**Regeneration & Culture - Foreword to the Plan:**

The Regeneration and Culture Directorate has set an ambitious agenda that views key regeneration, cultural, recreation and housing issues as opportunities that will deliver real transformation for its residents, visitors and businesses. Our intention is to take full advantage of our key assets unleashing the potential of Cheshire West and Chester.

This plan helps to sharpen the focus on our priorities over the next year and beyond, providing clarity on what will be delivered and how we intend to monitor our performance. Key to much of this delivery is the availability of resources through the Capital Programme which needs to be a long-term corporate commitment. This will give the right messages to our partners and key investment agencies that as a new Authority we have a long term commitment to realise our key projects, programmes and aspirations for the Borough.

The way in which we deploy our resources to meet our pledges and priorities is underpinned by the key principles of putting the customer first, giving value for money and putting best practice into operation. Much of what we do is very visible and impacts on both our communities and the environment, our commitment to meeting these key principles will be formed around engaging and consulting fully with partners and communities.

We have also highlighted some significant policy challenges that we face over the next year. These are particularly acute in relation to the housing market and issues around investor confidence due to the economic downturn, further uncertainties also follow in relation to future public funding. This presents some immediate challenges for our Directorate that will impact on our ability to deliver all our ambitions in the short term, as such we need to have a clear and robust plan that gives us the flexibility to ensure we can meet our potential.

**Councillor Herbert Manley**

**Director Charlie Seward**

**Councillor Richard Short**
What this Document is for:

This document outlines the vision and objectives of the Resources Directorate for 2010/11. Further information can be found within our Business Plan which we will use to

- Outline how the Directorate and its Services will support the Council in meeting its priorities, as outlined in the Corporate Plan pledges.
- Provide a standard by which progress will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Executive member and Directorate Management Teams to ensure we stay on track.
- Provide a foundation for effective business planning by ensuring that necessary actions and resources are in place to deliver against our priorities and that risks are managed effectively.
- Ensure that staff, partners and customers are fully aware of the Services provided by the Directorate.

Our Purpose and Vision

As a Council, we are focused on addressing three key challenges:

- To develop an efficient and modern Council which meets the needs of our customers
- To deliver first class regeneration projects that meet the needs of our communities in these difficult economic times
- To deliver the excellent facilities and services that our residents deserve

By concentrating efforts on these three challenges, the Council will take a coordinated approach to making a real difference to communities.

Looking at the Services we provide it is clear that we have a vital role to play in addressing these three challenges:

- Culture and Recreation
- Regeneration
- Strategic Housing and Spatial Planning
- Housing Management

We will ensure that these Services are in line with the Councils vision to put the **customer first**, provide **value for money** and display **best practice**.

Our vision for the Directorate is therefore as follows

**We will develop and sustain Cheshire West and Chester as the most vibrant, prosperous and distinctive place to live, work, visit and do business in the North West, and as an internationally recognised generator of wealth from which everyone can benefit.**

Our Achievements

The following outlines our key achievements and areas of good practice in relation to the objectives we set ourselves last year:-

Regeneration

- Created a Recession Action Plan
- Initiated new Cheshire Warrington Commission
• Established 4 robust Regeneration Programmes
• Established a £5 million Future Jobs Programme across Cheshire and Warrington
• Opened a new Retail Learning and Training Centre, ‘The Store’, at Rudheath Northwich
• Far exceeded national performance standards for success in Modern Apprenticeships through ‘The Skills Academy’, Winsford
• Supported Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy to become one of the first National Skills Academy for Retail skills shops in the country
• Commissioned 11,500 enrolments in Adult and Family Learning

