

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	6 th December 2016
Report of:	Executive Director Place
Subject/Title:	Quality of Place
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Rachel Bailey, Leader of the Council

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. 'Quality of Place' is a measure that focuses on the connection of environment and place. It deals with the quality of the built and natural environment, its interaction with people living in the area, the ability of individuals to make a life there and the vibrancy of the area and its culture. It is therefore central to delivering the Council's objectives, ensuring that growth is balanced with quality and that prosperity helps deliver the distinctive attributes that continue to make the place special.
- 1.2. This report addresses the strategic value of this concept, on the basis that successful places are often able to influence or tailor these attributes to the benefit for residents and the prosperity of area. Embedding Quality of Place at its heart will help define the Council's approach to future policy setting. It proposes that Quality of Place be adopted as a strategy for the Council that will assist it to achieve its aims and objectives as articulated in the Council's Corporate Plan.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - Adopts the principles relating to Quality of Place outlined in this paper as the overarching strategy for the council.
 - Agrees that 'Quality of Place' is used to inform a revised corporate plan for the Council
 - Notes that 'Quality of Place' will also be used as the key driver behind the refresh of Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan
 - Notes that a draft revised corporate plan will be prepared for Cabinet consideration in due course

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. Two relevant pieces of research have helped to inform consideration of the factors that need to be considered in adopting a strategic approach to 'quality of place'. A report on 'The growth benefits of maintaining and enhancing Quality of Place' has been prepared by KPMG which was commissioned by the Cheshire & Warrington LEP, while the National Trust has undertaken research which considers the quality, significance and value of landscapes in the northern part of the Borough.
- 3.2. Both validate the need to address 'quality of place', as under-pinning what we already have, as an important driver of the borough's future and as a major contributor to 'place making' to ensure continued growth and success.
- 3.3. In adopting it as a strategic driver, the Council will continue to have access to a variety of consultation mechanisms to help understand the aspects which are most important to businesses and residents.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. Cheshire East is already a great place to live, work and visit. The Council aims to sustain that success into the future for our residents through a focus on 'quality of place'. It will help to define future policy, supporting delivery of outcomes that promote our future prosperity while retaining the qualities valued by our residents and businesses.
- 4.2. Furthermore, Cheshire East is a strong performing Council, delivering for its residents. 'Putting Residents First' helps the Council to understand what residents and businesses need and to respond appropriately to provide the best possible Service. Putting 'quality of place' at the centre of future strategic priorities for the Council will provide a longer term strategic framework for its planning, helping it to continue delivering positive outcomes for its residents and businesses.

5. Background/Chronology

- 5.1. It is generally accepted that 'quality of place' contributes to the economic well-being of an area by outlining the characteristics that can hold it apart from its neighbours and competitors. Studies have shown how innovators and entrepreneurs are attracted to creative, cultural and beautiful places. In delivering economic growth in the area's economy, we must ensure that the components of quality places keep pace with our growth ambition, whilst retaining the characteristics that support our existing success or those that are valued by our residents.
- 5.2. It is accepted that 'quality of place' positively influences and encourages investment. There are direct links to job growth and the nature of the key businesses sectors that are attracted to an area. It stimulates economic

energy by attracting employees and young families, to an area as well as helping to retain existing skills and talent.

- 5.3. As well as attracting 'young wealth creators', it can contribute to the existing and ageing population being able to proactively contribute to the economy as they would wish (including paid employment and volunteering). These are aspects of value to both Cheshire East and the wider area. Much of Cheshire shares a 'quality of place' that helps to differentiate it from its neighbours and is an important strategic and economic determinant.
- 5.4. As well as supporting the prosperity of its residents and businesses, 'quality of place' can help create and communicate the 'identity' of a place. The cultural offer, quality of our natural & built environment, vitality of our towns and reputation for business, creativity, educational standards, lifestyle and wellbeing all contribute. Distinctiveness of identity influences perceptions and supports place marketing opportunities.
- 5.5. There is a clear interaction between economic growth, 'quality of place' and maximising the health of the population (and thus the workforce). Quality places promote healthy lifestyles, good use of leisure time and cultural vibrancy influencing physical and mental well-being.
- 5.6. In relation to housing and living spaces, a focus on quality of design and appropriate development, can help increase return on economic and social value, but at the same time we need to ensure that there is right mix housing available to meet the needs of all people (e.g. a variety of tenures is required). Delivery of quality housing and living space could in itself influence locational decisions, increase social capacity, civic pride and respect. Design guides and the consultation related to their development can help inform design quality of the built environment.
- 5.7. Furthermore, we need to embed 'quality of place' into master-planning and regeneration- an approach currently being considered in the Crewe master-planning. This strategic approach will seek to deliver well designed and maintained public spaces in any new development with a focus on design quality. It will require a strategic focus on quality and accessibility of green spaces and greenways, seek leverage in new uses for heritage assets, provide support to town-centre initiatives such as 'tech hubs' and digital connectivity and focus on quality and occupation levels in retail. A strategic goal of a strong cultural offer, events and public art can help to animate places, strengthening community engagement and identity.
- 5.8. As an example, Crewe provides a unique opportunity to build on an economic potential supported by strong connectivity, a focus on skills and learning, an emphasis on quality of new design and environment and a 'city scale' cultural offer.
- 5.9. In Macclesfield it is recognised that its heritage, culture and the creative sector can support regeneration and investment and promote Macclesfield

as a great place to live, visit, and work. This significantly contributes to its distinct character and quality of place, playing a key role in its appeal to residents, visitors and investors.

