

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

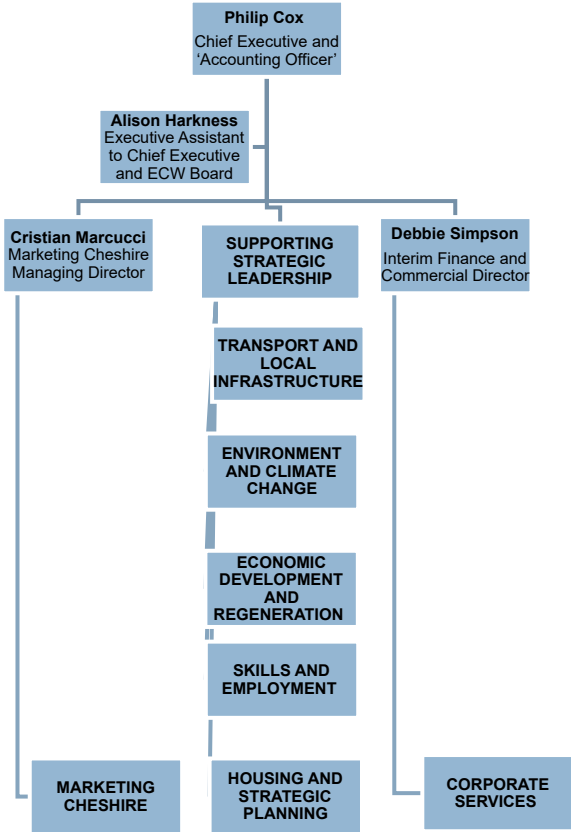
The proposed scope of activity in 25/26 remains very similar to that of 24/25, but the scale has changed, with a threefold increase in Skills Bootcamp Budget to £9m.

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

Cheshire and Warrington LEP - Appendix 1 Budget and Business Plan 2025/26

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Cheshire +
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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