Cheshire West & Chester Council

Unprecedented Times

Your chance to shape the Council budget and your services

Cheshire West and Chester

Contents

Foreword

We live in unprecedented times. Since March, we have faced the biggest public health emergency in living memory. Families, businesses and communities have rallied together to support each other, and the Council has played a vital role in protecting lives and livelihoods. At the time of writing we are seeing concerning rises in COVID-19 infections and new national restrictions. We need to do all we can to avoid further waves of this terrible virus. At the same time, we know the best way to manage a crisis is not just to deal with it, but look beyond it. For this reason, we are working on plans to recover from the pandemic, underpinned by the principle of building a stronger, fairer and greener future.

Against this backdrop we must ensure our budget for the future is balanced, reflects your priorities, and is linked to our vision for the borough.

This is, perhaps, one of the biggest challenges we have ever faced. It is likely we will need to make significant reductions to our budget. We face an uncertain economic future. Demand pressures on services may increase and we have little clarity on funding that will be available to us from Government.

> "We know the best way to manage a crisis is not just to deal with it but look beyond it."

We have managed our financial position carefully but, overall, we could face a funding gap of £89 million over the next four years. After business rates and Council tax are accounted for, alongside existing savings proposals that we have already consulted on, the gap remains between £34 million and £43 million, depending on the national funding available. We are having to make plans to address this gap in a one to four year period because of the uncertainty in funding from Central Government. Whilst Cheshire West and Chester Council is recognised for innovation, these financial challenges and uncertainties are forcing us to investigate budget proposals that we would not usually consider.

Our proposals will help address this funding gap, but we need your input and no final decisions have yet been made. Your views will be considered by councillors when they set the budget on 25 February 2021 and I can assure you that your feedback is highly valued.

The Council Plan, known as Play Your Part to Thrive, paints a vision of all our communities working alongside us to tackle shared challenges. Now, more than ever, this approach is needed if we are to confront these unprecedented times and build a stronger future.

Councillor Louise Gittins
Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council

Background

We want to hear your views on how the Council can set a balanced budget in these unprecedented times. We need to set a balanced budget, but also ensure our communities, businesses and residents are supported to come out stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the time of writing Central Government has not completed its Comprehensive Spending Review, which is designed to provide clarity on the public money available for the next four years. In the absence of this information, we do not know the full extent of the budget challenge we will face, but it is likely that significant savings and efficiencies will need to be made, and we will continue to face pressures on local services that support those with the most complex needs.

A series of proposals are included by Council function, which will be considered by all councillors on 25 February next year. Depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and your feedback, we may have choices on whether we need to implement these proposals but also choices on their timing. Unfortunately, we may also need to find further savings above those in this document so we would also like your ideas on further ways we could raise income or save money. We are seeking to be prepared for all eventualities.

There are a number of ways you can get involved and have your say.

- Take part in a range of engagement activities, including our online survey, at **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/councilbudget**
- Write to us: **Council Budget, Insight and Intelligence, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Council Offices, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE**
- Email: **councilbudget@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**
- Telephone the Council's Contact Centre on **0300 123 8 123** and quote **'Council budget'**
- Contact your **local councillor**
- Take part in our **Question Time event** in November
- Request a copy of our **consultation survey** in alternative formats, including paper copy, using the contact details above

We plan to close this listening exercise on **3 December 2020**. The results will be published on our website in **February 2021** so that you can see how your views have influenced our decisions. We will then bring forward proposals to be voted on at our full Council meeting, scheduled for **25 February 2021**.

Some of the proposals in this document are at an early stage of development and will require more engagement and conversations with the public and others. For some proposals, this will happen in parallel with this exercise. Other proposals will require further consultation following the agreement of the budget.

Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the biggest challenge faced by our communities and the Council in living memory. The community has been at the forefront of the response and all sections of society have played their part. The Council has also played its part, including the following.

- Contacting **10,000** shielding local people to offer support and providing **1,143** food parcels
- Assisting **6,446** businesses with vital funding and support
- Coordinating **1,233** volunteers to assist residents
- **Supporting care services** and ensuring PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) is in place to protect local people, care homes and staff
- Providing **ongoing advice and guidance** to residents and businesses
- Helping over **51,000** children and young people to return to school
- Assisting the **high street** and **public facilities** to reopen in a safe way
- Implemented our own Borough **test and trace system** to help contain the virus based on local insight and local action

As well as the costs of these vital services, the Council has seen income reduce from a range of fees, charges, and local taxes during the pandemic. Our current estimate is that COVID-19 has cost the council around £36.7 million. The Government has provided some welcome additional funding to partly cover these costs, but around £8.6 million is currently unfunded. Our budget must balance, so these unfunded costs will unfortunately mean savings will need to be found to pay for them – unless the Government provides additional funding.

