



Cheshire East Council

Corporate Plan

2017-2020

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk

This document is an annual update of Cheshire East Council's Corporate Plan.

You can give feedback on the activities of the Council and its plans by speaking to your local Councillor – visit **'Find Your Local Councillor'** on the Cheshire East Council website for contact details.

You can also send comments to the email address below – responses will be shared with Cabinet Members and Council. When submitting a response or comment, please also include your name, organisation (if applicable) and contact details.

If you have any comments or queries please e-mail:
shapingourservices@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Date of approval:

Foreword from the Leader of the Council

A Great Place to Live

Cheshire East is a great place to live, work and visit - and this is as important to the Council as it is to our local residents. In addition, we have one of the strongest economies in the country which is made up of a vibrant mix of businesses across a wide range of sectors.

The Council plays an integral part in the communities of this beautiful part of the Northwest of England and aims to deliver much needed services that deliver good value for money to our local residents.

This Corporate Plan for 2017 to 2020 highlights how the Council is striving to create sustainable growth in the local economy that will support the health and economic wellbeing of residents. We will continue to develop the skills of our local population which will help them secure meaningful long-term employment as well as supporting our local businesses to grow.

In addition, we will maintain a focus on the 'Quality of Place' in the Borough - providing a good quality transport and digital infrastructure system. This will support our economy to grow and support our local residents to

access employment, education and leisure opportunities. Furthermore, we will also ensure that the countryside and open spaces in Cheshire East are managed prudently and provide good quality front line services such as highways, waste collection and street cleaning to ensure that the quality of the environment in the Borough is maintained.

We will also continue to invest in supporting people to secure well-being and good health. Education achievement rates for pupils in Cheshire East remain as one of the highest in the country and social care for children and adults receive high levels of investment.

The costs associated with maintaining this level of quality in our services and environment are becoming increasingly challenging as national austerity measures continue to put pressure on

local government and as the costs of the health system continue to put all public services under severe financial pressure.

Nonetheless, the Council will continue to strive to provide services that are innovative, creative and deliver great value for money to our local residents.

**Councillor Rachel Bailey,
Leader of Cheshire East Council**

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The challenges we face

Like all local authorities, Cheshire East faces a significant financial challenge. A combination of reductions in the grant we receive from central government, alongside increasing demands on our services, and increased costs through inflation, mean we will need to find an additional £100 million by 2020, through a combination of savings and additional income. We will need to take tough decisions in order to make those savings whilst still continuing to provide high-quality services.

We must also recognise that Cheshire East has a maturing population. While young people often choose to move out of the Borough, it is a great place to raise a family, and many choose to stay once the children have flown the nest thanks to the enviable quality of life we provide.

This means that the average age of our population is skewed towards the older end of the spectrum. Inevitably, an aging population means that social care costs are continuing to rise. Furthermore, the increasing costs associated with the health system will continue to put all public services under severe financial pressure. However, there are also significant opportunities for economic growth on the horizon, and we must make sure that we are well-placed to make the most of these for local people. Cheshire East is a prosperous area, where residents have high expectations for good quality

services. There are however, still areas of significant need within our communities, but we have a real opportunity now, to grow that prosperity and use it to enable residents to change their lives for the better.

We must work hard to attract younger people to live and work in the borough as well as supporting our existing residents to get the skills they need to have a successful life. By doing this we will be able to sustain growth in our economy and create more jobs. If we are successful in achieving this we will be able to secure more funding for essential public services as well as seeing a reduced demand for high cost services like social care.

We will therefore aim to provide services that reflect the high aspirations of our residents, and the quality of the places we serve. We are an ambitious council, with the drive to meet the challenges we face head-on, and to continue to provide the high-quality services that we know our residents expect.



Corporate objectives and outcomes

Cheshire East Council is an organisation with strong political and managerial leadership, and stable, well-managed finances. We are confident in the decisions we make and the values that underpin those decisions. We want to see Cheshire East Council build a national reputation for customer services and partnership working.

As a new unitary authority, formed in 2009, Cheshire East is a young organisation. This means we have been successful in innovating and taking a fresh approach to the way we deliver our services. We are flexible in our approach to service delivery, always seeking solutions that will offer quality and value for money, and working with delivery partners who share our values and commitment to the success of the area.