- 5.10. For both the Council and its sub-regional partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), there is a real opportunity to ensure that 'quality of place' provides an economic driver that informs economic strategy. This is already informing consideration of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.
- 5.11. The KPMG research identified two key areas of opportunity: firstly, maintaining the current quality of place in those areas where it is felt to be strong, such as quality of countryside, strong cultural offer, independent retail and connectivity. This may need to be supported and promoted to ensure that this strong offer continues and becomes more of a 'Trademark' of the area and continues to attract the highly skilled workforce and quality businesses as competition across the UK intensifies.
- 5.12. Secondly, bringing focus to new development areas to ensure that Quality of Place is a key factor in objectives and themes and that these are clearly targeted to address any areas of weakness and in particular to meet the needs of a more diverse and younger population and to capitalise on future investment into the region such as HS2.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

- 6.1. All

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1. The Corporate Plan 2016-2020 sets out six clear outcomes, informed by the 'Residents first' values. 'Quality of place' can provide a significant strategic driver in achieving these outcomes, connecting directly with our organisational values and helping to shape the prosperity and wellbeing that our residents, visitors, workers and investors require.
- 7.1.2. At a strategic level, the Local Plan, Greenspace strategy, rural strategy, Visitor Economy strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy, Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Municipal Parks Strategy, Macclesfield Heritage & Culture Strategy, Cultural framework, Neighbourhood plans, design guides & public art strategy (eg supplementary planning documents), rights of way improvement plan, etc., are all in place or at various stages of development. Putting 'quality of place' at the centre of our thinking would build on our 'Residents first' values and help us achieve our outcomes within a coherent strategic approach. Quality of place also has a wider strategic value with relevance to cross-boundary working, strategic economic planning and potentially to discussion of devolution.

7.2. Legal Implications

7.2.1. None

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. None

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. None

7.5. Rural Community Implications

7.5.1. The emphasis on 'quality of place' has a significant relationship with any consideration of rural strategy. This is in respect to both the quality of rural places for our residents and businesses and the contribution that the rural area makes to 'quality of place' overall, including perceptions of Cheshire East and related locational decision-making.

7.6. Human Resources Implications

7.6.1. None

7.7. Public Health Implications

7.7.1. Quality of Place can have significant impacts upon the health of a population, with high quality built environments, urban and green spaces known to contribute to improved mental and physical wellbeing. Through the design of and access to such quality environments, there is a positive mental and physical wellbeing impact as people are more likely to be proactive in enjoying the quality places within which they live or that they are visiting. Through a strategic focus and planned design and delivery of quality places there is likely to be a reduction in air pollution, improved active travel options, better quality and more accessible green spaces, improved housing, improved community safety, and a better developed sense of place and community. In addition the economic benefits will be felt by local people able to access job opportunities with the positive impacts upon the wider determinants of health that this brings.

7.8. Implications for Children and Young People

7.8.1. The significant contribution schools make to their community is highly valued and recognised. Good quality schools are an important contributor to the perceived quality of an area. They also provide important venues and meeting points for a range of family and community activities. They are often an important driver for attracting families into an area and can help to ground residents socially within their local community.

7.9. Other Implications (Please Specify)

7.9.1. Quality of Place is central to the strategic priorities of the Place Directorate: It shapes the Council's approach to 'Place Making' through:

- Strategic regeneration, economic growth & prosperity
- Design guides
- Homes and neighbourhoods
- Connectivity- Transport, Digital and Communities
- Protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment including rural
- Business support and economic development
- Leisure, culture and heritage
- Support people in to work- skills, apprenticeships etc

7.9.2. It also shapes the Directorate's approach to 'Place Management', providing effective and efficient services (e.g. planning, enforcement, highways, asset management, housing, Countryside management and Rights of Way). The value of our quality of place is communicated and exploited through 'Place Marketing' to benefit our Visitor Economy, inward investment, strategic events, international trade and investment and locational decision-making, working closely with our sub-regional and national partners.

8. Risk Management

8.1. Adopting Quality of Place as the strategy for the Council will provide a longer term strategic framework for its plans, helping it to continue delivering positive outcomes for its residents and businesses

9. Access to Information/Bibliography

9.1. Further information can be obtained by contacting the report writer

9.2. Background documents:

Report on the growth benefits of maintaining and enhancing Quality of Place: Cheshire & Warrington LEP (KPMG) 2016

Cheshire East Landscape Scale Partnership: *National Trust* 2016

10. Contact Information

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