

Cheshire East Council

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Shared Services Joint Committee

Date of Meeting: 25 April 2025

Report Title: Future Arrangements for Council Shared Services and proposed changes to Libraries and Cheshire Rural Touring Arts delivery model

Senior Officer: Adele Taylor, Interim s151 Officer, Cheshire East Council
Simon Riley, Chief Operating Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council

1 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress under the implementation plan to support a move from the shared service model for Libraries Shared Services (LSS) and Cheshire Rural Touring Arts (CRTA) to a managed service and strategic partnership arrangement respectively.
- 1.2 A newly drafted overarching Administration Agreement has been produced which will ultimately govern the retained shared services (see table at 3.3) alongside revised Service Level Agreements for those retained services.
- 1.3 The Shared Services Joint Committee are being asked to recommend these proposals to both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils for a decision to allow for the final implementation and transition to the separate arrangements.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Shared Services Joint Committee recommends to the Corporate Policy Committee of Cheshire East Council and the Cabinet of Cheshire West and Chester Council:
 - i. approval of the changes to the shared services in accordance with the Shared Services Review, as described in the Shared Services Joint Committee Report of 17 June 2022;

- ii. approval of the proposed managed service and strategic partnership arrangements and principle of the revised Administration Agreement; and
- iii. to delegate authority to the relevant Officers in each Council to jointly implement the final transition to the separate arrangements including completion of the necessary legal agreements.

3 Background

- 3.1 At a meeting on 17 June 2022, the Shared Services Joint Committee (the 'Joint Committee') agreed to the proposed changes to the shared services, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Shared Service Review and as set out in the 17 June 2022 report at Section 5. Members also agreed the approach to the implementation of the changes at Section 8 of the report. A copy of the 17 June 2022 report is at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The minutes of 17 June 2022 meeting record that it was highlighted to Members that they were being asked to consider adopting the proposed changes, and if approved, appropriate governance structures would be implemented, to ensure there was no duplication with existing governance arrangements. A copy of the 17 June 2022 minutes is at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 For ease of reference, the proposed changes in the Shared Services Review were:

Category	Definition	Current Shared Service
Shared Service	Joint service with shared objectives, priorities and financial liabilities and benefit	- Transactional Services - ICT (Hybrid model) - Emergency Planning - Archives - Archaeology and Planning Advisory service (APAS)
Managed Service	A service governed through a contract with fixed costs and defined deliverables expected by one party	-Libraries Shared Service (LSS)
Strategic Partnership	Pooling specialist expertise to contribute towards delivery of an objective	-Farms Estate Mgmt. -Cheshire Rural Touring Arts (CRTA)

- 3.4 The Joint Officer Board developed an implementation plan to manage the transition of the new changes, including activities to review and update the following:
- The Administration Agreement and associated schedules
 - Service Delivery Statements
 - Staff Transfer Agreement
 - Service Level Agreements
 - Service Specifications
 - The Financial Memorandums
 - Strategic Partnership
- 3.5 These activities have been progressed, including a newly drafted Administration Agreement. The retained shared services will be governed by the new Administration Agreement alongside the updated Service Level Agreements for each shared service. The residual services that are intended to be managed by contract or partnership arrangements will continue to be governed by the original Administration Agreement dated April 2016 until such time as the new service arrangements are finalised and implemented. In time, the original Administration Agreement will become redundant.
- 3.6 The Joint Committee has carried out its responsibility under its Terms of Reference, being:
- Overseeing changes and projects and changes to shared services;
 - Ensuring that there are robust plans for any disaggregation of services and that there is a smooth transition into the separate arrangements
- 3.7 In order to finalise the transition to the separate arrangements, the Joint Committee should recommend to the Corporate Policy Committee of Cheshire East Council and the Cabinet of Cheshire West and Chester Cabinet to approve the proposed changes to the shared services in accordance with the Shared Services Review and delegate authority to the relevant Officers to implement the changes.
- 3.8 A separate report will be provided to the Joint Committee regarding the transition to separate arrangements for the Farm Estate Management service.
- 3.9 Emergency Planning, Archives and APAS continue under the shared service arrangements and will continue to report to the Joint Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference and relevant Service Level Agreements, which are currently being reviewed to ascertain if they require updating. Transactional shared services and the ICT shared model will be reporting to a future Shared Service Joint Committee for onward decision where appropriate, relating to matters relevant to those ongoing programmes.

