

Cheshire East Council Budget Engagement 2021 – 25

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis on an unprecedented scale. Coronavirus has affected countless countries and communities worldwide and without doubt has significantly changed our way of life as we all know it.

Against this backdrop, we have incurred significant additional costs and seen income in many areas reduced including parking, weddings, planning applications, council tax and business rates.

Cheshire East Council like every other local authority, is also dealing with unprecedented financial pressures due to increasing demand, particularly in adult and children's social care and our statutory duties to protect the most vulnerable. The impact of COVID-19 only adds to the existing uncertainty around the funding of vital local services that we must both manage and seek to secure. We must also plan for and support the recovery of our economy, our communities and our local public services.

Independent studies¹ have identified the forecast shortfall in funding for council services in England is £3.1 billion as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in addition to an underlying shortfall of as much as £4billion² that reflects the short-term nature of funding settlements from central government and the failure to recognise the growth in demand for services.

The council has reported a potential £13 million funding deficit related to the impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21 in addition to an already identified shortfall of £12 million in 2021/22. At the time of writing we are in a second national lockdown and there is future uncertainty around the impact of COVID-19 on the remainder of this financial year and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic into 2021/22 and beyond. This document assumes that these future impacts of COVID scarring will be funded by the Government. If this is not the case, the financial pressures on the Council will be increased. We will react to these pressures to protect essential local services as far as possible.

This budget engagement outlines our priorities, how we are investing to achieve them and how we must change things to live within our means over the next few years.

Notes:

1. Source: Institute of Fiscal Studies
2. Source: Local Government Organisation

Purpose of our Budget Engagement

Cheshire East Council provides more than 500 services for approximately 382,400 residents. From gritting roads to looking after vulnerable people, hundreds of council services are accessed every single day.

As your council, we have a responsibility to deliver cost effective services in a way that provides our residents with value for money and to ensure every penny is accounted for and spent wisely to deliver so many vital local services which support the needs of local people.

We are legally required to set a balanced budget each year, meaning we cannot spend more than our income. As part of this process we need to seek the views of residents and businesses regarding priority areas for the year ahead. In making such important decisions, we are keen to understand how the COVID-19 crisis has changed priorities, the impact on families and challenges facing local communities. Your views and feedback on our proposals as local people, businesses, organisations, Councillors and staff are therefore important and will help us to fully understand the impact of the changes required to achieve a financially balanced position.

Cheshire East Council is responsible for managing total expenditure in excess of £700million, after taking all the conditional income and grants the council receive into account, this creates an annual net revenue budget of approximately £300million. This covers the day-to-day running costs of providing vital services and equates to approximately £15 per week for every resident living in the borough.

As well as providing day to day services to support children and adults who need our help, the council also manages a range of capital projects such as building new schools, new roads, information and digital technology and regenerating our town centres. The total amount of projects being managed over the next four years alone, is almost £400million.

2020 has been an unprecedented year given COVID-19 and that makes the task of setting a balanced budget for next year an even greater challenge than usual.

This document outlines the key financial issues that we need to tackle, including those that relate to the ongoing pandemic, our proposed response to these financial challenges, our plans for spending next year, and how your views will be captured and decisions regarding the council's budget will be made.

Giving your feedback

Please submit your feedback by 8th January 2021. You can let us know what you think by:

- Completing this short survey
- Emailing RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Tweeting [#CheshireEast](https://twitter.com/CheshireEast) [#CECBudget](https://twitter.com/CheshireEast)

For any queries about this engagement e.g. if you would like to receive this questionnaire in an alternative format, or submit your response in a different way, please call Customer Services on 0300 123 5500 or email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

Your confidentiality is assured

Any personal information you supply will remain strictly confidential and will be used in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. To find out more about how we use your information see [our privacy policy](#).

Survey content

The engagement now covers the below topics - please choose which of these topics you would like to view and answer questions on:

- 1. Our priorities
- 2. Unprecedented times – the impact of COVID-19
- 3. Spending within resources
- 4. Spending on our priorities for next year
 - a. Open
 - b. Fairer
 - c. Greener
- 5. Managing the Council's Financial affairs

1. Our priorities

Over the last few weeks, we've been asking residents, businesses, other organisations, our staff and Councillors about our plans for the future. Our new draft corporate plan sets out the vision and priorities over the next four years. Our vision is for a more **open, fairer and greener Cheshire East**.

The vision is ambitious and long-term, leading to three broad aims of:

- An open and enabling organisation
- A council which empowers and cares about people
- A thriving and sustainable place.

The draft corporate plan includes actions that will help us towards these goals. Clearly, our ability to deliver them all will depend on the resources we have at our disposal. This means that our corporate plan and the budget are intrinsically linked.

In this budget engagement, we set out how we are investing in our priorities as well as where we are continuing to drive savings and efficiencies.

The council must invest additional funds in key frontline services to manage demand and meet our priorities to care for people and create a sustainable place. The increase in population across the borough inevitably leads to further demand for some services, but the complexity of care needs in particular also causes costs to increase.