Against this funding backdrop, society has now changed. People may be more likely to use digital technology, whether in relation to work or accessing local services. Local public services, including councils and the NHS, and the local voluntary sector, are working more closely together than ever before. Businesses are looking for support to adjust to a new economic environment and communities are looking to be involved in addressing local issues with our support and encouragement.

We are responding to this new situation with a Recovery and Renewal Plan, based on a vision of building a stronger, greener and fairer future. It reflects the broad priorities of the Council Plan and has also been used to guide the financial proposals within this document.

Financial position

Since 2010 we have received significant reductions in Government funding, while facing increasing pressures on services. There are more people with complex needs that we must support. Overall, in cash terms, we have seen funding reductions of almost **£400 million** since 2010.

We start from a challenging position and have always looked to plan ahead, in line with our legal responsibilities, and identify changes to services that enable us to balance the budget.

Last year we conducted a significant review of our budget for 2020-2024. This placed us in a good position to weather the storm created by COVID-19 and helped protect this Council from some of the urgent financial measures that some other councils have had to introduce. We are planning to implement proposals totalling **£13.5 million** for the next four years, which we have consulted on previously. These proposals are confirmed and will continue to be delivered. But the uncertainties we face mean that we need to go further. Depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, we may need to save between **£34 million** and **£43 million** over and above the changes we have already set. This is made up of anticipated reductions in funding from Central Government and investment required to meet cost and income pressures across the Council.

In the absence of certainty, we have included a range of proposals for you to consider. Proposals totalling **£7 million** that are more technical in nature are not included in the sections below to enable a greater focus on areas that have more of an impact on services and residents. A full list of proposals is available in Appendix A.

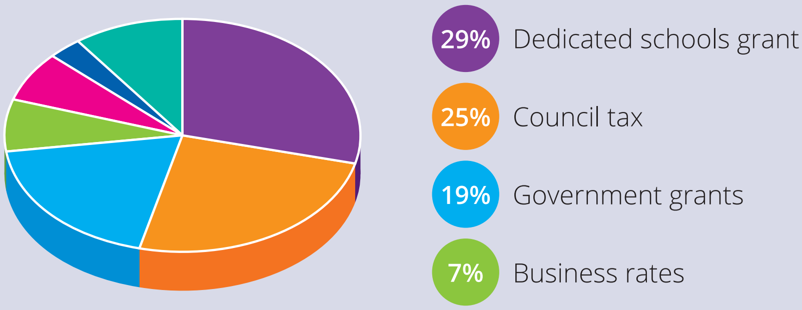
Subject to national funding decisions and local service demand pressures, we may be in a position where we do not have to take forward all our savings proposals, or may have more time to implement them over a number of years; but it is also possible that the savings we have proposed may not go far enough. If we must increase our proposed savings, this is likely to require some even more challenging decisions on further cuts and service reductions within a shorter timeframe. We would welcome your views on how we could bridge the gap, should it become necessary.

How our budget is funded and spent

The money we spend on services ultimately comes from the public. This includes a mixture of local sources, from Council tax and business rate payers, and fees for services and grants from Central Government, mainly for specific purposes.

Since 2010, councils are increasingly reliant on locally generated income, as Central Government funding has been cut. Councils do not set the level of local business rates, but they can keep a proportion of the local rates collected to encourage economic growth. However, the Council only retains about 40% of business rates, and has to pass about **£92 million** to Central Government in respect of 2019-20 income.

Where the money comes from



Spending

This year we will spend **£804 million** on our services. This includes the funding we distribute directly to schools (**£230 million** Dedicated Schools Grant). Schools aside, the Council's biggest area of expenditure is the **£178 million** that we spend on supporting vulnerable adults who need social care, and a further **£69 million** that goes towards supporting children and young people. The costs of these services are increasing significantly. Since 2013-14, the annual cost of a child under the age of 18 being in care has increased from **£26,000** to **£43,000** a year; the weekly cost of an adult 'care at home' package has increased from **£110** to **£213**.

