



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

Agenda

Date: Friday, 25th July, 2025
Time: 10.30 am
Venue: Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the top of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence from Members.

2. Declarations of Interest

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 10)

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 16 May 2025 and 30 May 2025 respectively.

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4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with Cheshire East Council's Committee Procedural Rules and Appendix on public speaking, a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the Joint Committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the meeting should provide at least three clear working days' notice in writing in advance of the meeting and should include the question with that notice. This will enable an informed answer to be given.

Part Two - Other Functions of the Committee

5. **Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan** (Pages 11 - 26)

To receive a report which outlines a programme of work which supports economic development across Cheshire and Warrington.

6. **Devolution National Policy Update** (Pages 27 - 56)

To receive a report which informs the Joint Committee of recent Government policy and strategic announcements since early June 2025, specifically highlighting potential economic growth and devolution impacts and opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington.

7. **Devolution Programme: Update Report** (Pages 57 - 92)

To receive a report which informs the Joint Committee, in its role as the overarching Devolution Programme Board, of progress against the agreed Devolution Programme and budget.

Part One - Shareholder Functions of the Committee

8. **Forward Plan** (Pages 93 - 94)

To receive an update and seek direction on the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Forward Plan.

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 16th May, 2025 in the Committee Room, Ellesmere Port
Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BG

PRESENT

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)
Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair)
Councillors H Mundry, M Gorman and Shore

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer,
Cheshire East Council
Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise, Cheshire East Council
Nikki Bishop, Democratic Services Officer, Cheshire East Council
Delyth Curtis, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and
Chester Council
Paul Clisby, Director of Law and Governance, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Park, Director of Growth, Warrington Borough Council
Philip Cox, Chief Executive, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
Steve Purdham, Chair of Business Advisory Board
Dan Price, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Police and
Crime
Joanne Morecroft, UNISON North West's Regional Convenor

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jean Flaherty.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January 2025 be
approved as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

5 ENTERPRISE CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON BUSINESS PLAN 2025 - 2026

The Joint Committee received an update on the Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington Business Plan 2025 – 2026 from Councillor Michael Gorman.

The Joint Committee were updated that Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington's proposed budget for 2025 / 2026 was £14.4 million, 80% of which was for programmes funded by grants. It was noted that a number of projects were being funded by central government at a level similar to 2024 / 2025, with the exception of the Skills Bootcamp which would see its budget increase to over £9 million for 2025 / 2026.

It was noted that income from capital balances would be used to support the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy, manage the Enterprise Zone, support the Plastic Recycling Site in Ellesmere Port, and ensure Cheshire and Warrington residents felt the economic benefits offered by the Hynet Programme, support Marketing Cheshire, and a provision of a £500,000 fund to cover the cost of subregional work which the Joint Committee wished to commission.

Trade Unions requested that the Fair Employment Charter work should be co-designed with the Trade Unions and standards be codified into commissioning and procurement policies. Trade Unions also asked for information on what checks were in place to ensure that the Skills Bootcamp providers met the high employment standards, and for information on the schools and hospitals decarbonisation scheme, how the scheme would promote inclusive growth and ensure that funding, investment and opportunities, would reach the most deprived areas and communities in Cheshire and Warrington.

Officers committed to providing a written response to the above.

Members noted that Trade Unions had been engaged with the Fair Employment Charter, and the government had identified Cheshire and Warrington as a pilot area for the Skills Bootcamp.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee:

1. Approve the Budget and Business Plan for Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) including Marketing Cheshire (MC) for 2025/26.
2. Delegate authority to accept additional income for programmes already being delivered by ECW should it be made available, to the ECW CEO, in consultation with CEC Finance Manager and the appropriate lead member of the Joint Committee (JC) on the understanding that any sums agreed will be reported to the next JC.
3. Agree that if ECW receives more commercial income during the year than currently budgeted, it can deploy this in consultation with Growth

Directors and the CEC Finance Manager on projects of up to £100k that will strengthen C&W's ability to deliver the sub-regional vision.

4. Note that for any additional items of funding offered to the sub region, outside the scope of ECW programme, it will be for the Joint Committee to consider how it wants those funds to be deployed
5. Note that ECW will be transferring to the North East Combined Authority the remaining NP11 assets it holds.

6 DEVOLUTION WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET 2025/26

The Devolution Work Programme and Budget 2025/26 item was deferred to the next meeting of the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee on 30 May 2025.

It was noted that work was continuing to progress the workstreams and devolution.

7 JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

Members received an update and sought direction on the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee Forward Plan, from Councillor Louise Gittins.

RESOLVED:

That the reports on the Forward Plan be adopted and approved.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 2.16 pm

Councillor L Gittins (Chair)

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Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee**
held on Friday, 30th May, 2025 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Sankey
Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor K Shore (Co-Chair)

Councillors M Gorman, J Flaherty

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire East Council
Janet Witkowski, Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer,
Cheshire East Council
Peter Skates, Director of Economy and Growth, Cheshire East Council
Sam Jones, Democratic Services Officer, Cheshire East Council
Delyth Curtis, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and
Chester Council
Steve Broomhead, Chief Executive Officer, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Park, Director of Growth, Warrington Borough Council
Sandra Rothwell, Programme Director, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution
Programme
Philip Cox, Chief Executive, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
Steve Purdham, Chair of Business Advisory Board
Damon Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Cheshire Police and Crime
Dan Price, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Police and
Crime
Joanne Moorecroft, UNISON North West's Regional Convenor

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Gittins and
Hans Mundry.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest other than those already on file.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

The public speaking procedure was noted. There were no public speakers.

4 DEVOLUTION TIMELINE: LATEST GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Members received a report concerning the latest guidance and information
from Central Government on the Devolution Timeline, from Councillor Nick
Mannion.

The Joint Committee were updated that there were a number of key decision points ahead on the journey to devolution for Cheshire and Warrington:

1. The Secretary of State to make an announcement, following the government's statutory consultation period, in early – mid June 2025 as to whether Cheshire and Warrington had met the government's statutory tests to move towards devolution.
2. The Spending Review would be concluded on 11 June 2025, which would detail the funding offer for priority devolution areas, would be announced at this point.
3. Details of the devolution agreement specific to Cheshire and Warrington which would detail the devolved powers and functions and the initial funding package to be expected from government, including the 30-year investment fund.

It was noted that, whilst a formal decision from the Secretary of State was pending, following the closure of the statutory consultation period, early site of the anticipated timeline was necessary to allow for the Cheshire and Warrington Councils to plan effectively. It was noted that plans would need to be completed as early as July 2025, as a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority could be completed as early as January / February 2026, with Mayoral elections on 7 May 2026.

Dan Price, Police and Crime Commissioner, noted the positive news regarding the amount of external funding which would be received as part of the devolution process.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note the latest overall anticipated timeline of the Devolution Priority Programme.
2. Note the potential impacts on the local decision-making timeline for each council in Cheshire and Warrington.

Councillor Karen Shore joined the meeting at this point.

5 DEVOLUTION WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET 2025/26

Members considered a report on the devolution programme and cost plan for 2025/26, from Councillor Karen Shore. The Joint Committee were updated that it was necessary for Council's to agree a provisional plan and associated budget to allow for preparatory work to continue ahead of the government's expected formal announcement.

It was noted that the three Councils were promoting the devolution programme, and a small programme team were in place to supporting it; to date focus had been on communications and engagement, governance, finance, work force, and priority themes (transport, skills and housing).

It was noted that each of the three Councils had a cross-party devolution reference group set up, as well as regular all-member briefings. There was also support from the Business Advisory Board, and a series of public “pop-up” events had been held over Cheshire and Warrington.

Members were updated that officers had sought a budget position which would ensure that there would be no direct call on Council budgets and that costs were only incurred where necessary. It was noted that at the end of March 2025, confirmation was received that, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation, Cheshire and Warrington would be eligible for £1 million of Mayoral capacity funding for the remainder of the financial year, and that the costs of running a Mayoral election could be fully reimbursed by the Combined Authority.

It was noted that three core funding allocations totalling £1,275,00 were available to support the devolution development process from January 2025 to March 2026, as follows, and the total cost of delivering devolution in Cheshire and Warrington could be fully met from these:

1. £1 million from central government
2. £250,000 allocation approved by the Committee in January 2025
3. £25,000 capacity grant from the Local Government Association

It was noted that there were other potential funding streams available.

It was noted that Unison would be listed as a Key Stakeholder going forwards, and that workstream dates and leads would be published shortly and shared with Unison colleagues.

Members requested a detailed breakdown of the communications and engagement budget of £250,000 detailed in Appendix 2 and officers committed to providing a written response to this.

RESOLVED:

That the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee:

1. Note progress to date across the Devolution Work Programme, particularly the exception reporting and impacts on timeline.
2. Endorse the financial principles for the management of the Devolution costs and budgets as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Agree that the recently announced external funding streams (£25k grant from the Local Government Association and £1m from the Government Capacity Grant) be considered available to support the local implementation of devolution.
4. Approve the creation of a budget of £1.275m to support the delivery of the activities outlined in this report to devolution in Cheshire and Warrington, to be fully funded by external grants (£1.025m) and previously approved use of Enterprise Zone (EZ) retained business rates (£0.25m), with funding released on a phased basis as the delivery milestones are met.

6 JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that were discussions ongoing regarding the reports on the forward plan, given devolution timeline and upcoming decisions from central government.

It was noted that 27 June 2025 was a Civic Day in Warrington so Members and Officers would be unable to attend a Committee meeting on this date.