We are committed to supporting the most vulnerable residents, whilst enabling others to support themselves. We will empower individuals and communities to thrive independently in a supportive environment; working together with partners, with the voluntary sector, with business, and most importantly, with residents themselves. We are committed to ensuring that the growing economic prosperity of this area creates opportunities for everyone who lives here.

Protecting and enhancing the 'Quality of Place' in the Borough is a key aim of the Council and our partners. 'Quality of Place' is about the quality of our built and natural environment, its interaction with our residents and businesses and the ability of individuals to make a successful life here. It's about ensuring that growth is balanced with quality and that we continue to secure investment in the right areas to continue to make the place special.

Getting our 'Quality of Place' right it will mean that we:

- Need to deliver the right type of housing in the right places
- Support our existing businesses to grow as well as attracting more inward investment into the Borough
- Retain and attract highly skilled people; and support local residents to be as successful as possible
- Continue to invest in our digital and transport infrastructure
- Develop the heritage, cultural and leisure offer in the Borough
- Manage our countryside and green spaces prudently
- Regenerate our towns and villages

All of this will support the wellbeing of our local residents. This will enable Cheshire East to have high levels of employment with a skilled and motivated workforce that will result in reduced demand on public services. In turn this will free up more resources to focus on delivering more growth and prosperity and also ensure that the most vulnerable continue to be supported by the community, the Council and its partners.

We aim to be a lean and efficient organisation, which empowers staff at all levels to do the best job they can for local people, always putting residents first. We also aim to be an employer of choice, attracting the best of both local and national talent, to help us provide the very best services for local people.

Corporate objectives and outcomes cont'd

Our five resident-focused outcomes are:

Communities – We will enable and empower individuals and communities to thrive independently in a supportive environment; working together, engaging and collaborating with partners, with the voluntary sector, with business, and most importantly, with residents themselves.

Economy – We are committed to ensuring that the growing economic prosperity of this area creates opportunities for everyone who lives here.

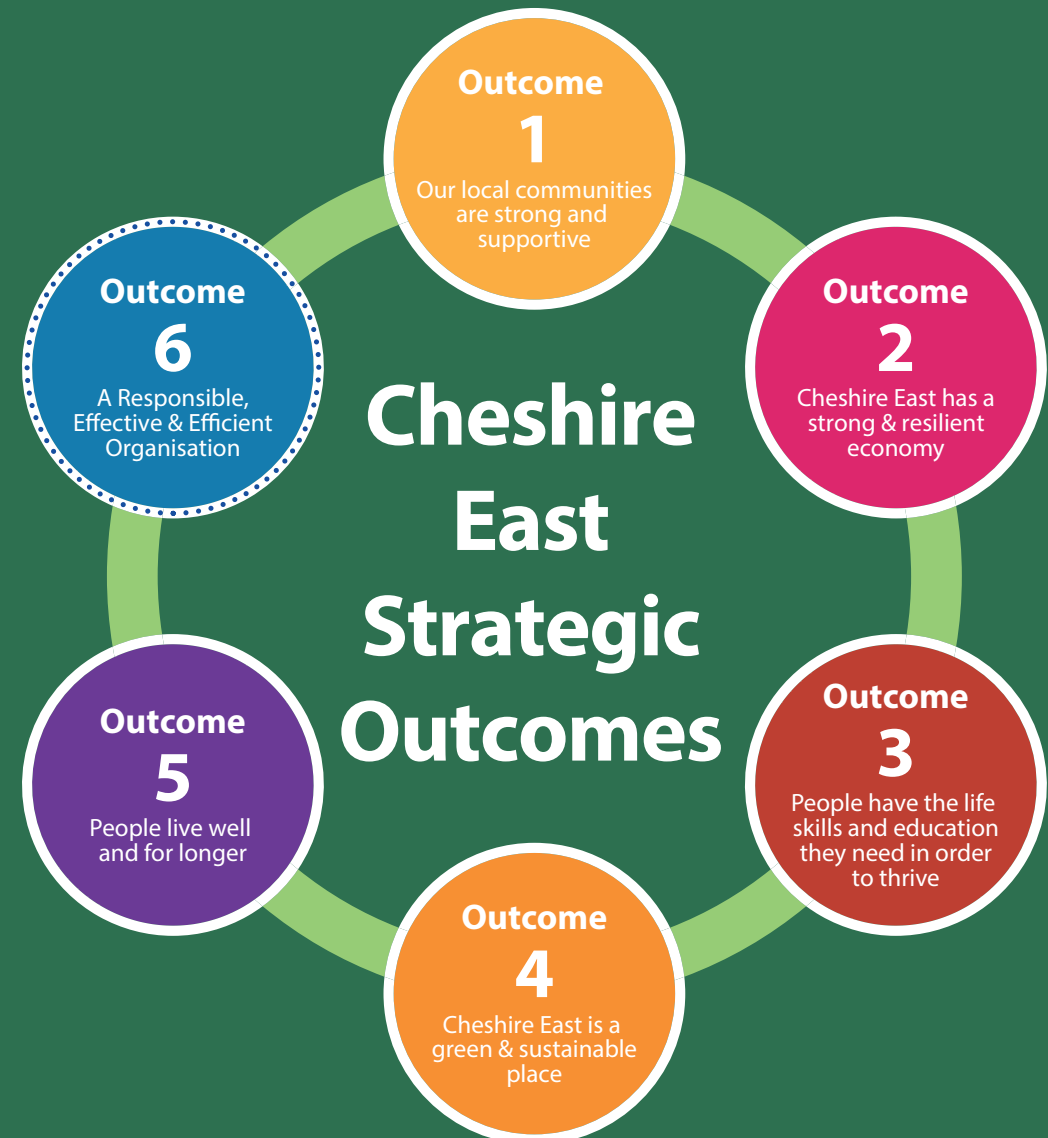
Education – Supporting residents early to provide a great start in life.