The chart below shows how the Council's resources are currently distributed against each of our departments, as well as the money which goes directly to schools:

Where the Council is spending its budget in 2020-21

Health and Wellbeing, which includes adult social care, public health, education, children's social services and early help and prevention services

Schools, which covers funding allocated to schools to provide education and support to schools

Communities, Environment and Economy, which includes highways, transport, street care, libraries, strategic housing, economic growth, leisure, culture and heritage

Council-wide services, which includes Council-wide budgets that support all services and support services such as customer relations, democratic services, legal services, finance, human resources, communications, research, change and technology.

Council Companies

The Council has created six companies that deliver services on behalf of the local authority and other customers. Collectively they employ 2,800 staff and spend £70 million to deliver key services such as adult social care, support to schools, leisure and waste collection. We work very closely with these companies to help them develop by securing more income from other sources beyond the Council and reducing their costs to make them more competitive. We also place a lot of emphasis on them being responsible employers and progressive companies which work closely with residents and communities. The companies are an integral part of the Council and it is important that they play their part in addressing the financial challenge and support the delivery of the Council's objectives.

To support them in this we are exploring the following:

- Creating a group structure that provides cost effective back office support to the wholly owned Council Companies and enhances the link between the Council, its companies and residents' expectations.
- Reviewing their facilities and services offered to ensure they meet the needs of local people. This is particularly relevant now with a review of Brio, the Council's leisure company. A public listening exercise is underway to find out from local people how the service could better reflect the needs and aspirations of our different communities.
- Identifying any links between the companies and reducing duplication through a review of all the services we currently commission through these organisations.
- Ensuring their employment offer is in line with the values of the Council, is fair, and is sustainable.

Capital

Despite the pressures on our day-to-day spending, we have the opportunity to invest in assets that deliver an economic or social return into the future. Under the rules set for local government, we can invest in projects that deliver a financial return to the Council, or where we can fund the financing costs of investment from within our revenue budget. We also bid for external funding to enable investment in assets that support our local economy and public services.

We can fund one-off projects to build and develop assets like leisure centres and roads for regeneration programmes, or technology and equipment. Capital investment is raised:

- through selling assets such as buildings or land we no longer require
- from dedicated government grants
- from private sector investment
- from other borrowing, which is repaid over a period of years
- from the Housing Revenue Account, which is financed by, and allocated towards, Council housing
- through setting aside some of our revenue budget to fund future finance costs.

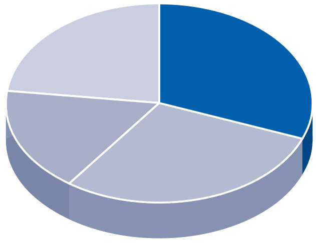
We are planning to invest over **£350 million** between 2021 and 2025, requiring approximately **£113 million** of Council borrowing, with the remainder financed through other sources.

Key areas of focus for the programme include:

- supporting regeneration, housing and economic recovery from COVID-19
- tackling the climate emergency
- investing in our neighbourhoods, including the provision of additional housing
- investing in leisure assets to improve the wellbeing of residents
- improving our technology to deliver better services for our residents and customers
- developing schemes within the borough to ensure the Council is positioned to attract any Central Government funding that is available
- maintaining our assets, whether that means buildings, roads or IT equipment.

Glossary

Sometimes we use terms and phrases that may not be familiar to everyone. This is because there are specific terms associated with particular types of services that some people, mainly those using these services, will know and use. We have provided a short glossary at the back of this document to help explain some less well-known terms.



Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Val Armstrong
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Councillor Robert Cernik
Cabinet Member for Children and Families

This area of the Council includes services such as:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Support for vulnerable families
- Education
- Public Health

Key priorities in this area, particularly as we move forward from COVID-19, are as follows.

Priority	Areas of focus as we recover from COVID-19
Support children and young people to have the best start in life	• Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people • Finding new ways to support families at an earlier stage and reduce the need for more costly crisis services • Supporting the education needs of all children and young people as they return to school • Embedding new digital approaches to support children and families
Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives	• Implementing a robust test and trace approach to manage infections and outbreaks • Improving public health, particularly in relation to obesity • Transforming adult social care to provide care, which is more joined up with the NHS, closely connected with communities and embraces technology • Improving services that support good mental health

Overall the budget for this area is **£192.5 million** a year. The Council has previously consulted on savings for 2021-4 of **£5.5 million** (2.9 per cent of the budget in this area).

This will largely be achieved by putting in place services that prevent the need for more expensive and intensive support later. We also have a priority to put people at the centre of care rather than be overly focused on delivering services from specific buildings.

To put this into perspective, we currently support over 15,000 adults with social care needs and almost 2,000 children in need of specialist help and protection. The money needed for this support varies but, for example, to support children with complex needs by providing residential care, costs around **£189,000** per child each year. The price of this care has risen by 16 per cent in the last 12 months. Similarly, the cost of packages of support for those with a learning disability can vary greatly, but on average, is around **£44,000** per year for each individual.

To balance the budget and ensure there is enough money to tackle the priorities set out on the previous page, the proposals under consideration are as follows.

Support to adults

(1.1) **Review of mental health services:** The Council provides mental health support to residents to aid their social care needs. There is scope to transform the service to provide rapid help to people to avoid escalation to crisis; to achieve a better balance between building-based and outreach services and to consider greater links with local health services. Overall, by avoiding escalation to crisis, this could save £120,000.

(1.2) **Transforming learning disability services:** We plan to review the way we work with adults with learning disabilities and the range of services and support options available. This will include reviewing and improving our supported living offer, working closely with providers to enable more services to be delivered locally and reduce the need for people to be placed outside of the Borough. We could also make greater use of assistive technology to enable people to maximise their independence and work with people to access community resources and facilities to reduce reliance on more traditional services. These measures should reduce service level costs by an additional £325,000.

(1.3) **Ensuring funding is in place to support the transition of children into adult social care:** We have identified that more can be done to plan for the transition of children who require social care support into adult services. We will do a full review to identify opportunities to improve transition and to better manage costs. Even after this review, it is expected that further funding of £1.775 million will be required to meet the increasing demand on adult services.

(1.4) **More efficient ways of delivering care:** Demand for care at home continues to grow and we are not always able to provide this support when it is needed. This can place greater pressure on families or mean we must provide alternative more expensive services whilst people wait for care at home. We need to make best use of the support available and ensure care is delivered in a person-centred and dignified way. There are a number of care packages that are currently delivered by two people at the same time and there is scope with appropriate equipment, training and support, for this care to be delivered by a single care worker, providing greater dignity for the person receiving care, and increasing domiciliary care capacity. Alongside a combination of other projects to better meet needs, this could save an additional £1.68 million on service delivery costs.

(1.5) **Joining up support with the NHS:** Building on the joint work between the Council and the NHS over recent years, which has accelerated during the pandemic, it is proposed to join up more care workers with health workers in the community. This will help avoid hospital and care home admissions, and support people to return home more swiftly from hospital through rapid access to integrated health and social care resources. Overall this could save £400,000 a year when the costs of the model are considered.

(1.6) **Expanding the range of social care support available:** There is scope to extend more choice to people in how their care and support needs can be met. For example, we are working to make direct payments more accessible and easier to manage. Direct payments involve the Council providing a payment to the individual needing care who can then employ a personal assistant to meet their needs rather than this being arranged through the local authority. We also want to increase the range of services available to meet people's social, respite care and accommodation needs. As part of this, in partnership with Vivo, we plan to grow the Shared Lives service. Shared Lives is a person-centred service, matching people with a carer or carers who will share activities, or their family life and home, meeting the needs of older people, adults with learning disabilities and adults with autism who need support, or support and accommodation, to live full and more independent lives. Overall these proposals are intended to improve service delivery and better meet the needs of service users and could save £600,000 a year when fully implemented.

(1.7) **Review of building-based care:** We are committed to delivering more care and support services at, or as close to, people's own homes and communities as possible. We now need to review our building-based services to enable this continued improvement in the range of flexible services on offer. There are some buildings that are underused, do not have modern facilities, and are not close to where care is required. A more detailed consultation on these proposals will take place but, overall, this could save £1.188 million a year if fully implemented.

(1.8) **Meeting our core responsibilities:** We are already consulting on a new Adult Social Care Charging Policy for non-residential care services to ensure we have a fair and consistent approach to charging for services. In addition, we need to ensure that we are only funding social care services that the Council has a statutory duty to fund. Overall, these proposals could save £1.722 million.

(1.9) **Review of care provided by Vivo, our Council-owned care company:** We are proposing to work with Vivo to ensure that care is provided at the most appropriate rate. In particular, we are proposing that we work with Vivo to reduce the level of spending above the agreed block contract by maximising capacity within the block contract and, where appropriate, purchase services from other providers. Overall, this could save £500,000 a year.

(1.10) **A new model for carer services:** We arrange support for carers who play a vital role in our communities. Following consultation with carers, we believe there is an opportunity to redesign the service and make improvements in line with the feedback we get from carers. Overall, this could save £90,000 a year without having a major impact on service delivery.