4 Implications of the Recommendations

4.1 Legal Implications

Without the appropriate legal documentation, the services are operating at risk without the controls and measures in place to accept liabilities. It is therefore crucial that the changes are implemented to ensure good value and mitigate any future risks.

The newly drafted Administration Agreement will sit alongside the existing arrangements and, as services are reviewed and their Service Level Agreements revised, they will be brought within the terms of the new agreement. This will provide for smooth iterative transition of services once they reach the point of agreement of their revised delivery model.

The role and responsibilities of the Members of the Joint Committee are clearly set out in each Council's constitution and the Joint Committee's constitutional documents.

The Joint Committee has a constitutional role to fulfil the purpose set out in the terms of reference which is to oversee the management of those services which are provided on a Cheshire wide basis on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Cheshire East Borough Council, to ensure effective delivery of such services and to provide strategic direction and is specifically responsible for overseeing changes and projects and changes to shared services..

The Joint Committee is not a decision making body and so the recommendations set out in this report must be routed through the Joint Committee for a decision by each Council's executive (Cabinet or Committee).

4.2 Finance Implications

Cheshire Rural Touring Arts

Both Councils currently contribute £16,000 each year towards CRTA, with an additional £50,000 currently coming from Arts Council England (ACE) annually. It is anticipated that a funding arrangement whereby both councils contribute an equal sum will continue once CRTA becomes a Strategic Partnership. CRTA is an ACE National Portfolio Organisation and as such will need to reapply for this status in 2027.

Libraries Shared Services

The Libraries Shared Service is hosted and managed by CWC. CE Council Libraries buys in to the service on an annual or three yearly basis. There is a contract for the supply of services. Draft costs for 2025/26 service to CE are £385,252.

The 2022 report included Education Library Services and BookTrust under the same heading as LSS.

BookTrust is funded through an agreement on an annual basis with Children and Families Services in both authorities, separate to Libraries Shared Services. The LSS host the team and resources. This is a contracted service therefore the associated roles are funded posts. CWC have indicated they will continue to fund at a value of £25,000 with £5,000 contribution from CW&C Libraries. CE have absorbed Booktrust into their existing Children and Families Service.

The Education Library Service is a subscription service, schools and nurseries can subscribe for school library and literacy delivery. This is hosted and delivered by CWC and operates a cost recovery model with subscriptions and income covering service delivery costs. There is a specific pricing model in place for schools and this is administered either through direct invoice, via Chess for some Cheshire East Schools and some undertaken via eCWIP (Corporate and regulatory services trading arm of Cheshire West).

4.3 Policy Implications

There are no direct policy implications

4.4 Equality Implications

There are no direct Equality implications at this stage.

4.5 Human Resources Implications

There are no direct Human Resources implications.

4.6 Risk Management Implications

Risks and mitigations will continue to be included in the CRTA risk register as appropriate and are monitored via quarterly meetings between CWC and CEC and through quarterly reporting to ACE. These quarterly meetings will continue to ensure a joined-up approach to the delivery of the CRTA programme, ensuring that it is aligned to priorities of both councils as well as ACE.

Risks and mitigations will continue to be considered and monitored via quarterly meetings between CWC and CEC. These quarterly meetings will continue to ensure a collaborative approach to ensuring best value for both authorities.

4.7 Rural Communities Implications

There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

4.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

There are no direct implications for Children and Young People/Cared for Children.

4.9 Public Health Implications

There are no direct implications for Public Health.

4.10 Climate Change Implications

There are no direct implications for Public Health.

4.11 Ward Members Affected

This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both CE and CWC, therefore all wards are affected in both Councils.

5 Access to Information

5.1 Documents are available for inspection at:

Cheshire East Democratic Services
Westfields, Middlewich Road
Sandbach
CW11 1HZ

or:

Cheshire West & Chester Democratic Services
The Portal, Wellington Road
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BA

6 Contact Information

6.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officers:

Name: Sally Starkey
Job Title: Libraries Development Manager
Email: sally.starkey@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Name: Paul Newman
Job Title: Archives and Local Studies Manager
Email: paul.newman@cheshiresharedservices.gov.uk