Culture & Recreation

• Active 8 – Trust Consolidation/best value – service improvements via CADSART
• Successfully delivered consistent quality public facing services during a period of significant change and transformation, retaining and further achieving external accreditation through Quest to evidence this.
• Production of clear cultural vision & associated service priorities to deliver from transition into transformation.
• Repositioned a range of complex legacy projects and developed deliverable and sustainable business case/way forward – including Lion Salt Works, Helsby Community Sports Complex, EPIC, Castle Park and City Baths
• Developed a collaborative and objective brief for the leisure asset review and options appraisal with a focus on efficiency, investment and wider health perspective
• Developed an impartial and business focused brief for the provision of a new Theatre in Chester, and feasibility studies for the St Michaels and, Grosvenor Museum.
• Identification of £2.5 million efficiency deliverables utilizing innovative growth and delivery mechanisms, without staffing resource reduction
• Successfully delivered the new Wharton Library product and Winsford Lifestyle Centre
• Achieved a Britain in Bloom Silver Guilt Standard for Chester, best City at North West in Bloom and a special award for the Best Feature in a public space.
• Increased the number of green spaces, Green Flag Standard from 4 to 6 in 2009
• Successfully bid for the improvement and restoration of Grosvenor Park under the HLF Parks for People programme, £95K secured towards a £3.6m investment.
• Delivery of 11 new/re-developed play areas as part of the £1m play builder programme.
• Supported 17 athletes to reach national success by winning medals at the Special Olympics National Games in July 2009 at Leicester
• Host the 2009 Sweetspot international cycling event in Chester

Strategic Housing and Spatial Planning

• Evidence base studies undertaken to support the Core Strategy and Growth Point Programme including Strategic Housing Market Assessment (completed), CW&C Transportation Baseline Study (completed), Employment Land Study (completed), Renewable Energy Study (completed), Water Cycle Strategy (commissioned), Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (progressed – completion June 10)
• Established the Growth Point Implementation Group and progressed infrastructure planning and delivery.
Housing

• Delivered around 350 new affordable homes, assisting at least 700 residents to secure good quality, affordable homes.
• Established new sub-regional and local housing partnership working arrangements
• Adopted a proactive framework to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, secured £1.5 m funding for site provision and commenced a Site Identification project
• Completed a public sector stock condition survey to inform the investment requirements and solutions for the Council’s housing stock.
• Improved the contract management framework for the Supporting People programme
• Established Supporting People governance arrangements and embedded within the Cheshire West Together Strategic Partnership
• Spent £10.6m to deliver Supporting People services across client groups
• Developed clear vision and values for the Supporting People programme
• Launched the Enhanced Housing Options Programme
• Met the 2010 temporary accommodation in 2009
• Developed the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy
• Completed a private sector stock condition survey, including HMOs, in Chester and produced a headline findings report for Cheshire West and Chester
• Completed 180 Disabled Facilities Grants with 97% of clients stating that the adoptions undertaken had greatly improved their quality of life.
• Empty Homes Strategy approved and adopted.

Housing Management

• Reviewed our formal mechanisms for engaging with representative resident groups
• Introduced Service Improvement Panels to work with us in partnership on the development and implementation of our improvement proposals
• Reviewed and adopted a new Resident Involvement Strategy and Delivery Plan
• Reached agreement on a new lettable standard with our customers
• Took on additional contractors to work on more empty homes
• Brought in a certification process when homes are ready to let
• Enforced the notice period to give us time to identify prospective tenants and them time to consider a move to a new home
• Tenancy visits undertaken within 6 weeks of tenant taking up occupation of their home
• Created a specialist anti-social behaviour team to tackle challenging nuisance cases
• Upgraded the Lifeline alarm system to replace outdated pull-cord systems
• Extended the service to any tenant regardless of whether they live in sheltered accommodation, general needs accommodation or the non-council sector
• Introduced differentiated services to match customers’ needs
• Introduced and implemented enhanced property inspections at Stoak Lodge and Churchill Court
• Invited every leaseholder to a number of consultative meetings to share our proposals for developing the service and to understand what our leaseholders want from us
• Introduced a manual appointment system for some repairs
• Begun training our workforce to be able to undertake more than one trade at a time (multi-skilling) when carrying out repairs
• Improved our gas servicing procedures to ensure that we can service every gas appliances for which we are responsible within the year
• Amended the proposed capital programme for 2010/11 to take into account our tenants’ wishes
• Carried out some 60 major adaptations to tenants homes where alterations were needed allowing the tenant or a member of their household to remain in their home.
• Revised and implemented an updated Health & Safety Strategy and Action Plan
• Established a champion for developing and improving customer services and customer access to our services
• Established an Equalities and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and appointed an Equalities and Diversity champion to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and, in association with the council’s policies and procedures ensure full compliance with the Equalities Commission and TSA requirements
• Value for Money Working Group prepared a VfM Strategy and Action Plan to identify service areas to be changed or developed to reduce costs and improve efficiency
• Propose a new structure for the Housing Management Service to ensure the council can create an appropriate establishment capable of achieving upper quartile performance within 3 years.