(1.11) **Review of community support:** We fund a range of organisations within the community to provide support to individuals to reduce isolation and increase social support. We believe there may be some elements of duplication in this support and the potential to provide this help through technology. We would like to recommission these services with input from the community.
We believe this could save £268,000.

Support to children, young people and families

(1.12) **Sharing the costs of support with schools:** Following a review, we would like to have further conversations with schools about sharing the costs of services we provide at a cost to the Council. This could include a range of services such as school crossing patrols, educational psychologists and administration. This could save the Council £570,000 a year.

(1.13) **Home to school transport investment:** Further home to school transport will be required as the number of children and young people rises. We will look to make our support as efficient as possible but, at the moment, it is predicted that an additional £528,000 a year will be required.

(1.14) **Better targeting of youth services within our communities:** We believe that the needs of young people are changing and that there are more effective ways to provide targeted, preventative services to those in the greatest need, which do not require the same level of centre-based delivery that we currently provide. This means more support can be delivered within communities on an outreach basis rather than solely through buildings. We have also secured grant funding from outside the Council, which has enabled us to reduce our budgets for some of our youth workers without impacting on service delivery. Overall this proposal will save £108,000.

(1.15) **Preventing the need for more costly support for children's social care:** We have successfully developed a team of intervention workers who focus on preventing children needing to be in our care. We plan to expand this team so we can have a bigger impact which also includes helping to prevent placements breaking down for those children who need to be in our care, therefore reducing the need for more costly placements elsewhere. This initiative alongside other existing preventative services could save £970,000 a year.

(1.16) **Additional in-house residential provision for children:** We believe by providing more local residential provision for children in care through the Council, rather than out of the Borough, we could save around £122,000. This would also ensure more support is provided closer to home, which also helps to prevent placements breaking down.

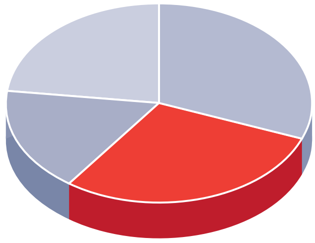
(1.17) **Contract efficiencies in the leaving care service:** We have a responsibility to support young people as they leave care up to the age of 25. We believe there is the opportunity to have a more efficient way of buying support by reducing spot purchases and increasing the use of pre-agreed contracts with providers, which could save £250,000.

(1.18) **Strengthening our integrated approach across all children's services:** A review will take place to look at the links between early help, education and children's social care to identify any synergies and opportunities to reduce demand for services and therefore costs. Overall this could save £200,000.

(1.19) **Corporate parenting:** We have a role to support children in our care as a corporate parent and ensure they have access to the opportunities that all our children should have. We will make a temporary budget of £50,000 permanent to help with this goal.

Public Health Services

(1.20) **Public health funding review:** We will explore whether all the services currently funded through the public health money we receive from Government reflect the latest priorities and are making the maximum difference. Overall this review could release around £550,000 which can be reinvested to support other activities in the Council that deliver public health goals, including our commitment to sustain leisure and wellbeing services delivered by Brio.



Communities, Environment and Economy

Councillor Louise Gittins
Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Economic Development

Councillor Karen Shore
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Strategic Transport and Lead Member for Housing

Councillor Matt Bryan
Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Lead Member for Planning

Councillor Paul Donovan
Cabinet Member for Democracy, Workforce and Localities

Councillor Carol Gahan
Cabinet Member for Legal and Finance and Lead Member for Town and City Centre Development

Councillor Val Armstrong
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and Lead Member for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

This area of the Council provides services such as maintaining roads, managing planning applications, licensing premises, collecting household waste, maintaining public spaces, supporting local economic growth and engaging with local communities. Overall, the current budget for this area is £57 million.

Key priorities in this area, particularly as we move forward from COVID-19 are as follows:

Priority	Areas of focus as we recover from COVID-19
Grow our local economy and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents	• Taking action to address unemployment and reskilling • Enhancing support to new and existing businesses • Delivering regeneration programmes to drive local growth • Providing support to key sectors of the local economy • Delivering new and improved infrastructure and transport to drive sustainable growth • Driving housing delivery programmes for both new build and energy efficient retrofit
Tackle the climate emergency	• Ensuring the Council is carbon neutral • Delivering more sustainable housing and development • Supporting reduction of carbon across industry and business • Developing further green spaces and tree planting • Embedding more sustainable transport • Bringing forward proposals on a new waste strategy to reduce waste and increase recycling
Make our neighbourhoods even better places to call home	• Developing new approaches to engaging local people in local decisions and local services • Transforming community assets to enable local residents to have joined-up and affordable facilities that meet the needs of each area of the borough • Developing a new deal with the voluntary and community sector to ensure they can play their full part in tackling shared challenges