RESOLVED:

That the reports on the Forward Plan be adopted and approved.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 10.55 am

Councillor N Mannion (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor K Shore (Co-Chair)



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

25 July 2025

Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan

Report of: Cheshire West and Chester Council

Report Reference No: JC/05/25-26

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No
Cheshire West and Chester	No
Warrington	No
Cheshire East	No

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report outlines a programme of work which supports economic development across Cheshire and Warrington. The programme will be co-ordinated and delivered in line with and in preparation for potential devolution in the sub-region. It is one of the ten employment and skills functions listed in the Government's English Devolution White Paper (December 2024).
- 2 The "Get Cheshire and Warrington Working" Plan will become a key strategic plan for the sub-region, identifying its vision and short-term priorities to enable work to pay for all residents. This will be informed by local place-based evidence and co-designed by a range of stakeholders. This will become the Cheshire and Warrington response to the wider "Get Britain Working White Paper¹" launched by Government on 26 November 2024.
- 3 The recommendation from Cheshire and Warrington Growth Directors is that Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) will act as the Lead and Accountable Body for this piece of work, co-ordinating the consultancy support, stakeholder engagement and the development of the local Plan to be

¹ [Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/get-britain-working-white-paper)

completed by September 2025. CW&C have been identified as the lead for this piece of work as it complements the Connect to Work programme, for which CW&C also have lead responsibility.

Executive Summary

- 4 This report provides an overview of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan and how it will be developed in a co-ordinated manner across the sub-region.
- 5 The Plan will bring a range of strategies and plans, aimed at supporting residents to access and thrive in the workplace together in one place, whilst also understanding the needs and potential barriers employers face recruiting people who experience barriers to employment and in work progression. It is likely to cover employment support, skills development and health interventions.
- 6 It will not have any associated delivery money at this stage, but it will be used to inform future commissioning, along with on-going skills and employment devolution conversations.
- 7 Government has however allocated CW&C £150,000 towards the development and publication of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan, to be utilised by 31 March 2026.
- 8 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan is to be discussed at Joint Committee as partners will be agreeing to a project that will respond to a major economic priority identified by Cheshire and Warrington – supporting more of our residents to be able to access, sustain and progress in employment.
- 9 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Task Group² have agreed a high-level priorities document (shared with Growth Directors) and attached at Annex A. This has been submitted to DWP and will evolve over the coming months to inform the full plan.
- 10 In Cheshire and Warrington there are over 100,000 people (20% of our potential workforce) who are economically inactive – a number that has not changed in the last 20 years. The local Get Britain Working Plan is a great opportunity to do things differently, making a measurable impact and difference to a significant number of our residents as well as local employers who need to fill vacancies. This will link to the Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Strategy and its ambitious targets.
- 11 Working with stakeholders it will develop a vision and priorities for the next 24 months; this could include a target to increase the current employment rate in line with predicted future job opportunities. It is likely that initially the plan will be focused on a few areas of activity, with the aim of increasing this breadth over time, reflecting local need.

² Attended by the three local authorities, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, DWP and the Integrated Care Board.

- 12 The final document needs to be approved by all three LAs and submitted to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by the end of September 2025. The final Plan will also need to be approved by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and DWP.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
The Joint Committee is recommended to: 1. Note the information in this report. 2. Note and confirm that Cheshire West and Chester Council (as recommended by Growth Directors) will: a. Accept the £150,000 from DWP to develop and publish the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan. b. Lead on the development, stakeholder engagement and submission of a Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan to DWP, working in partnership with a commissioned appropriate consultancy service. c. Act as Lead and Accountable Body for the new Get Cheshire and Warrington Working programme, an activity that directly responds to an identified economic priority of the sub-region.	

Report Detail

13 Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Local Plan

The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Local Plan will be developed in direct response to the Governments wider Get Britain Working Strategy³. Here it outlined the ambition to improve local support and co-ordination of services to ensure that the employment rate across the country is 80%. Although the current employment rate in Cheshire and Warrington is 79.8%, there are still challenges which need to be addressed.

- 14 As lead and accountable body for Connect to Work, Cheshire West and Chester Council will also be the lead and accountable body for the local Get Britain Working plan: "Get Cheshire and Warrington Working".
- 15 DWP have agreed to allocate £150,000 towards the development of a local plan for Cheshire and Warrington. A sub-regional officer task group has been established and have secured some consultancy support to help with the necessary stakeholder engagement activity and the production of the Plan.

³ [Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/get-britain-working-white-paper)

This is necessary as the timescales for delivery is tight, there is no capacity to deliver in-house and to ensure there is an element of independence to the Plan.

- 16 The document should build on existing plans, including the Connect to Work delivery plan and a draft summary of priorities was developed by the task group and submitted to DWP on 30 June 2025. The full plan should look at six key issues in detail. These are outlined below:
 - Too many people excluded from the labour market (e.g. health conditions, caring responsibilities)
 - Too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to further learning/ apprenticeships or support to work
 - Too many people stuck in insecure, poor quality and low pay work
 - Too many women who care for family members experience challenges to stay and progress in work
 - Too many employers can't fill vacancies (labour and skills shortages)
 - Disparity between labour market outcomes – different places, different groups
- 17 Local areas should work together to identify local labour challenges and drivers of economic inactivity, building on what support activity is already available and have a focus on improving participation, progression and earnings/job quality.
- 18 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working plan will outline the sub-regions vision for the next 10 years, with a focus on priorities to be addressed in the next 12-24 months and will help to shape a coherent participant journey from economic inactivity to employment. We acknowledge this will coincide with the intended establishment of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) for Cheshire and Warrington if it progresses and will need to be considered within the skills functions and responsibilities for the MCA in due course.
- 19 Although there is no additional funding available to help deliver these identified priorities, the plan should help to inform future commissioning activities and indicate how impact on residents and employers will be measured. It will also provide Cheshire and Warrington with an opportunity to lobby for systematic changes in policy that may be needed which should complement the developing skills and employment devolution conversations. The plan will need to be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure it is still relevant to the local area.
- 20 Although Cheshire West and Chester Council is the lead body for the plan, Cheshire East and Warrington Borough Councils will be actively involved in its development along with key stakeholders such as the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, voluntary and community organisations, DWP, FE training providers, employers, housing associations

and unions. All plans need to be approved by DWP and the ICB before formal submission to DWP in September 2025.⁴

- 21 The proposed timetable for activity is outlined below:

Activity	Timeframe
Sub-regional officer working group established	April 2025
Commissioning of consultant to support the sub-region to develop the plan (utilising a proportion of the £150k allocation)	June 2025
High level summary of priorities developed and submitted to DWP (following approval by task group, DWP, ICB and Growth Directors).	June 2025
Sub-regional stakeholder engagement	July/ August 2025
Paper shared with Joint Committee	July 2025
Draft Plan shared with Joint Committee, DWP and ICB	September 2025
Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan published and submitted to DWP	September 2025

Reasons for Recommendations

- 22 It is a government requirement to produce a local Get Britain Working Plan.
- 23 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan should be place-based and informed by local need (both qualitative and quantitative evidence) and shaped by stakeholders. It is one of the ten functions that will transition following devolution for Employment and Skills. If we do not produce a plan, we would not be able to move forwards with this area of work and we would not be able to support residents to access and progress in employment.
- 24 This programme links to the:
- Cheshire West and Chester’s Borough Plan, especially the “Opportunity for a Fair Local Economy” mission.
 - Cheshire East Council’s Corporate Plan, especially the “Fair” aim, “...to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents
- 25 Warrington Borough Council’s Corporate Strategy, especially the pledge: “Everyone benefits from our thriving economy”.

⁴ However, DWP have indicated that there could some flexibility towards this submission date as they appreciate limited capacity to deliver and necessary time required for sign off/approval.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 26 To date there has been five Cheshire and Warrington task group meetings on Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan. These have been attended by the three Local Authorities, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington and DWP.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 27 Cheshire West and Chester Council as Accountable Body would be responsible for ensuring the spend and activity supported is in line with the Grant Funding Agreement from DWP and must ensure that the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan fulfils the requirements outlined by government and that the draft priorities document and the final Plan is submitted on time. CW&C will be responsible for the procurement and contract management of the agreed preferred consultancy chosen to help the sub-region with this task and for ensuring compliance with any terms of conditions attached to the funding from the DWP.
- 28 The Joint Committee has appropriate authority in its terms of reference to make the decisions set out in the report but there is a need to identify an appropriate governance structure to oversee this piece of work. The Joint Committee can appropriately oversee the production of the plan, however this does also require approval by DWP and ICB, who should also become part of the governance structure moving forward and involved in decision making. It is recommended that this is one of the short-term priorities to be identified and resolved as part of the delivery of the Get Cheshire and Warrington working plan and could be included as part of the wider devolution governance discussions.

Finance implications

- 29 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working plan will bring in an additional revenue budget of £150,000 to be spent by 31 March 2026. This is a one-off payment which will be made to CW&C and should be used to develop the plan. The task group have agreed to commit £80,000 to be used for consultancy support, with the remaining £70,000 to support stakeholder engagement activity. This could include activity which supports the proposed launch of the Connect to Work programme and potentially some emerging devolution skills and employment asks.
- 30 This funding is a grant allocation and is not subject to a competitive bidding process and there would be no requirement of any Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington budgets being utilised to support the delivery of this programme.
- 31 There is currently no delivery budget identified for the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan; however, government has indicated that this Plan would be used to inform future commissioning activity, e.g. any successor to the current UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and future devolved skills and employment funds (subject to council decisions).

Risk Management

- 32 A detailed risk register will be developed alongside the delivery plan to ensure we have identified the risks associated with the Programme and any mitigating actions needed. This will include due diligence checks required when commissioning some activity to delivery partners, ensuring all delivery partners check that participants accessing the Connect to Work Programme are both eligible and suitable and that any financial claims are in line with the DWP cost register.
- 33 This risk register will be monitored as part of the operational and strategic partnership groups that will be established to support the successful delivery of the programme.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 34 An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on this programme. The programme will have a positive impact on many priority groups who are unable to access support or employment. The delivery team will be working closely with a range of stakeholders to ensure that as many eligible and suitable residents as possible are able to benefit from the support provided through the programme.

Policy

- 35 The Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Programme's key mission is to kick start growth through building an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work, and the chance to get on at work. It also supports the governments missions to break down barriers to opportunity and to improve the health of the nation.
- 36 By supporting both businesses and residents, the Programme will also help to ensure that the employment opportunities available in Cheshire and Warrington are accessible by the residents that live in the sub-region.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Gemma Davies Director Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council Gemma.davies@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Appendices:	Annex A: Cheshire and Warrington High-Level Priorities Document submitted to DWP 30 June 2025
Background Papers:	NA

Annex A: Cheshire and Warrington High-Level Priorities Document submitted to DWP 30 June 2025

Initial Proposal Template

This template is intended to support DWP to assess how plans are developing across England and where further support may be required.

Responses should give a general summary against each question. Detailed responses are not required at this stage.

Contact Information	
Individual plan "Brand" Name <i>Individual plans should be branded as "Get [name of place] Working" plan</i>	Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan
Geography covered by the plan: Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Local Authority areas	
Accountable Body <i>(If this differs from the accountable body for your Connect to Work Delivery Area, please provide your reasoning for this in the space below)</i>	Cheshire West and Chester Council
N/A	
Name of the specific point of contact for the plan:	Leah Maltby, Inclusive Economy Partnership and Strategy Manager
Email address: leah.maltby@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk	
Date: 30 June 2025	

1.	Please detail the organisations who will form the partnership group to develop and provide the governance of your local plan. <i>Please include the organisations involved in the Governance Board for both the initial local plan and when the plan is reviewed.</i> <i>Key partners should include the nominated representatives from both the local Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Jobcentre Plus. It should also include representatives from upper tier and unitary authorities, where relevant.</i> <i>In addition, partner membership should also include representatives from voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, education and skills providers, employer and business representative groups, employment experts and potentially from key providers.</i>
To ensure that the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan is co-owned across a range of partners, we have formed a Task and Finish Group. The following organisations are included: • Cheshire West and Chester Council • Cheshire East Council • Warrington Borough Council • DWP • Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) • Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) We are working with Metro-Dynamics (a consultancy organisation) to pull together focus groups relevant to the broad themes of the Get Britain Working Strategy. As part of this work, we would be looking to identify appropriate representation from across the sub-region to join the programme's governance board. This will include: • Cheshire and Warrington Infrastructure Partnership (Voluntary and Community Organisations, including those working with refugees, the over 50s and young people). • FE Colleges and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) • Cheshire Business Group (representing the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses) • Organisations working with prisoners who are released on temporary licence (ROTL) and ex-offenders, such as Cheshire Probation We are keen to ensure that the group is appropriate to provide governance and strategic oversight to the emerging Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan and envisage that it will be no more than 20 people to ensure it can operate effectively. We will also set out clear roles and responsibilities of this governance group to avoid and confusion and to ensure the plan gains real traction.	

2.	Please advise of any engagement activity which has been carried out, to date, regarding your local plan. <i>E.g. with ICBs, Jobcentre Plus colleagues, constituent LAs or wider, where applicable.</i>
To date there has been 4 Get Cheshire and Warrington Working task group meetings. These are attended by the 3 LAs, ECW, ICB and DWP As mentioned earlier the consultancy support that we are working with will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders between July – early September 2025. This will ensure the final plan submitted in September has been informed/co-designed by organisations supporting residents to access and sustain employment. We are also keen to ensure that this engagement activity will involve those residents with lived experience to understand the reason as to why they chose to engage or not with current employment support programmes, building on the recent survey work already carried out by DWP colleagues. There has been alignment to the work currently underway around the development of the Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health strategy.	
3.	Please describe the anticipated or confirmed governance, clearance and sign-off processes for your local plans.
We will be looking to use the newly created Joint Committee group to sign off the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working plan on behalf of the three local authorities. This group has been established in preparation of devolution in Cheshire and Warrington (due to come onstream in 2026). Additional meetings with ICB and DWP will be arranged for sign off purposes. We envisage that existing governance structures will be reviewed as part of devolution, with the likelihood that there will be boards set up to oversee all workstreams, including Skills, Employment and Inclusion. As mentioned, we will be agreeing roles for all partners on the Governance Board to ensure that the plan is more than just a position statement and instead becomes a document that informs policy and delivery of Employment Support in Cheshire and Warrington. We would also be ensuring that the plan is shared and signed off by the overarching Health and Care Partnership as work and health is one of the six headline ambitions.	
4.	In addition to the partnership group, which wider stakeholders, both internal and external, will the lead authority engage with in the development of local plans?
External stakeholders are listed above in our response to Q1. With regards to internal stakeholders, the lead authority will be looking to engage with teams responsible for:	

	• NEET and vulnerable young people, including those with care experience – supporting the post 16 transition work already taking place. • Adult Social Care – to help identify the needs of adults, many of whom will have a disability and are economically inactive and what support would be required to support them to transition into work. • Public health colleagues who are working with the ICB and exploring how employment can be seen as a health outcome (in line with the Health Care Partnership All Together Fairer plans, emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Marmot⁵ priorities) • Housing teams who are supporting homeless individuals across the borough • Other teams who are supporting vulnerable residents such as the benefits team • Business growth/ employer engagement teams, including those with regeneration responsibilities to ensure we are responding to the needs of employers – both those who are established and those looking to invest. • Support for ex-veterans
5.	Please briefly describe any existing plans and strategies you have in place, or are developing, which could be used to inform the local plan.
	• Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy • Cheshire and Warrington Growth Plan • Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) • Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health Strategy and emerging interventions • Cheshire West and Chester Inclusive Economy Strategy • Cheshire West Borough and Place Plan (soon to be the Health and Wellbeing Strategy) • Warrington Skills Commission • Cheshire and Warrington Connect to Work delivery plan (in draft) • Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter • Warrington Towns Fund -Investment Plan • Cheshire West and Chester's Skills and Employment Prospectus • Cheshire and Warrington Skills Report • All Together Fairer: Our Health and Care Partnership Plan 2024-2029 • Alignment with Core20PLUS5 programme • Alignment of the developing Neighbourhood Health model

⁵ Cheshire and Warrington has Marmot Region Status

6.	Please provide a brief summary of the known key labour market challenges in your area. For example, the availability and accessibility of suitable employment opportunities, skills requirements, ageing population etc. <i>Please note: We will expect a more detailed analysis in the full plan.</i>
	• The number of people who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive (approximately 100,000 people) has not changed over the last 20 years despite significant investment and multiple initiatives. We would like to explore how this group has changed over that time. • There are many jobs in Cheshire and Warrington with salaries below the Living Wage (estimated number: 64,000) • Cheshire and Warrington have a very tight labour market with significant job vacancies and skills shortages – we need to support more people to become active in the labour market. • There is a need to increase levels of productivity in the area. Productivity in Cheshire and Warrington has stalled for several years. • The number of young people who are NEET has grown and there is a lack of consistent, sustainable re-engagement activity available. • Attainment and progression rates of young people eligible for free school meals continues to lag that of their peers. • Where people live in Cheshire and Warrington impacts on their social mobility and health. There is a need to understand and pilot new approaches to tackle entrenched areas of disadvantage. • Not enough employers are investing in training for their workforce, despite citing skills shortages. There also seems to be a lack of workforce planning activity to identify future skills needs to ensure viability, productivity and innovation. • There is a need to drive up the quality of careers information, advice and guidance for young people and adults promoting the job opportunities available in Cheshire and Warrington. This will include facilitation of meaningful experience of the workplace and putting employers at the heart of inspiring and informing residents of new technologies and local career opportunities, building on the work of the Careers Hub and Cheshire and Warrington opportunities portal. • There is a need to develop progression pathways for residents from Level 2 to ensure there are sufficient people with skills at Level 3 and above to fill local vacancies. This will include apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps. • There is a need to develop a co-ordinated skills and employment response to the challenges faced by the Health and Social Care sector. An insufficiently trained workforce is leading to an over-reliance on expensive agency staff or residents unable to return to their homes following a hospital stay. A lack of health care experts is also impacting on people's ability to stay in or return to work.

7.	Please provide a brief summary of the cohorts in your area which are known to face specific labour market challenges. This should include economically inactive individuals, disabled people, young people and NEETs, those with health issues, caring responsibilities etc. <i>Please note: We will expect a more detailed analysis in the full plan.</i>
	• Economically inactive residents, particularly those with mental health conditions, disabilities, over 50, homeless, ex-offenders and MSK problems. • Sector-specific work absences – monitor trends and support which may be required, especially for older workers. • NEET young people and those at risk of dropping out, who are unable to re-engage with education, training or skills. They are also unable to access employability support should they wish to find work. • Those residents who live in our deprived wards who are more likely to be economically inactive and/or suffering from ill health. • Those residents who live in rural communities with limited/no access to public transport, services and potentially digital connectivity • Unpaid carers, single parents and others who may face barriers to workforce participation. • Key employment sectors such as Health and Social Care, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing (including opportunities associated with low carbon) and the Visitor Economy. • The developing Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health Strategy has completed a data analysis and identified several cohorts to consider in relation to worklessness and economic inactivity. They are: ▪ Mental Health Conditions and Worklessness ▪ Musculoskeletal Conditions and Sector-Specific Work Absences ▪ Geographic Health Inequality and Worklessness ▪ Older Workers and Early Workforce Exit ▪ Gaps in Health and Employment Support Services ▪ Health-Harming Behaviours and Worklessness ▪ Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention, Obesity, and Physical Activity in Workforce Retention ▪ Racial Disparities in Health-Related Worklessness ▪ Unpaid Carers, Single Parents, and Barriers to Workforce Participation