Our Challenges
Looking ahead we need to recognise the following challenges:

• **Delivering Affordable Housing** – The policy challenge is to double this programme over the next 3 years
• **Meeting Housing Supply Targets** – The policy challenge is to ensure that potential development sites can be unlocked by implementing key infrastructure works.
• **Ensuring the housing stock meets decency standards** - The policy challenge is to improve the quality of accommodation available, make the best use of existing stock and meeting the needs of vulnerable residents (corporate and sub-regional priorities). Particular priority will be given to addressing the investment needs of the Council’s housing stock in Ellesmere Port and Neston.
• **Provision of sites to accommodate Gypsy and Travellers** – The Policy challenge is to identify between 31-45 new permanent pitches and 10 transit pitches by 2016.
• **Progressing our Local Development Framework**
• **Maximising the understanding and value of the Supporting People programme across partnerships** - The primary focus of Supporting People is to provide housing-related support to vulnerable people.
• **Influencing move-on from temporary accommodation**
• **Deliver the four key regeneration programmes** - The policy challenge is to ensure these programmes are embedded within Regional and sub-regional investment programmes and continue to be a viable delivery proposition by the private sector.
• **Reduce Worklessness** - It is a challenge for us not only to maintain but to step-up the momentum of activities in this climate.
• **Lead the response to the recession** - Addressing the recession is one of the CAA’s key areas of focus.
• **Improve the standard of leisure facilities** - The policy challenge is to set out a fresh approach to how services are managed and to identify which facilities residents are to be offered.
• **Provide fit for purpose cultural facilities** - The policy challenge is to ensure these facilities meet the needs of residents and visitors.
• **Delivering the Housing Management Business Plan** - The challenge now is to build on the momentum that has been created and maintain the trajectory of improvement.
Our priorities

The Council’s Corporate Plan outlines the key priorities that are crucial to our resident’s quality of life. The Council has pledged to focus on these priorities when delivering services and making decisions. Overall, there are sixteen pledges within the Corporate Plan. The pledges which the Directorate are responsible for include:

CP1 We will work with the business community to seek to minimise the number of people who are out of work
CP2 We will actively support the creation of new businesses in the area
CP11 We will improve access to, and the availability and choice of, an affordable and appropriate mix of housing
CP3 We will maximise the contribution that culture and recreation makes towards community vibrancy and the economic, social, health and wellbeing of Cheshire West and Chester.

In addition, the Directorate has identified the following priorities which are integral to its vision and objectives.

RC1 We will work with partners and employers to improve skills levels of people working in Cheshire West & Chester, to improve productivity and prosperity for individuals and businesses.

RC2 To work in partnership with all stakeholders to secure the self sustaining regeneration of the Council’s four core programme areas

RC3 We will strive to secure investment to manage, maintain and improve the homes in our ownership with the aim of being a top quartile performer within 3 years

RC4 We will enable private sector residents to improve their homes and live in safety, comfort and security

RC5 We will provide a holistic housing options service to those in housing need, ensuring that homelessness is prevented or that other appropriate accommodation is found.

RC6 We will provide improved access to high quality housing-related support services assisting vulnerable people to maintain independence in the community

RC7 We will improve the cultural infrastructure within Cheshire West and Chester and the overall quality of our cultural offer.

RC8 Advance the Culture and Recreation Service transformation encompassing internal and external cross agenda collaborative working.