To balance the budget and ensure there is enough money to tackle the priorities set out on the previous page, the following proposals are under consideration:

(2.1) New ways of dealing with waste: In April 2020 we successfully transferred our waste services from a private contractor to Cheshire West Recycling, a Council-owned company operating on cooperative principles. How we manage waste has a real impact on our ambitions to address the climate emergency. Reducing the waste we produce, reusing and recycling are all goals where we have made great progress but we want to go further. A waste strategy is being developed covering collection arrangements, disposal arrangements and household waste recycling centres. The strategy will be subject to further consultation with the public. Depending on the options agreed there is the potential to save £982,000 while, at the same time, addressing our climate emergency priorities.

(2.2) Efficiencies and income generation in highways and street cleaning services: A range of measures could be taken to increase the efficiency and income within this service including more efficient cleaning of gullies; more coordinated administration of insurance claims; raising income for sweeping and ground maintenance from other organisations; charging for events; gathering income from new developments for highways; delivery of efficiencies in Christmas lighting and using technology more to better manage the inspection of streetlighting. We are also consulting on introducing a wildflower approach to grass verges where appropriate. Overall, this could save £671,000 without a major impact on service quality.

(2.3) A review of community buildings: Community buildings can be vital assets to our neighbourhoods, bringing together local groups and supporting the delivery of local services. However, not all of these buildings are well-used, and they are of varying levels of quality. We also need to consider that more services are being delivered through digital means and fewer buildings may be required overall. There may also be more opportunities for communities to have a greater role in the management of some buildings. Overall, a review could save up to £201,000 subject to further local consultation.

(2.4) Strengthening enforcement: By strengthening and increasing our enforcement activity we are likely to identify more issues that will levy a fine for behaviour that contravenes current policy and adversely impacts on residents' lives. Overall, this could raise income in the region of £238,000 a year to meet the costs of service delivery.

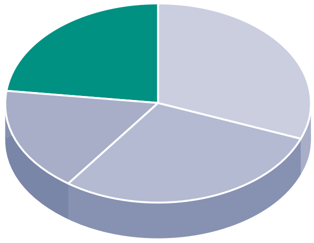
(2.5) Staffing restructures: We will look at staffing restructures across a range of services in this department to reduce duplication and ensure that we have the right skills in the right place to deliver the Council's priorities. Where possible we will manage this by deleting vacancies. Overall this could save £958,000.

(2.6) Efficiencies with shared services: We share several services with Cheshire East Council and other authorities. These include administration support for libraries, archives and an education library service. By strengthening collaboration, we believe a saving of 5% could be achieved; which is around £53,000.

(2.7) Concessionary fares: We manage a scheme to provide low fare public transport for older people and other groups. Due to less than anticipated passenger numbers and a review of our administration costs, the budget in this area can be reduced by £170,000.

(2.8) A joined-up approach to tackling unemployment, homelessness and support to individuals and families in poverty: We are seeing an increase in unemployment, pressure on homelessness services and increased benefit claims driven by reductions in household income. We believe a seamless and joined up response is essential. By bringing a range of services and contracts together, redesigning some of our processes, using more technology and by eliminating duplication, we believe we could reduce our costs by £218,000.

(2.9) Driving further rental income by building more supported housing: Additional supported housing schemes for people with ongoing support needs are being developed and acquired by the Council, and these will bring in additional rental income to the authority in the region of £95,000.



Council-wide proposals

Councillor Carol Gahan
Cabinet Member for Legal and Finance

Councillor Paul Donovan
Cabinet Member for Democracy, Workforce and Localities

We have a range of support services that enable the Council to be safe and well-managed. These include areas such as human resources, finance, ICT, legal, transformation, data and support to decision-making and assurance. Overall the budget for this area is £72 million.

Key priorities in this area, particularly as we move forward from COVID-19 are as follows:	
Priority	Areas of focus as we recover from COVID-19
Enabling an efficient and empowering Council	• Delivering a financial recovery programme that addresses how services will be affordable with increased demand and constrained resources • Bringing forward plans to embed flexible working across the organisation rather than staff being predominantly based in Council buildings • Developing a People Plan to further develop staff across the organisation • Developing a dedicated 'assurance' function to ensure the Council is supporting decision-making, moving to a more modern way of conducting business and meeting its requirements as a well-managed public body. • Introducing a further digital first programme to enable more customers to transact with us through the website and apps.