Continuing to deliver our existing services in the current format is not possible without additional investment.

Although our services are valued by you, our residents, we also recognise that services should not cost more in Cheshire East than elsewhere. Our staff are all committed to providing you with excellent service, and we work hard at providing the support to our staff that they need. The financial forecasts include pay inflation, but also include potential changes to terms and conditions in line with other similar organisations. Over time it is also clear that services will need to adapt and transform, and in doing this some roles will change or in some cases will no longer be necessary.

The council is committed to 'digital first' and will adopt strategies that improve access to services and create efficiencies. New technology requires investment but, overall, business cases will demonstrate that we will operate in a far more efficient way using new systems, in particular through a reduced requirement to maintain large office spaces.

2. Unprecedented times – the impact of COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on all our lives. The council and its partners are working tirelessly to respond to the challenges. At the same time the council has continued to strive to:

- deliver essential local services
- protect our most vulnerable children, families and vulnerable adults
- support our communities and local businesses.

The financial implications of the pandemic will continue to affect the council's budget for the next few years. The council is working with Government to get help where it is most needed, but there is still the potential that the council's ability to do that will be impacted and this can affect services.

The council's latest forecasts estimate that as much as £13million of COVID-19 related expenditure or income losses will have to be funded locally. But there is still quite a lot of uncertainty so we must make some assumptions about spreading this cost over the medium term to help set a balanced budget for 2021/22.

If the situation improves, we may not need to make all the savings proposed in this consultation. But if it stays the same or gets worse, it is likely that we will need to make savings to the services we really want to protect.

More information about the council's response to COVID-19

The council's response to COVID-19 has been comprehensive and impacts on all services. Regular reports have been provided to Councillors on the activities to combat COVID-19, the latest version of which can be [viewed on the council website \(opens new window\)](#).

To what extent do you agree or disagree the council is managing the impacts of COVID-19 effectively? Please tick one box only

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Is there anything else you think the council could do to manage the impacts of COVID-19? *Please write in below*

3. Spending within resources

All Local Authorities (councils) in the UK are legally required to set a balanced budget, meaning they cannot spend more than their income. Cheshire East Council gets income from Council Tax, business rates, government grants and local fees and charges.

Since 2013/14 central government’s general-purpose revenue support grant to Cheshire East Council has fallen by £55.9million to zero. The reduction was partially mitigated by permission to raise more money through Council Tax and other sources.

This is a difficult challenge when lots of the council’s spending is driven by increases in demand as the population grows and people live longer, as well as unavoidable costs such as inflation and national living wage. A large proportion of this is spent on supporting older people in care homes or in the community, people with a physical or learning disability or mental ill health. This is in addition to protecting our most vulnerable young people who need to come into the care of the local authority or ensuring our children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) are supported to live full and active lives. Our income sources are at risk due to the impact COVID-19 is having on the economy.

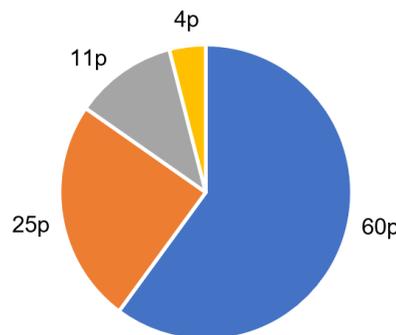
The council’s finances are audited, with reports to central government and independent external auditors that provide an opinion on the quality of the council’s arrangements. If there is a risk that a council is not going to achieve a balanced budget in-year or in the future it must take immediate action.

When the council agreed a budget in February 2020 it was balanced. However, we also made it clear that there would be a financial deficit of £12million in 2021 and beyond, and we would need to take appropriate action to address this to enable the council to set a balanced budget.

How is £1 of your Council Tax spent?

In February 2020, Cheshire East Council agreed it would spend each £1 of its budget for the year April 2020 to March 2021 in the following areas:

People Services e.g. Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care	60p
Place Services e.g. Highways, Waste, Libraries, Leisure	25p
Corporate Services e.g. Legal, HR, Trading Services	11p
Central Budgets e.g. Funds for Capital Projects	4p
Total	£1



Within budget so far

The good news is that this year, impacts of COVID-19 aside, the council is living within its means, with the Mid-Year Review balanced to within 0.2% of the budget that was agreed for the year. In the previous financial year, the council was forecasting an overspend of 2.7% (or £7.5m) at mid-year, so this is an improvement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council spends money wisely? *Please tick one box only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