8.	Please provide indicative priority actions for the next 12-24 months. These could include processes for ensuring partnership working is fully embedded, actions to address labour market needs and key challenges (from Q6) and priority groups (from Q7). <i>Please note: These are to be expanded on in your full GBW plan and will be expected to show how they will contribute towards outcome measures and the ambition of an overall 80% employment rate.</i>
Priority actions likely to include: • To work together to enable devolution of powers from 2026 onwards. This will include activities associated with supporting economically inactive adults into and sustaining work, launching the Connect to Work programme from Autumn 2025, ensuring health are included as key partners. • To agree an appropriate governance structure for the devolved skills, employment and inclusion workstream. • Mapping and alignment of employment support activity commissioned through the ICB with the support available and funded through other bodies such as DWP, Adult Skills Fund (ASF), Lottery Funding and Westminster Foundation etc. • Ensure full alignment with the Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health Strategy – this is due for publication in late Summer 2025. • Develop steps to recognising employment as a health outcome. • Ensure there is consideration and alignment with the established Anchor Institution programme – there are currently 33 organisations signed up with a target to increase this to 50 by March 2026. Work is also underway to ensure that all the Health and Care Partnership member organisations are fully signed up. • Mapping of support available to young people at risk of becoming or are NEET, identifying gaps in provision and good practice and shaping an action plan to be followed. • Work with employers to recognise the importance inclusive recruitment and supporting them to adopt inclusive working practices, building on the Fair Employment Charter and other activity such as Keep Britain Working Report.	
9.	In addition to financial support, what other resource/support would you need to complete your local GBW plan?
We will work closely with all our strategic partners to support the development of the plan, this includes both regional and local DWP/JCP colleagues, ICB and Local Authorities. We will be developing the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan alongside our 10-year Local Growth Plan and will ensure that both documents are complementary. We will ensure the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan is fully aligned to the Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health Strategy and subsequent implementation plans and interventions.	

10.	Please set out your expected timelines, key activity and milestones for the development of your local GBW plan and publication by September 2025. <i>Please include commencement of activity within the local authority, (convening partnerships, obtaining sign-off etc.). Please also advise of any upcoming events/competing demands which could impact these timelines.</i>	
Activity		Timescale
Formation of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Task Group		1 April 2025
Recruitment of consultancy support		13 June 2025
Carry out a review of relevant data		June 2025
Submit a high-level priorities document		27 June 2025
Stakeholder engagement begins		1 July 2025
First draft of the plan to be shared with Task Group		1 September 2025
Draft plan to be shared with and approved by Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee, ICB and DWP		15 September 2025
Final version of the Plan to be approved by Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee, ICB and DWP		30 September 2025
Final version of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan submitted to DWP		30 September 2025

11.	Please confirm the extent to which content of this template has been discussed and/or agreed upon by all relevant upper-tier and unitary local authorities within the delivery area. Additionally, please ensure that the representatives nominated to sign off the plans from the relevant Integrated Care Board(s) and Jobcentre Plus have also provided their confirmation. <i>Please include the contact details and position of the nominated representatives from each of these organisations.</i>
This template has been co-produced by the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Task Group, which is attended by Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Local Authorities. This group is also attended by Jobcentre Plus and the ICB. The nominated representatives are Peter Jamieson, North West Group Director, DWP and Ian Ashworth – Director of Population Health – NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board	



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

25 July 2025

Devolution National Policy Update

Report of: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme Steering Group

Report Reference No: JC/26/25-26

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No
Cheshire West and Chester	No
Warrington	No
Cheshire East	No

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is an information report to inform the Joint Committee of recent Government policy and strategic announcements since early June 2025, specifically highlighting potential economic growth and devolution impacts and opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington

Executive Summary

- 2 On 11th June 2025 the Government concluded their multi-year Spending Review. As well as outlining the focus for Government investment for both departmental budgets to 2029 and capital investment to 2030, the Review was also a trigger for key national strategies including the Modern Industrial Strategy and 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy. Together these form a suite of key drivers to deliver on the Government's 'Plan for Change' – with a specific focus on "kick-starting economic growth". It should be noted that a number of other strategies are due to be released later in the year, including business support and skills, and these will be reported to the Committee in due course.
- 3 A key mechanism underpinning 'Plan for Change' is the Government's continued commitment to "widen and deepen devolution across England... to

deliver growth". July saw the introduction of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill to Parliament.

- 4 This report summarises these new developments, focusing in particular on the potential implications for Cheshire and Warrington.