Environment – Protecting and enhancing the 'Quality of Place' in the Borough is a key aim of the Council and our partners. 'Quality of Place' is about the quality of our built and natural environment and how this relates to residents, visitors and business.

Health – We are committed to supporting the most vulnerable residents, whilst enabling others to support themselves and lead a prosperous and healthy life.

These outcomes are underpinned by a sixth outcome based on a responsible and efficient way of working.

The Council will demonstrate achievement of these outcomes through its quarterly performance management and monitoring arrangements.



Our values - Putting Residents First

This commitment is about delivering the best outcomes for the diverse range of people living and working in Cheshire East. Putting 'Residents First', rather than the individual resident, is about balancing the needs of individuals with the needs of the population; protecting the most vulnerable while enabling everyone to have access to services and facilities which reflect local circumstances in their communities and Cheshire East as a whole. It is about really listening and understanding what residents and businesses need and responding appropriately to put in place affordable services equitably and responsibly.

- This requires **Flexibility**, which means us all adapting quickly to changing circumstances and learning together from our experiences.
- We will put **Innovation** at the heart of our thinking and in the way we approach our work.
- Taking personal **Responsibility** is a key cornerstone of our values in delivering what we promise, and ensuring efficient use of resources, whether this is our people, funding, processes, information or technology.
- In addition to all of the above the Council will put residents first by setting and achieving clear standards of **Service** that residents can expect. We shall also aim to deliver our services through a 'right first time' approach where we meet appropriate customer demands in a professional and timely way.
- Bringing this together is **Teamwork**, respecting and working well with others to collectively achieve the best outcomes for local residents and communities.

Achieving outcomes

Cheshire East wants to deliver public transformation across a range of public, private and third sector partners as it recognises that working together with other agencies like health, police, fire, probation, our town and parish councils, voluntary sector and faith-based groups, businesses and many others, will help deliver better and more responsive services to residents. The Council regularly reviews how local services can best meet the needs of residents in Cheshire East. The Council aims to help local people to be healthy and enjoy living in the Borough. The Council will work to create wealth from its approach to education, employment, housing and transport. The approach will lead to mental wellbeing, safe communities and overall economic prosperity.