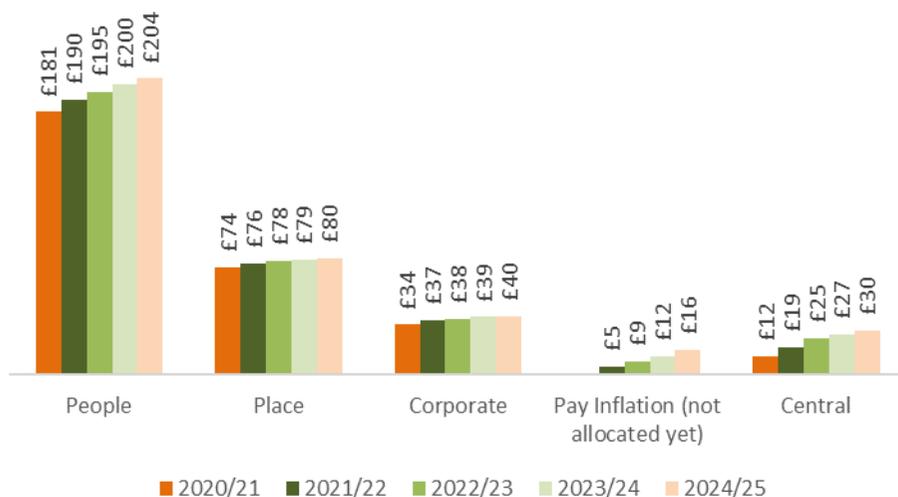
What information do you need to be able to judge how the council spends money? *Please write in below*

4. Spending on our priorities for next year

We will continue to invest in our priorities, support our most vulnerable residents and meet the needs of an expanding population.

Service area	Spending priorities
<p>+£9m in 2021/22 for People Services (services include Social Care for Children and Adults, Education, Public Health and Communities)</p>	<p>Whilst we have significant financial challenges, we plan to invest in these services and there will be increases in spending to meet the needs of the growing numbers of older people who often have complex care needs and younger adults who are living longer with very complex needs. We are also prioritising investment in services for children, education (including more school places), early help and public health.</p>
<p>+£3m in 2021/22 for Place Services (services include Highways, Waste, Environmental Management, Economic Development, Planning and Leisure)</p>	<p>The council is committed to improving the environment and reducing carbon emissions in the Borough, therefore spending is being prioritised to support this ambition. We are also investing to support the regeneration of our towns and economic development across the Borough.</p> <p>In addition, as more houses are being built, we need to ensure we can increase the level of services such as waste collection to meet this demand.</p>
<p>+£3m in 2021/22 for Corporate Services (services include Legal and Democratic Services, ICT, Finance, HR and Customer Services)</p>	<p>We will continue to invest in modern technology and efficient ways of working. We've completely changed how we work since lockdown with all staff who can working from home. This will help us to reduce our premises costs in the future, for example. We also have set money aside to cover losses in Housing Benefits and to provide support with housing costs to individuals on lower incomes.</p>
<p>+ Additional Budgets (across all services to manage items such as pay inflation and the ongoing costs of the capital programme)</p>	<p>Pay inflation includes money for pensions, and the costs of the capital programme which reflect the council's requirement to borrow money to fund significant infrastructure schemes.</p>

Projected Budgets, by service area (£million)



Under the current funding arrangements for Local Authorities, which has seen reductions in government grants as well significant control over other funding sources, the demand for services will exceed the resources available to the council.

This means whilst investing in its priorities, the council must also reduce expenditure, which can prevent or delay the council from achieving its locally identified priorities.

If the council is able to access a fairer level of funding, which increases the budget, then, based on the responses to the consultation, not all of the proposals to reduce expenditure will need to go ahead.

In February next year, the council must meet to agree its [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#), which will show how spending pressures can be balanced against available resources, or reductions in spending by changing the way services are delivered.

If a council is predicting a budget shortfall for next year, meaning it would spend more than its income, it must show how it will make up this shortfall by proposing savings.

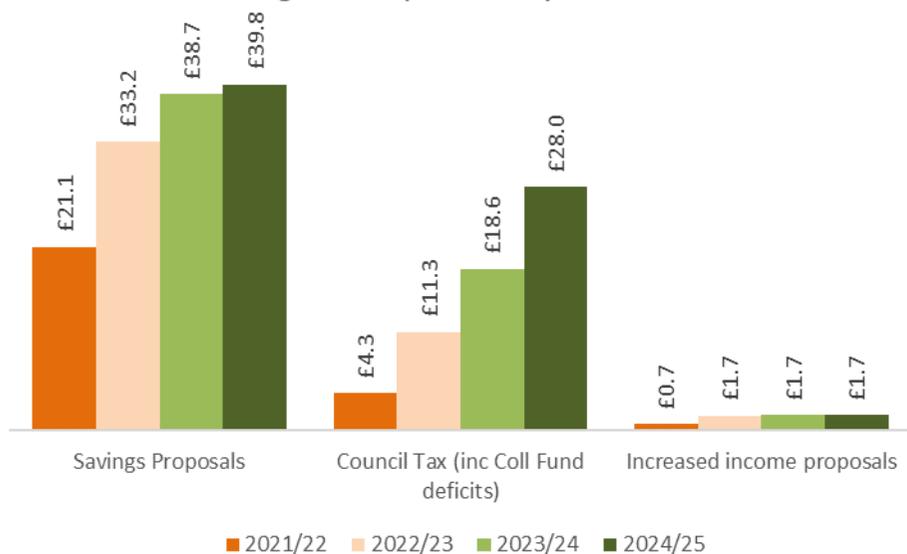
Savings are proposed across all areas of the council. We aim to do this through improved efficiency, reducing duplication, streamlining how we work, better targeting and reducing support for lower priority activities. We also need to make sure we have the right skills in the right places to

deliver the council’s priorities. This could mean a reduction in the workforce, but we will work hard to minimise compulsory redundancies and to support our staff.

