

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 April 2022
Report Title:	Open Data – Annual Report
Report of:	Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Report Reference No:	CP/39/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report updates on our commitment to provide access to open data, in line with our vision of becoming an Open Cheshire East. It provides an opportunity to review progress made in delivery of the ambition to become a more Open and Transparent Council and to endorse a continued commitment to the publishing of open data.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. By law councils must publish information under the [government's transparency code of recommended practice](#) and, to support this, Cheshire East Council publishes its open data via the [Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](#) website.
- 2.2. To support our commitment to transparency, Cheshire East Council made a commitment in its Corporate Plan to Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making. This enables the Council to work towards making all public data (that is not sensitive or personal) freely available in a variety of formats suitable for reuse.
- 2.3. By encouraging residents, staff and partners to use our data we will raise awareness of issues, enable residents to offer fresh perspectives and opinions on how to improve services in the borough and enable our stakeholders to hold us to account on the quality of services we provide and how we spend our money.

- 2.4. We are releasing more data to make our activities more open and decision making more transparent and by doing this, we will provide residents and stakeholders with a better understanding of what information we use to make decisions.





3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To note the progress made to date and to support the Council's continued commitment to ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision-making and to request an annual report on progress.
- 3.2. To support the use of the [Insight Cheshire East website](#) to hold and provide a mechanism to share Census 2021 data and to ensure that we provide transparency about how and where this data is used to inform decision making by the Council.
- 3.3. To support open data accreditation for all data which is currently available via the [Insight Cheshire East website](#).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. To meet both legal commitment and the Council priorities of openness and transparency, Cheshire East Council has already made significant steps towards becoming a more open and transparent council, as detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan under the aim of ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making. This activity includes:
- 4.2. Compliance with mandatory publication requirements
- 4.2.1. [ICO Publication Scheme](#)
- 4.2.2. [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- 4.2.3. [The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#)
- 4.2.4. [Reuse of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015](#)
- 4.2.5. Publishing the output from our consultations and decisions which have been made using this information via the [Consultation Results \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#) webpages.
- 4.3. During the Local Transport Plan consultation, feedback from a number of stakeholders, including Local MP Dr Kieran Mullan, indicated that the use of the open data site for the local transport plan consultation was one of the most successful consultations that the Council has undertaken, and provided an open and transparent approach to the presentation of consultation material. This feedback shows that the [Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](#) provides an innovative mechanism for engagement and for a transparent approach to consultation and aligns with the open data plan in 4.9 and with other benefits highlighted in 5.2.

- 4.4. In the last 12 months (March 2021 to February 2022) there was a total of 86,254 visits made to the homepage of [Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com). However, many people will access content directly – either via a link to the item, for example from the Council’s website or via a saved bookmark to a dataset, therefore the actual number of views of the content is likely to be greater than this figure.
- 4.5. [Data on air quality measurements](#) remains the most popular dataset, during 2021 air quality measurements receive an average of 40 views per day and there has been a total of 14,598 views since the 2021 dataset went live.
- 4.6. The data collected via the Census 2021 is to be released for use in 2022. The census is a survey that takes place every 10 years and it gives the Council the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in Cheshire East. The information helps the Council to decide how services are planned and funded in your local area.
- 4.7. Open data accreditation at Bronze level via the [Open Data Institute](#) will be progressed during the 22/23 for all data available on the [Insight Cheshire East website](#). Initial accreditation has been sought for [spend over £500](#) and this data will be the starting point, with other data being added during the year. Efforts will be made during 22/23 to progress Bronze accreditation and where possible raise the standard of the data to the Silver accreditation level. Accreditation via the Open Data Institute will support the Council in its ambition to improve our open data practices.
- 4.8. We will continue to use the open data site to publish stories about our data to ensure that we are open and transparent about what data we use to make decisions - [Air Quality in Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](#).
- 4.9. Our Open Data plan for 22/23 is summarised below:

 <p>A published statement of Cheshire East’s commitment to transparency</p>	 <p>Use of Story Maps for consultation including Budget Consultation and CGR</p>	 <p>Publish council performance and create Power BI dashboards using data from the site</p>	 <p>Nurture a residents community or group to help develop and design the site</p>
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- 4.10. The benefits of making open data available are:

- 4.10.1. Transparency and accountability - publishing the information we use allows stakeholders to see what has been used to support the decision-making process within the Council.
- 4.10.2. Public service improvement – providing access to open data can help residents and stakeholders challenge our decisions – this supports accountability and can lead to improvements in data quality.
- 4.10.3. Generating economic growth - allowing small and large businesses to use the data can enable them to combine data to influence and inform business decisions and can support the development of apps.
- 4.10.4. Helping democracy - giving information to residents and stakeholders can engage more people in the political process.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Council, in its Corporate Plan 2021-2025, made a commitment to ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making. The publication of open data provides better transparency in decision making by linking evidence, consultation, results and performance to the Council vision and aims.
- 5.2. The benefits to the Council of promoting open data are many and have been summarised in the image below. These benefits demonstrate why the plan for the open data agenda, noted in 4.9, is important to the Council. The publication of open data contributes to an improvement in reputation and engagement, and through the use of interactive stories and development of a collaborative engagement model with residents, we can drive increased levels of democratic participation.



- 5.3. Our goal is to not only adhere to, but to exceed, the [Local Government Transparency Code requirements](#). To do this, the Council will seek opportunities to release open data through the Customer Experience workstream and the refresh of the Council's approach to consultation and engagement and through further development of the [Insight Cheshire East \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com) website.
- 5.4. Developments to enable the publication of performance management information will be incorporated into the design and release of an improved approach to performance reporting (supporting the action plan described in 3.5) and will align with the ambition of the Customer Experience Strategy.
- 5.5. Publishing data freely means that the Council's performance, spending and opportunities for improvement are visible, and allows residents to hold the Council to account.
- 5.6. The release of open data enables stakeholders to understand how the Council works and helps them to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes. It also strengthens our democratic institutions and encourages better decision-making, to meet the needs of our residents.
- 5.7. In recent survey with members of the Digital Influence Panel (DIP 2021), the top five open data sources which they showed an interest in, were identified as:
- Highways incidents and reports
 - Council performance indicators
 - Air quality statistics
 - Health Indicators
 - Individual restaurant inspection reports
- 5.7.1. Of the items listed by the members of the DIP, [household waste performance](#) data is available, [air quality is provided](#), health indicators are available within [the borough profile](#) and food hygiene ratings can be found via the [Food Standards Agency](#).
- 5.7.2. We will look to identify leaders within the open data community, members of the DIP and key officers within the Council who can support our approach to the release of open data.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1. Consultation and engagement is undertaken via the Open Data site. This provides an opportunity for residents and other stakeholders to make a request for additional data or information to be made available for reuse.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.2. By law councils must publish information under the [government's transparency code of recommended practice](#) and, to support this, Cheshire East Council publishes its Open Data via the [Open data and transparency \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#) website.

7.3. Finance

7.3.1. Funding for the current license and for any extension which might be taken is available and is allocated for the specific use of continued licensing of the Open Data site.

7.3.2. Our current license is for 36 months from 2 November 2020 – 1st November 2023 and incorporates the option to extend for a further 24 months.

7.3.3. The contract value is £15,120 over the first 3 years (£5,040 per annum) with an option to extend for a further 24 months at an additional £5,040 per annum - with a potential total for the full period - £25,200 – representing good value for money in this space.

7.3.4. The costs are met within the existing budget.

7.4. Policy

7.4.1. The open data and transparency agenda supports the ambition of Cheshire East Council to become a more Open and Transparent Council and to endorse a continued commitment to the publishing of open data in support of this priority

7.5. Equality

7.5.1. In stimulating creativity and innovation, the more people and organisations that use our data, the greater the social and economic benefits that will be generated. This is true for both commercial and non-commercial uses. Freely-available data can be used in innovative ways to create useful tools and products that help people navigate modern life more easily. Used in this way, open data is a catalyst for innovation in the private sector, supporting the creation of new markets, businesses and jobs.

7.5.2. Human Resources

7.5.3. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. Only data which is considered 'open', that is data which should be freely available to everyone to use and republish as they wish, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control, will be made available via the Open Data site.

7.6.2. Cheshire East Council will follow the principle that there are legitimate reasons why some data cannot be released, in particular pertaining to intellectual property, commercial sensitivity, personally-identifiable and sensitive information, and will therefore not release this data as Open Data.

7.6.3. Protecting personal data is of paramount importance to us. We are only publishing data which contains no personal data or where any personal data has been removed. Publishing data will not impact on our obligations in adhering to the Data Protection Act.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Phil Christian Acting Head of Business Change Phil.christian@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Nil
Background Papers:	Scrutiny Committee report - final draft 26.3.19. 2 2.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk) Corporate Plan (cheshireeast.gov.uk)