This approach gives all our staff and partners a 'golden thread' linking everything they do on a daily basis for residents to these six clear outcomes and our organisational values. A summary of our performance management arrangements is set out on pages 11 and 12.

The overall structure of public sector services will adapt to improve public value, and the Council is at the forefront of such change. We are flexible in our approach to service delivery, always seeking

solutions that will offer quality and value for money, and working with delivery partners who share our values and commitment to the success of the area. As a commissioning organisation the Council recognises that it does not have a set ideology on how best to deliver services and instead will adopt the "best fit" on whatever mechanism is right to achieve its 6 outcomes – this 'best fit' approach is set out on page 8. The Council runs companies, enters into partnerships, takes on new burdens or devolves services to ensure the most appropriate service is provided at the right cost.

Underlying its approach is a commitment from the Council to transparency and good governance. Decisions of the Council will continue to be evidence based and subject to appropriate challenge, but free from unnecessary

bureaucracy. Public value will be achieved alongside public trust and the Council will continue to openly report progress and publish information that allows any interested party to see how the Council works within external and internal controls. The Cheshire East group of businesses will continue to be open to scrutiny and open for business.

Cheshire East Council has a reputation for being a low cost, high performing Council and the Corporate Plan 2017-2020 provides a further commitment to maintain that reputation.

**Mike Suarez, Chief Executive
Cheshire East Council**



The 'Best Fit' approach

The ultimate commissioners of services are the **Cheshire East Council Cabinet members**.

Executive Directors, Directors and Heads of Service work to establish the most appropriate provider of services.

We will also work with other local public services providers, both within the borough, sub-regionally and regionally to achieve the outcomes of the Corporate Plan for the residents of Cheshire East.



Maintaining Financial Stability

Self Reliance – funding local services with local resources

To maintain value for money the Council will demonstrate how local services will continue to be affordable.

The need to reduce the demands on central government funding means the Council will cease to receive many government grants by 2020. As such we aim to fund all local expenditure from local sources of income by this time. This means Council services will be self-reliant and only paid for from Council Tax payments, Business Rates and direct charges for services.

The Council has taken bold steps to significantly limit the burden on local taxpayers since becoming a unitary Council in 2009. However, we are acutely conscious that we have a maturing population and we also have a local health economy that is under both service and financial pressure, and we must act strategically to continue to innovate, develop and finance those services to those in greatest need.

Achieving self-reliance will be supported by creating economic growth in a way that efficiently spreads the cost of services.

We have outlined a clear set of financial measures and forecasts that show how the Council will remain financially strong in future. These measures focus on reducing bureaucracy, improving efficiency and productivity, Local Taxation, Capital Investment and Reserves.



Local Taxation

Council Tax

- **Growing the domestic tax base** – each new home brings additional Council Tax revenue, New Homes Bonus and, in the medium term, a Community Infrastructure Levy. But homes also bring additional costs, such as education, waste collection and highways. The Council will ensure that any subsidised services are carefully examined to achieve maximum value from any Council Tax payment.
- **Increasing employment opportunities**
- high levels of employment with a skilled and motivated workforce will place reduced demand on public services, freeing up more resources to focus on delivering more growth and prosperity and also ensure that the most vulnerable continue to be supported by the community, the Council and its partners.
- **Maintaining strong collection rates** – this ensures fairness to all and helps the Council maximise local income for local use.

- **A responsible approach to changing Council Tax levels** – it will be important to manage Council Tax levels in response to the removal of reliance on government grant.

Business Rates

- **Promoting Economic Growth** – business growth will result in additional income being retained for local investment. This supports the Council's approach to invest in economic growth through unlocking development land and supporting inward investment.
- **Working with Partners** – the Council will maximise the benefit of the business rates retention scheme by working with partners in the region.

Capital investment

- The impact of financing capital expenditure will be restricted to ensure value for money is maintained. An annual cap on capital financing costs will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains appropriate in light of the expected return on the overall investment.
- The Council's strategic Capital Programme will continue to put emphasis on infrastructure which will generate local economic growth; investment in new service delivery models and improvements in the Council's asset base.
- The Capital Programme will reflect the Council's ambition, to pursue additional external funding, private sector investment and maximise receipts from asset development and sales.
- Borrowing will be appropriate based on the lifetime benefits of a scheme. All investments will be subject to strong control arrangements and analysis of risk.