Income will come from increasing Council Tax levels as well as charging for more services or increasing existing prices for services.

Part of the overall strategy is also to be use reserves specifically built up over time, to fund longer term costs such as capital funding.

Funding, Income and Savings proposals
- change from previous year £million



Overall the Council’s budget is still expected to rise, with expenditure increasing across each of the Council’s priorities, funding coming from Council Tax. Although there is a risk that spending may exceed income from 2023/24 this reflects the approach of the Council to develop sustainable proposals but not to make significant reductions that may not be necessary if government funding settlements become clearer, and more focused on long term opportunities.

Summary position for 2021/22 to 2024/25	Estimated Net Budget 2021/22 £m	Estimated Net Budget 2022/23 £m	Estimated Net Budget 2023/24 £m	Estimated Net Budget 2024/25 £m
Service Budgets	288.9	293.6	296.8	303.0
Proposed changes as follows:				
Open	0.7	1.2	3.9	4.2
Fairer	3.7	1.9	2.1	4.0
Greener	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.5
Total Service Budgets	293.6	296.8	303.0	311.7
Total Central Budgets (Net of Reserves)	11.0	13.2	14.9	16.9
TOTAL: SERVICE + CENTRAL BUDGETS	304.6	310.0	317.9	328.6
FUNDED BY:				
Council Tax	-235.9	-243.0	-250.2	-257.7
Business Rate Retention Scheme	-49.1	-49.1	-49.1	-49.1
Specific Grants	-21.6	-19.9	-18.5	-17.2
Collection Fund Deficit due to COVID-19	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0
TOTAL: FUNDED BY	-304.6	-310.0	-315.8	-324.0
Funding Deficit	0.0	0.0	2.1	4.6

4a. Open Investment and Saving Proposals

	Open - Investment	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Transparency	Local decision making is crucial to be a transparent organisation. Local elections must be funded properly and the next all-out elections for the borough, town and parish wards are scheduled for May 2023. We will increase the budget to save up each year to meet this cost.	0.150			
Financial Sustainability	To support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation, we will make decisions to fund pay awards but must also recognise some important ongoing financial pressures. Pay inflation increases will include review of pay structures; spinal point incremental increases for eligible staff and annual nationally negotiated pay awards.	6.805	3.473	4.029	4.134
Commercial Opportunities	Adjustments to the income target for the council's owned company, Orbitas Bereavement Services have been agreed and essential capital and revenue investment in Public Rights of Way service are proposed to enable them to continue to provide the service.	0.042	0.021		
Workforce	The council will continue to invest in modern working practices and efficient ICT and communication systems including telephony and video conferencing systems which underpin and support innovation, and affordable frontline delivery. There will also be a programme of ICT procurement and contract renewal over the next three years for ongoing software maintenance and support for service delivery.	0.634	0.769	0.895	0.032
	Open – Total Investment	7.631	4.263	4.924	4.166

	Open - Savings	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Listen, Learn	Surveys will continue to support our decision making, but as no further funding is required for the Census 2021, £20,000 can be removed from the budget.	(0.020)			
Financial Sustainability	<p>The corporate services directorate will look at more efficient ways of working by completing staff restructures, focussing on highest priority activities, developing self-service digital solutions and generating income. It will further reduce costs from a wide-ranging review of terms and conditions of service across all areas to ensure the council is aligned with legislative changes, best practice and new ways of working. Pension forecasts will also reduce in line with latest forecasts and spending will reduce on corporate subscriptions, professional associations and journals.</p> <p>A review of the shared services between Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester councils will ensure that value for money is delivered, that there is merit in continued collaboration, and that opportunities for further efficiencies are identified.</p> <p>Along with Cheshire West and Chester Council, the council has agreed to invest in a new system which supports payroll, accounting for income and paying suppliers. The new system will enable the council to be more efficient by automating processes and will reduce the number of staff needed for these transactions.</p> <p>Repayment of the Council's debt is frequently reviewed, to assess value for money and appropriateness under the Minimum Revenue Provision policy. Reviews will deliver budgetary savings in the short term but does not necessarily alter the overall liability over time. The capital financing budget will increase over time and will take account of available capital resources, including the use of anticipated capital receipts.</p> <p>We will look to reduce the level of debt owed to the council through extended pre-payment and increased debt recovery. Improved debt collection over time reduces income from court costs, which are already</p>	(5.025)	(0.951)	(0.260)	0.030

	<p>forecasting a budget shortfall. Excess Direct Payments funds can also be recovered.</p> <p>As a result of COVID-19, we have been able to improve usage of ICT. This enables us to make a one-off, permanent saving from the travel element of Members' Allowances to reflect the existing and expected continued lower level of claims for travel allowances due to virtual meetings. Savings to travel budgets will be recognised in key services as staff will not be required to make as many journeys.</p> <p>In conjunction with NHS colleagues, we can undertake reviews of nursing home placements and complex care packages to identify those people who have a primary health need and are therefore eligible for Continuing Healthcare Funding.</p> <p>Further efficiency savings and reduction in expenditure will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved customer experience in the highways service and a reduction in annual cuts of grassed areas • Improvements to Regulatory Services ICT systems • Using contract services for low risk food hygiene inspections • Migration of the CCTV service to a wireless network • Reduced funding to the Constellation Partnership • A new operating model for Congleton Visitor Centre • Reducing base budget for community grants and signpost to alternative sources, for example, crowd funding. 				
<p>Commercial Opportunities</p>	<p>The council owns or partly owns several separate trading companies. It will review of the governance arrangements of the council wholly owned companies including the development of opportunities for efficiencies/ income generation. The council will be undertaking a strategic review of leisure services and the operating agreement between the council and Everybody Sport & Recreation.</p> <p>The Fees and Charges Review and Change Project will review the current status within service areas of the council and deliver a change in policy and practice to maximise efficient and tangible income generation.</p>	<p>(1.527)</p>	<p>(0.710)</p>	<p>(0.332)</p>	<p>(0.040)</p>

	<p>The council proposes to enable Cheshire East Highways to undertake external works for 3rd party clients to deliver an income stream and/or overhead reduction for the Council.</p> <p>We are obliged to provide value for money from each of the commissioned services. With COVID-19 many providers have embraced digital working, and this means we must find new ways to make efficiencies to meet increasing demand. The commissioning staff will complete a comprehensive review of all contracts considering fees and charges, performance, outcomes, service delivery and quality.</p> <p>There are proposals to establish two new traded services. Establishing an Education Psychologist traded service would provide early intervention support to children and therefore also potentially reduce demand on the SEND service. Establishing a traded service for non-statutory elements of Attendance Service would provide early intervention support and improve the support offer to schools and families to improve the attendance of children at school.</p>				
Workforce	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how adult social care can operate differently. There are opportunities such as the development of the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and integration commissioning that will enable the staff to work differently. New ways of working and integrated posts will be adopted which will result in more efficient ways of working.</p> <p>A strategic review and transformation of the existing main office estate as part of the Estates and ICT transformation programme. This will improve the design of the office environment, support flexible working, reduce overall carbon emissions and deliver net savings. This also involves a review of all council buildings that provide customer facing services within towns and neighbourhoods across the borough.</p> <p>The local authority receives an external grant to support school improvement functions for the maintained schools' sector. We propose to use a proportion of this grant to contribute towards staffing costs of those staff who directly support our maintained schools to improve outcomes for their learners.</p>	(0.399)	(1.500)	(0.460)	

	<p>A saving on the corporate training budget can be achieved through a shift towards using, wherever possible, more cost-effective means of providing courses such as online training.</p> <p>We are currently aligning our services across Early Help to deliver more effectively on a locality basis using our partnership model 'Together in Communities' to improve the understanding and accountability of all partners regarding their roles and responsibilities around identifying and offering whole family early intervention and support. We are also looking to commission a volunteer model to support the step-down arrangements and to provide ongoing support that some families will require when they no longer meet the threshold for more intensive early help.</p> <p>Once locality working is well embedded, the volunteer service is delivering excellent outcomes and as a partnership, our council services are no longer having to lead on a high majority of prevention casework, we will be in a position to streamline our teams accordingly in the Family Service and Children's Centres.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to review the way we operate children's and family centres, moving forwards with less requirement to offer full time reception duty cover and, with the recent investment to enable staff to work remotely, offer more services in a virtual, digital capacity. This reorganisation is required in order to streamline business support which means we have flexibility to cover fewer bases and at different times of operation. This will support better integrated working with NHS services moving forwards.</p>				
	Open – Total Savings	(6.971)	(3.161)	(1.052)	(0.010)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the investments and savings under Open? *Please tick one box only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Do you have any comments to make on the investments and savings under Open? *Please write in below*

4b. Fairer Investment and Saving Proposals

	Fairer - Investment	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Reduce Reliance	<p>The Adults Social Care budget both here in Cheshire East, and across the country, remains under pressure as a result of a number of factors. These include young people transitioning into adulthood, care fee levels paid to external care providers, the rising demand generally and our older population requiring much more complex care. To ensure the council is well placed to meet this demand it will invest in services that will deliver high quality support to our most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council has a duty under the Care Act 2014 to “promote the efficient and effective operation of a market in services for meeting care and support needs.” In delivering this obligation, councils must ensure the sustainability of the market and that there are sufficient high-quality services available to meet the care and support needs of adults in the area. We propose a fee uplift for Accommodation with Care and Complex Care providers for 2021/22.</p> <p>There are currently 2* PFI (Private Finance Initiative) extra care housing schemes in Cheshire East where the Council provides the cost of catering/restaurant service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oakmere in Handforth with 53 apartments - Willowmere in Middlewich with 71 apartments - Beechmere in Crewe had a major fire in August 2019 and the entire site was destroyed. It had 132 apartments and is scheduled to be re-built, however, no dates have yet been confirmed for this. <p>The restaurant facilities at all PFI extra care housing schemes are currently subsidised by the Council and this proposal is to continue the subsidy. Options to reduce this subsidy will continue to be explored.</p> <p>This is to bid for additional growth to meet the demands for advocacy services. Local authorities have an obligation to provide statutory advocacy services. This support enables an individual (usually a</p>	6.853	4.000	4.000	4.000

	vulnerable person) to understand, communicate their choice and to participate in decision making which affects them.				
Safeguard Children	The number of new Education, Health and Care Plan requests continues to increase significantly above the national rate. Previous investment in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service should enable the service to deliver on new needs assessment requests but further investment is essential to enable the service to fulfil the statutory requirements for ongoing annual reviews.	0.100			
Corporate Parenting	The children's social care budget, both here in Cheshire East and across the country, remains under pressure as a result of several factors. These include increasing numbers of children and young people entering the care system. To ensure the council is well placed to meet this demand it will invest in services that will deliver high quality support to our most vulnerable group of children.	1.300	1.300	1.300	
	Fairer – Total Investment	8.253	5.300	5.300	4.000

	Fairer - Savings	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Health Inequalities	<p>The Pathfinder contract is due to end in May 2021 following a contractual period of 2+ years. Commissioners proposed not to extend the contract further into the extension period. To provide support for people contacting social care via upskilling frontline staff (Local Area Coordinators, Community Development Officers libraries), especially on financial matters/form filling/signposting. Other social prescribers (including Community Connectors) will have further training on financial inclusion to bridge further gaps. The People Helping People service also provides support which aims to prevent social isolation within our communities.</p> <p>Mental Health Floating Support focuses on early intervention and prevention, supporting the development of innovative solutions to best meet the needs aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families. Interventions will promote people's</p>	(0.220)			

	<p>independence and thereby reduce demand on social care and health services. Funding of this will be picked up by the public health ring fenced grant in future and will require subsidy from the Council's non-ringfenced funding.</p>				
<p>Reduce Reliance</p>	<p>The current and future cost savings will be made by reconfiguring the Communities Team to focus on low level prevention activity and mobilising the local community to support low level domiciliary care tasks. The appropriate management structure would be more integrated within Commissioning which will allow a seamless approach to gathering local need and intelligence and matching this to future integrated commissioning intentions.</p> <p>The Virtual School for Cared for Children supports cared for children and care leavers with transition to employment, through the procurement of an external provider who facilitates access to employment. It is proposed that this programme is supported through pupil premium grant received from the Department for Education to support progress and achievement of cared for children.</p> <p>Our strategic vision for day opportunities in the future within Cheshire East is to support safe, purposeful and personalised activities that enable citizens to play a valued role in their community and to live as independently as they choose. Ensuring that vulnerable adults can access activities appropriate to their needs, and with choice and control is paramount. By ensuring that all day opportunities adopt a more personalised and flexible approach we can potentially reduce the level of expenditure and see more people take up Direct Payments.</p> <p>We are proposing to undertake a full review and reassessment of all the Local Authority's section 117 aftercare arrangements under the Mental Health Act (1983), as permitted under the Act and acknowledging that people can recover from episodes of mental health and therefore can be enabled to live their lives more independently. As required by the legislation, this will be done in consultation with our NHS colleagues.</p>	<p>(2.616)</p>	<p>(0.850)</p>	<p>(0.150)</p>	

This Family Information Service (FIS) provides the statutory function to advise parents and carers about the availability of Childcare and support services for children for Cheshire East families. The proposal is to review the role of the FIS officers and look at how their frontline advice and guidance can be delivered in a different way, utilising those staff already front facing with families such as Business Support Assistants and Family Service Workers.

This Contract Management Team intend to monitor providers performance and potential cost reclamation against Key Performance Indicators for fulfilment of commissioned hours via the Electronic Monitoring System. The system is utilised to monitor the commissioned prime providers delivering care and support across the Borough of Cheshire East against their Key Performance Indicators (KPI) as set out in the Care at Home contract specification, pricing schedule and Performance Monitoring Framework.

The system aims to drive up the quality of the service that care providers deliver to people whose care is commissioned by the Council. The quality of the service actually delivered is measured against the commissioned care packages in terms of the start time of the call, call duration and continuity of carers. In cases where the care call is less than 80% of the commissioned call time and over all less than 90% the contract allows Commissioners to recover any costs attributed to the failure to adhere to the call duration KPI.

Cheshire East Council is a partner in the digital platform that shares data called the Cheshire Care Record. This is used by Health and Social Care practitioners to enable a holistic view of a person's health and social care needs. The budget has some flexibility in it to reduce the amount required to maintain its usage.