To balance the budget and ensure there is enough money to tackle the priorities set out on the previous page, a corporate services review was carried out with further information provided below.

(3.1) Redesigning our support services: In 2019 a review of all support services took place. This took into account:

- the support needs of the Council
- the priorities we need to deliver
- how we can support the organisation to be more enabled through better information, training and processes thus requiring less support
- reviewing whether we are focusing our support in the areas of greatest risk and reducing support in lower risk areas
- introducing new technology to improve the efficiency of our internal processes.

All the above will be a combination of efficiencies, but also service reductions. We will have to focus on 'keeping the Council safe' but may have less ability to undertake the innovative things, at the same pace as the Council has been able to do in the past. By implementing this review, we believe we could save £1.359m.

(3.2) Reviewing our office accommodation as more staff work from a range of locations: We have existing budget plans to save £250,000 by rationalising office accommodation as more staff work from a range of locations including at home. Linked to this, we believe we can reduce the security costs for our buildings by £230,000. We are also considering much more significant accommodation savings as a significant proportion of our workforce are now working from a range of locations including at home. These proposals are being developed through the remainder of 2020.

(3.3) Reviewing support to the voluntary and community sector: We will review the £3m of financial support we provide to our voluntary and community sector to ensure resources are better targeted, meet local priorities, reduce duplication and, where possible, provide longer term funding commitments. In line with other cost pressures facing the Council, we also want to encourage and support community organisations to identify additional funding sources and to reduce their costs. Overall, this could save an additional £149,000.

(3.4) Getting the best value from our contracts: We currently spend £125 million a year on contracts which are £1 million in value each. These cover vital council responsibilities such as caring for adults, delivering highways, managing buildings, providing support to families, and many other key services. We will review these contracts as they come up for renewal and ask ourselves how we can better target our money to meet local needs. Where possible we will also look at opportunities to secure efficiencies with current contracts. We have several companies which we own and who are contracted to deliver Council services. We will work with these organisations to see if there are opportunities to reduce their costs and increase their income. Overall, we believe this review of key contracts could save £2.2 million.

(3.5) Review of income: We have reviewed all our fees and charges across the organisation to ensure we are recovering our costs in line with current policy. We are also planning to raise additional income through using outdoor space for advertising. In total these proposals will raise additional income in the region of £260,000.

(3.6) Council-wide priorities: The Council has agreed three key issues that require a whole-Council approach. These are mental health, poverty and inequality and the climate emergency. It is proposed that £300,000 is made available per year to drive these forward.

(3.7) Digital transformation: We will build on previous work to make it easier for residents and businesses to access our services through digital methods, such as our website and app. This will reduce the need to contact the Council face-to-face through the contact centre, but these options will still be available. It will also make some of our internal processes more efficient and enable staff to be more productive. Overall, this will save in the region of £317,000 after the costs of technology are taken into account.

Potential further savings required

We may be in a position where further savings need to be made on top of the proposals outlined above, if funding from Central Government is less than anticipated. This will require more difficult decisions, but potential areas we could look at include:

- reducing service standards, for example in highways and street cleaning
- changing our Council tax reduction scheme, which provides relief for people on low incomes with Council tax bills
- increasing fees and charges above inflation
- further reductions in buildings owned by the Council, to reduce costs but also to secure investment from the sale of property
- further use of technology to deliver services.

We would welcome your views on these areas and any further savings we could deliver if they are needed.

Reminder of how to get involved

Take part in a range of engagement activities, including our online survey, at **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/councilbudget**

Write to us: **Council Budget, Insight and Intelligence, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Council Offices, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE**

Email: **councilbudget@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Telephone the Council's Contact Centre on **0300 123 8 123** and quote **'Council budget'**

Contact your **local councillor**

Take part in our **Question Time event** in November

Request a copy of our **consultation survey** in alternative formats, including paper copy, using the contact details above

We plan to close this listening exercise on **3 December 2020**.