Workforce Planning

Workforce priorities

The Corporate Plan links the work of staff and teams at Cheshire East Council to the longer term Sustainable Community Strategy and considerations in relation to workforce planning.



We aim to be an employer of choice, attracting the best of both local and national talent, to help us provide the very best services for local people.

Key workforce priorities are:

- **Resident led and customer focused** – our workforce will need to continue to be resident led and focused on providing the very best customer service.
- **Outcome focused and high performing** – we will be more focused on outcomes and less on processes but continuously reviewing and improving our performance to be the best that we can be.
- **Well led and managed** – those with responsibility for directing and supporting the work of others will need to deploy a wider range of skills underpinned by fairness, equality and diversity to ensure that the workforce can address the challenges that the Council faces.
- **Engaged, motivated and resilient** – we will need to ensure that our workforce are fully engaged and motivated to contribute their ideas and views about the best way to deliver the Council's objectives. We will need them to be more resilient to deal with lots of change and fewer resources but remain focused on delivery

- **Professionally skilled and competent but working across boundaries** – we will continue to need highly skilled and competent professionals who operate safe practice and risk awareness but we will need them to work more effectively across internal and external boundaries as the structure and form of public service changes.
- **Flexible, adaptable and innovative** – our workforce will need to be flexible and adaptable to deal with a rapidly changing environment as well as finding innovative ways to organise and deliver services for our residents.
- **Working in a safe, healthy and supportive environment** – which enables the workforce to contribute effectively, reach their potential and maximise attendance.

Headcount analysis and trend

Despite increasing demands on the services we deliver, headcount has reduced over time. This increased productivity is mainly attributable to innovating and transforming and, therefore, the restructuring of services. In addition, some staff have TUPE transferred to alternative service delivery vehicles to achieve greater value for money.

Measuring success

Measuring the effectiveness of the workforce priorities will be tracked through the scrutiny of key performance indicators such as:

- Employee engagement index
- Employee turnover
- Sickness absence
- Ratio of agency workers to employed staff
- Number of staff with performance development plans and performance ratings

Staff Reductions

Any change proposal with an impact on staffing numbers will be shared and consulted on with the relevant staff and trade union representatives at the appropriate time.

Corporate Plan: Protecting against risk and supporting investment

- The Council's consideration and response to threats, and its ability and capacity to recognise and seize new opportunities, underpin its successful performance.
- Cheshire East's strong taxbase and greater independence provides financial stability and offers some 'local protection' from the impact of national economic fluctuations. In this context, it is also important to note that compared to neighbouring local authorities, total spending per head of population is below average. Given this national and local context its overall financial risk profile should continue to reduce.
- The Council's management framework is used to help it respond to changes. This strengthens the effectiveness of its overall governance, and provides a mechanism to ensure effective decision making. The internal control system allows the Council to respond appropriately to risks. This increases the likelihood of the Council achieving its strategic priorities and outcomes.
- Supporting the Council's budget with adequate reserves is a key element to creating financial resilience.
- The Council will be flexible in its approach to holding or transferring money from general and earmarked reserves to protect Council Tax payers against year-on-year fluctuations in expenditure.
- The Council will continue to be flexible about investing revenue funding in maintaining sustainable services and reflecting changes to the risks facing the Council. Budget reporting will include revised Reserves strategies to provide further detail on estimated balances and the application of reserves in the medium term.
- The Council will use reporting processes to monitor the achievement against budget that is so important to managing financial risks.
- The Council manages high-level risks through a Corporate Risk Register. This process is underpinned by a risk management framework that operates on strategic, operational and project levels. Risk registers will be maintained within Team Plans. Emerging risks are escalated to senior members and/or officers as appropriate and in line with the potential impact of the risk.



Feedback

Be involved in decision making in Cheshire East...

If you would like to be involved in consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, you can do so by registering for updates on the Consultation pages or joining the Digital Influence Panel. Please visit: **cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations**

If you would like to view the results of previous consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, please visit: **cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations**