1 update
	Foster4 collaboration		
A2.4.2	Prioritise care experienced adults as part of our recovery work to improve employment and training opportunities.	Head of Service: Cared for Children and Care Leavers	Care Leavers are being supported into employment education and training from dedicated workers in the Care Leavers Service. Improvement in KPI's and in support to CL's has been evidenced.
A2.4.3	Deliver the priorities of the Cared for children and care leavers strategy 2022-26	Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers	The Cared for and Care Leavers Strategy is being updated as part of the Children's Service Improvement Plan. This is on track to be updated by November 2024
A2.5.1	Continue to develop services and support offered through Family Hub model and promote the Parenting	Head of Early Years	The Family hub outreach program and children's centre remodelling consultation was paused due to the pre-election period guidelines. New date set for quarter 2 and Children & Families Committee in November 2024 for a decision. The core offer from our 6 family hubs continues to be delivered, the family hub transformation action plan is progressing on track for completion at the end of September 2024 in line with the end of the program.
A2.6.1	Establish and deliver against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan	Strategic lead for SEND and inclusion	Work is ongoing which is having a positive impact and has reduced the DSG deficit. It is forecast to reduce further.
A3.1.1	Develop and begin consultation upon 'New style' Local Plan Strategy	Head of Planning	Issues and Options completed on new Local Plan as planned. However, uncertainty over timeframes remain due to lack of clarity over legislation and planning reforms from new Government.
A3.1.2	Deliver the Planning Service Improvement Plan (SIP)	Head of Planning	Good progress now being made on key areas of the SIP. Restructure now completed and vacancies ready to be filled; communication, customer and performance improvements are on track; and extensive work on s106 audit recommendations with other services continues. IT system implementation has been delayed by supplier to mid-October for go live hence overall rating.

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q1 update
A3.2.3	Update the Safer Cheshire East Partnership Plan	Locality Manager, Community Safety	<p>The 2024-25 Partnership Plan is currently available on the Safer Cheshire East website and is accompanied by the 2023-24 Safer Cheshire East Partnership Annual Report. The Report provides full details of all Community Safety activity and work programmes delivered against the funding provide through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner together with other Community Safety projects supported by partners. The Annual Report was presented to Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2024. The Partnership Plan is designed to account for Community Safety Priorities for a period of 3 years though is reviewed annually. Data analysis and intelligence is to be provided by both the Police and the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service at the next meeting of SCEP on 8 October when all current priorities will be assessed to ensure work programmes align to any new emerging risks and threats. Amendments to the Partnership Plan will be undertaken to account for any new areas of work identified.</p>
A3.6.1	Deliver actions to achieve the objectives of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan 2027 (updated timescale)	Head of Environmental Services	<p>Progress in Q1 good including carbon reduction projects. 11 electric vans under construction with delivery in August, decarbonisation of buildings continues with air source heat pumps and building mounted PV / electric supply upgrades under way. Carbon offset with 15ha trees of natural offset planted, Council's First solar farm Leighton Grange nearing completion. Capital Review is required to continue work this year on 2nd solar farm and further fleet decarbonisation putting 2027 target at risk in future quarters.</p>

14 The actions which are red and not meeting target are:

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q1 update
A1.1.4	A clear and transparent budget setting process, where opportunities to inform and influence decision-making are clearly understood by stakeholders	Head of Finance	<p>The S151 Officer with CLT has established a Strategic Finance Management Board (SFMB), made up of CLT and supporting officers. A number of groups have been set up to report to SFMB; one of these is the Finance Management Group (FMG) led by the Head of Finance. A core task of FMG is to drive the MTFs review and enable engagement and consultation with stakeholders. A joined-up timeline has been established, reflecting the significance of and inter-relationships between in-year financial reporting; development of the MTFs; and implementation of the Transformation Programme. Critical to the success of development of the MTFs and budget setting process is the timely generation of savings/ budget change proposals, and the determination of the deliverable budgetary effects of those proposals, in respective financial years, from 2025/26-29. Whilst most of these activities will take place in Q2, it is important to note now that the generation of ideas - be that from interpretation of the Transformation Programme or otherwise - is taking longer than anticipated in the timeline (as reflected in the RAG status). As reported to 12 September Finance Sub-Committee, the indicative timeline for budget consultation has slipped a little. Via SFMB, senior management have been asked to make all efforts to populate the 'MTFS Tracker' working document by 20 September, to enable a 'stock-take' comprehensive view of the emerging picture for 2025/26, in particular. This will inform CLT/ SFMB of the further actions required to complete draft budget/ MTFs preparations and plan for the appropriate types of consultation and stakeholder engagement.</p>

Priority Action	What will we do	Lead Officer	Q1 update
A2.7.1	Deliver the Kingsbourne Academy primary school in Nantwich	Head of Education	This scheme has been further delayed due to ongoing legal issues.

- 15 The full quarter 1 organisational health performance report is at Appendix 2. This gives further details on progress made against delivery of the Cheshire East Plan during quarter 1 of the 2024/25 municipal year.
- 16 There are 2,829 FTE staff in Cheshire East Council as at quarter 1, a reduction in the level reported in quarter 4 (2,869). The vacancy rate across the Council has increased from 12.16% in Q4 to 13.05% in Q1 2024/25.
- 17 The greatest numbers of vacancies are reported in Corporate (15.59%) and Place (14.21%) directorates.
- 18 There has also been an increase in the levels of staff turnover, from 3.2% in Q4, to 4.10% in Q1 2024/25. With the Corporate directorate reporting a rate of 6.10% for the period.
- 19 There has been a reduction in the number of agency staff from 237 in Q4, to 232 in Q1 2024/25.
- 20 There has been an increase in the variance between the forecast outturn and total net budget, increasing from 2.4% in Q4 to 6.80% in Q1 2024/25. Full details of finance reporting period 1 is a separate item on the committee's agenda.
- 21 Service committees receive performance information on a regular basis through their subject matter expert officers, specific to the subject of the committee. This performance report offers an oversight of progress against the Cheshire East (Corporate) Plan 2024/25 and should complement the more detailed performance and service specific dashboards that are considered at service committees.

Consultation and Engagement

- 22 Consultation was undertaken in developing the Cheshire East Plan and priority actions within it.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 23 The Corporate Policy Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising performance against the strategic aims and objectives in the Cheshire East Plan 2024/25.

- 24 The performance management framework continues to be developed and seeks to provide a robust, customer focussed view of performance. Member input into this development is valued to ensure that performance management reports are of use.
- 25 Performance management is a tool to allow oversight of the Council's key activities and to enable transparency and understanding around where the Council is performing well, and what are the areas of challenge and improvement.

Other Options Considered

- 26 Not applicable.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 27 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 28 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from performance matters will be covered in other reports to respective service committees, including separate financial reporting in-year, as well as in further development and reporting of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as required.

Policy

- 29 This report demonstrates progress against all priorities within the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-25.

An open and enabling organisation.	A council which empowers and cares about people.	A thriving and sustainable place.
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 30 The range of council activities covered in the Corporate Plan aim to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and the obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

- 31 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

32 Performance and risk are intrinsically linked. Where risks are identified, performance data can evidence the likelihood of the risk and can also show if risks materialise. The performance report identifies areas where performance is strong and areas for development and improvement. This supports the risk management process by providing the opportunity to review progress and identify areas for improvement and any necessary mitigating actions.

Rural Communities

33 The Corporate Plan aims to support greater inclusion for rural communities. In 2022/23 a Rural Action Plan was approved by the Economy and Growth committee, which includes priorities around digital connectivity, access, housing, visitor economy and support for rural based businesses.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

34 Performance management of the priorities relating to children and young people and cared for children ensure that there is a focus on children receiving the best start in life and that we deliver on our commitments to children and young people in Cheshire East.

Public Health

35 This report supports our Public Health priorities using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Tartan Rug to ensure that we work with partners to address issues of poor housing, poverty, employment and education across urban and rural communities.

Climate Change

36 Performance against the Corporate Plan contributes to overall achievement of the net zero targets for the council and for the borough.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Karen Wheeler – Interim Director of Policy and Change karen.wheeler@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – The Cheshire East Plan Progress and Performance Report Q1 Appendix 2 – Organisational Health Performance Report Q1
Background Papers:	Cheshire East Plan 2024/25 Performance Report – Q4 2023/24