Glossary

Adult social care charging policy	A policy for deciding what a person who uses adult social care should pay towards the cost of their care. It provides a consistent and fair framework for charging for all services users who receive care and support services, following an assessment of their individual needs, and their individual financial circumstances.
Assets	Buildings, land and technology owned by the Council
Assurance	Monitoring significant or high-risk activities to ensure that work is on track and no issues are arising
Balanced budget	A budget where revenue (or income) is equal to, or greater, than spending
Block contract	A contract where the purchaser pays in advance for a set number of activities at an overall price – like buying a bundle of bus tickets in advance at a discount
Building-based services	Services which are tied to a building from which they are arranged and delivered, rather than being available in a range of places or in people's homes
Business rates	A tax on the occupation of non-domestic, or commercial, property such as shops; offices; pubs; warehouses; factories; holiday rental homes or guest houses. Also known as Non-Domestic Rates
Capital spending	One-off spending on assets, technology or equipment such as vehicles, buildings and IT equipment
Carers	People who provide help or support to children, family members, friends, or neighbours who have physical or mental ill-health, disability, or issues related to old age
Commissioning	The process of arranging and purchasing services that meet the needs of residents
Comprehensive Spending Review	The process by which Her Majesty's Treasury sets Governmental budgets and the key services and improvements which these will fund

Corporate parenting	The collective responsibility of a council, its elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the Council
Digital transformation	Where digital technology is used to fundamentally change, or transform, a business or service
Direct payments	Where the Council provides a payment to the individual needing care who can then employ a personal assistant to meet their needs rather than this being arranged through the local authority
Domiciliary Care	Care that is provided to people who still live in their own homes but require additional support with activities, including household tasks, personal care and any other activity that allows them to maintain both their independence and quality of life
In-house	Done or existing within the Council
Funding gap	The gap between the money that the Council has to spend and the money that the Council is committed to spend on goods and services
Shared services	Services which are jointly provided and received by the Council and another council or partner
Spot purchase	A purchase which is not done as part of a wider contract, usually because it is an emergency or likely to be a unique purchase
Transition	In education, transition refers to the movement of pupils from primary to secondary schooling. Within social services it refers to the move of a client from children's to adult social care

Appendix A

Proposed revenue savings and investment 2021-25			
Consultation reference	Proposal	Investment £	Proposals to narrow the funding gap £
Health and Wellbeing			
(1.1)	Review of mental health services		-120,000
(1.2)	Transforming learning disability services	175,000	-500,000
(1.3)	Supporting the transition of children into adult social care	1,775,000	
(1.4)	More efficient ways of delivering care	126,000	-1,806,000
(1.5)	Joining up support with the NHS	400,000	-800,000
(1.6)	Expanding the range of social care support available		-600,000
(1.7)	Review of building-based care	225,000	-1,413,000
(1.8)	Meeting our core responsibilities		-1,722,000
(1.9)	Review of care provided by VIVO (our Council-owned care company)		-500,000
(1.10)	A new model for carer services		-90,000
(1.11)	Review of community support		-268,000
(1.12)	Sharing the cost of support with schools		-570,000

Proposed revenue savings and investment 2021-25			
Consultation reference	Proposal	Investment £	Proposals to narrow the funding gap £
(1.13)	Home to school transport investment	588,000	-60,000
(1.14)	Better targeting of youth services		-108,000
(1.15)	Preventing the need for more costly support for children in social care	500,000	-1,470,000
(1.16)	Additional in-house residential provision for children		-122,000
(1.17)	Efficiencies in the leaving care service		-250,000
(1.18)	Strengthening our integrated approach across all children's services		-200,000
(1.19)	Corporate parenting	50,000	
(1.20)	Public Health funding review		-550,000
Communities, Environment and Economy			
(2.1)	New ways of dealing with waste	30,000	-1,012,000
(2.2)	Efficiencies and income generation in highways and street cleaning services	150,000	-821,000
(2.3)	Review of community buildings		-201,000
(2.4)	Strengthening enforcement		-238,000

Proposed revenue savings and investment 2021-25			
Consultation reference	Proposal	Investment £	Proposals to narrow the funding gap £
(2.5)	Staffing restructures		-958,000
(2.6)	Efficiencies with shared services		-53,000
(2.7)	Concessionary fares		-170,000
(2.8)	A joined-up approach to tackling unemployment, homelessness and support to individuals and families in poverty		-218,000
(2.9)	Driving rental income by building more supported housing		-95,000
Council-wide			
(3.1)	Redesigning our support services	404,000	-1,763,000
(3.2)	Review our office accommodation as more staff work from a range of locations		-230,000
(3.3)	Reviewing support to the voluntary and community sector		-149,000
(3.4)	Getting the best value from our contracts	300,000	-2,500,000
(3.5)	Review of income		-260,000
(3.6)	Council-wide priorities	300,000	
(3.7)	Digital transformation		-317,000
		5,023,000	**-20,134,000**

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at:

equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منّا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

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Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

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