The Skills & Lifelong Learning Service supports post-19 learners in developing skills for employment through accredited courses and wider community engagement. The principle funding stream is an Education and Skills Funding Agency grant currently supplemented by council

	<p>funding. The intention is to reach the position where the service team functions entirely on grant.</p> <p>Schools are supported by the local authority through our school liaison services as well as being part of a comprehensive traded service including governance. The function of this service will be reviewed to achieve efficiencies.</p>				
Safeguard Children	<p>To redesign Early Help Services on to a locality delivery model, streamlining management arrangements to increase integration and reduce duplication.</p> <p>We intend to review our commissioned services to ensure that they offer the very best experience and life chances for people with learning disabilities. This will involve working with our NHS colleagues and care providers, ensuring a person-centred approach at all times.</p> <p>We know that outcomes for children who enter the care system, particularly those who enter it late, are not optimised. The sooner we can support children and their families, to help them stay safely together, the better the chances are for all those family members to do well and have the best chance of a good life. If we continue to strengthen our frontline practice ensuring we have the right plans and care arrangements for our children, with permission to be creative and flexible in our approach, a reduction in the budget will follow. We will achieve this through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safely reducing the number of cared for children 2. Resetting the current placement imbalance by reducing the number of children living in children's homes and with external foster carers. This will increase the number of cared for children living locally in Cheshire East. <p>This service supports achieving better outcomes for children, young people and families through delivery of service development, improvement and transformation initiatives, effective partnership working through the coordination of the key children's partnership boards, coordination of external support and validation including</p>	(1.634)	(2.571)	(3.007)	

	<p>inspection, and support to the cross service business functions for the People directorate.</p> <p>As a result of COVID-19, improved locality working and partnership working and a successful volunteer service, we will be able to realise savings to the travel budget as staff will not be required to make as many journeys to delivery sites or family's homes. We are utilising improved ICT functionality so have less need to travel to the office for meetings and in some instances are using the technology to deliver services to families.</p>				
Best Start	<p>This proposal is to reduce the Development and Partnerships Service by 50% in 2023-24 to generate a cost saving as this service is not statutory. The roles of the service would need to be absorbed by existing services which may impact on our ability to carry out these functions and our ability to carry out service development and transformation.</p>			(0.300)	
Collaboration	<p>To reduce by 10% the council's contribution to deliver a single Youth Justice service across the Cheshire Constabulary area.</p>	(0.045)			
Fairer – Total Savings		(4.515)	(3.421)	(3.457)	

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the investments and savings under Fairer? Please tick one box only

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Do you have any comments to make on the investments and savings under Fairer? *Please write in below*

4c. Greener Investment and Saving Proposals

	Greener - Investment	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Great Place	<p>The Council is required to meet the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller Community.</p> <p>Based on an assessment of need it is proposed to develop a transit site which will provide a safe environment and avoid the occurrence of unauthorised encampments.</p> <p>The new facility will require running costs to be covered and therefore growth of £27,000 is proposed to meet these costs.</p> <p>The proposed facility is subject to securing planning approvals before construction commences.</p>	0.027			
Neighbourhoods	<p>The Council has previously set an income target relating to environmental enforcement. The Council is currently reviewing its approach to enforcement and has identified that having a fixed income target is not sustainable. Therefore, growth is proposed to remove this income target from for the budget.</p>	0.118			
Environment	<p>Housing growth to date and future projections in house building will see a corresponding increase in recycling and waste. In addition, annual price increases for waste disposal contract costs have been factored in.</p> <p>We have committed to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the Borough. Our Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan, sets out how we will achieve this. Planned growth in the budget has been factored in for 2021, but due to cost pressures this is proposed to be removed with growth of £20,000 planned for the following year.</p> <p>Additional investment is required to fund the implementation of the Council's tree risk management strategy.</p> <p>Illuminated traffic signs and bollards are an integral feature of the highway providing guidance and direction for all road users. Installed</p>	0.810	1.194	0.572	0.582

	over the last 50 years they are an ageing, energy inefficient asset that requires replacement with low energy LED illumination or no energy de-illumination to current standards.				
	Greener – Total Investment	0.955	1.194	0.572	0.582

	Greener - Savings	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Great Place	<p>These planned savings result from income and efficiencies generated through the investment programme in the facilities at Tatton Park, which will improve the visitor experience and reduce the overall subsidy the Council makes to Tatton Park.</p> <p>Engage with Community organisations and Local Councils to explore opportunities to work together on the delivery and funding of services. This will include the potential of asset transfers and partnership approaches to funding key services and facilities.</p>	(0.150)	(0.036)	(0.048)	(0.046)
Neighbourhoods	Savings through the recommissioning of Housing Related Support contracts.	(0.045)			
Transport	<p>The Council must meet unprecedented and complex challenges with increasing customer expectations to provide a modern, fully maintained, safe, responsive, harmonised and fair parking service. A separate and detailed consultation is being undertaken to inform detailed proposals to potential changes to car parking tariffs in the borough.</p> <p>This initiative seeks efficiency savings and income opportunities in the delivery of supported local bus services. Engagement with residents, bus users, bus operators and other stakeholders will be undertaken before final budget adjustments are made.</p> <p>The Council has reviewed the flexible transport Flexi-Link service and changes have been made in the way it is commissioned and delivered. This has enabled the service to be improved and deliver the efficiencies</p>	(0.469)	(0.955)		

	planned. There is no proposal to reduce this service. In addition, savings will be delivered through a combination of increased income through advertising and reduced costs in the contract with the Council's company Transport Service Solutions Ltd, which will not impact on the level of service provided to residents.				
	Greener – Total Savings	(0.664)	(0.991)	(0.048)	(0.046)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the investments and savings under Green? *Please tick one box only*

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Do you have any comments to make on the investments and savings under Green? *Please write in below*

5. Managing the Council's Financial Affairs

The way council services are funded has been subject to review by central government for several years. The Government was expected to publish a 4-year spending review in 2019, together with proposals for a new approach to social care funding. Instead, a one-year spending settlement was announced, and we expect to learn what that means for Cheshire East Council before Christmas.

The council aims to provide sustainable services, meaning they can be maintained over time without relying on funding sources that may be only temporary. We await information on sustainable funding beyond 2022.

Uncertainty over government settlements not only impacts on grants but also affects Council Tax and Business Rates income, which makes up about 95% of the council's net funding. The council has limited reserves to manage this level of uncertainty so must prepare for a position that can be managed locally and complies with the requirement to set a balanced budget.

If government announcements during the consultation period allow the level of savings to be reduced, then this will be considered alongside all the other feedback received. If it is possible to reduce the level of savings required, it will be important for the council to understand the thoughts of local people, partners, businesses, staff and Councillors through this consultation

But if funding remains in line with the forecasts in this consultation document, the level of savings will be required in full and any proposals to make changes will need to be balanced by alternative savings or compensating income. If the announcement leaves us in a worse position, it is likely that we will need to make savings to the services we really want to protect.

As part of managing the Council's finances in a responsible way the Council reviews the technical elements of the budget to ensure funding is provided to front line services. This means understanding the implications of investment and borrowing as well as recognising variations in the tax base and contribution from local businesses. This element of budget management also recognises the impact of proposals on the Council's reserves.

Central Budgets and Funding Activity	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
<p>To ensure openness and transparency the Council identifies the use of reserves and other impacts of the Council's balance sheet and how this affects the overall requirement to raise Council Tax to fund local services in a sustainable way.</p> <p>Over the period 2021 to 2025 the Council will add an appropriate amount to general reserves (c.£2m) to reflect the increasing size of the budget and the associated risks from managing demand led services. However, at the same time, built up reserves for Capital Spending and the Collection Fund will be utilised to manage the impact of COVID-19 and ongoing costs of borrowing to fund infrastructure costs (£5m).</p> <p>Costs of Capital Financing will still increase significantly over the medium term though (costing £23m over 4yrs).</p> <p>Any costs of redundancy will also be covered by Central Budgets.</p> <p>The previous strategy for year-on-year increases to contributions to the pensions fund has created a more sustainable position and contributions do not need to continue increasing which will save money over the MTFS compared to the previous strategy (saving £20m over 4yrs).</p> <p>Council Tax provides the most significant funding source for local services and cumulative increase over the MTFS will be significant (providing £47m over four years).</p> <p>It also expected that government grants will reduce from 2022/23 which will reduce income by a cumulative c.£10m over the three years.</p> <p>If government settlements are better than forecast the benefits will be recognised within the Council's funding of local priorities and not reflected in Central Budgets.</p>				
Savings and Income	-12.973	-9.840	-8.067	-10.440
Investments and Costs	8.284	6.655	3.951	4.213
Net Central Budget Items	-4.689	-3.185	-4.116	-6.227

Generally speaking, would you prefer next year's budget shortfall to be made up through money saving proposals, through an increase in council tax, or through increased prices for services?

I would prefer next year's budget shortfall to be made up... *Please tick one box only*

- ...through further money saving proposals
- ...through higher increases in Council Tax
- ...through increased prices for services

Do you have any final comments to make about this budget consultation? *Please write in below*

About you

It would help us to check that we are providing services fairly if you would answer the questions below. Information you give will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people, and to check if services are being delivered in a fair and accessible way. You do not need to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

Which of the following best describes how you are you responding to this consultation: *Please tick one box only*

- On behalf of a group, organisation or club
- On behalf of a local business
- As an individual (e.g. local resident)
- As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor
- Other (please write in):

If you wish to, please give the name of the group, organisation, club or business you are responding on behalf of: *Please write in below*

What is your home postcode? We ask this so we can be sure we have obtained a range of views from across the borough *Please write in below*

What is your gender identity? *Please tick one box only*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write in the box below):

What age group do you belong to? *Please tick one box only*

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 and over
- Prefer not to say

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age. *Please tick one box only*

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnic origin? Please tick one box only

- White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish
- Any other White background
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian
- Asian / Asian British
- Black African / Caribbean / Black British
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write in the box below):

Which of the following best describes your religious belief / faith? Please tick one box only

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- None
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write in the box below):

Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age? *Please tick one box only*

- No
- Yes, 9 hours a week or less
- Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week
- Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week
- Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week
- Yes, 50 or more hours a week

Survey finishes.