RECOMMENDATIONS

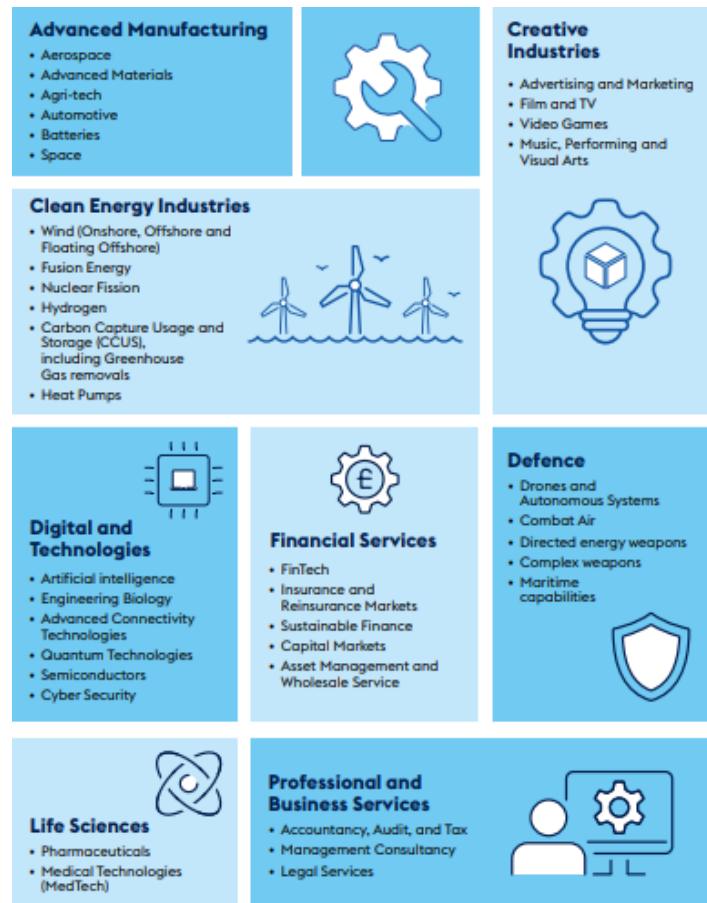
The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the latest developments in UK policy and investment linked to economic growth and devolution.
2. Note the potential impacts for future economic growth planning and devolution in Cheshire and Warrington, with further detailed reports to follow as subsequent work develops.

Report Detail

- 5 The Government concluded its multi-year **Spending Review** on 11th June 2025. As well as outlining Central Government Departmental budgets and a number of key policy areas (beyond the scope of this report), it outlined a clear focus on investment in growth and the opportunities of devolution. A number of the investment packages were entirely focused on devolved areas including integrated settlements for Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Yorkshire and the North East, as well as a commitment for funding for new Mayoral Strategic Authorities within the Devolution Priority Programme.
- 6 The Review also underlined its alignment to the 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy, Modern Industrial Strategy and commitment to build 1.5 million homes. Key highlights included:
- (a) A clear focus on regional growth via investment in transport, housing and innovation, with a number of increased budget areas, including bus services, flood defences, affordable homes, brownfield land investment, employment support and skills as well as business investment via research and development.
 - (b) A greater emphasis on a move away from a 'grant-based' investment to alternative finance including loans, equity and guarantees via the National Wealth Fund, new investment routes through the British Business Bank and Great British Energy as well as a new Mayoral Recyclable Fund.
 - (c) Additional programmes were highlighted, including a Local Growth Fund (primarily focused on mayoral city regions), a £240 million capital Growth Mission Fund and a targeted programme across 350 deprived communities.

- 7 Whilst further detail on some of the funds is still to be published, it is clear that the emphasis on Government investment is capital-based and targeted on devolution areas. The Review also states, “[t]he Government is investing in the potential that exists in places across the country... includes driving growth in city regions... improving connectivity between cities and the towns that surround them”. This is an area of concern for Cheshire and Warrington in terms of the clear focus on city regions. We will need to ensure that we make a strong case for future investment, including opportunities for collaboration with our neighbours.
- 8 It will be important to factor this approach into any Council and (subject to decision) future Mayoral Combined Authority investment strategy. There is a clear shift away from generic, open competitive grant programmes via central government – and a much stronger emphasis on investment in places to deliver growth (specifically via devolved arrangements). This also aligns with the review of the Treasury’s Green Book – the Government’s guidance on appraisal for public investment – which will be introducing a ‘place-based business case’ approach for future funding.
- 9 Within the emphasis on driving growth via the Government’s ‘Growth Mission’ in the Spending Review, the Government indicated a clear intention to support ‘high-potential sectors clusters’ across the country. This theme has been further expanded in the recently published **Modern Industrial Strategy**.
- 10 The 10-Year focus of the Industrial Strategy is based on eight ‘highest potential sectors’ - referred to as ‘IS-8’. These are shown in the following graphic taken from the Strategy:



- 11 Support is based on a 'partnership between business and state' with a strong emphasis on the geographical locations of the IS-8 clusters. I.e. that place-based growth and the success of the clusters are inextricably linked. Support is outlined via a series of 'Sector Plans' – some of which are published, with some following later in the year. These plans identify targeted sector specific investments, including skills, innovation and investment promotion.
- 12 Cheshire and Warrington has particular strengths in three of the IS-8:
 - (a) Advanced Manufacturing
 - (b) Clean Energy Industries
 - (c) Life Sciences
 - (d) As well as a number of 'supporting strengths' including business and professional services and financial services in particular, plus emerging digital and technology sectors.
- 13 As part of our response to the Industrial Strategy we will be working across the three Council areas (and via a Local Growth Plan if the Combined Authority is approved). We will look to build on the specific references to Cheshire and Warrington in the Industrial Strategy, such as the importance of chemical production in the IS-8 supply chain, Capenhurst nuclear, HyNet, defence cluster research and development centres and the recent investment

of £28.6m to the Peak Cluster pipeline from the National Wealth Fund. The Strategy also recognises that clusters stretch across boundaries – again Cheshire and Warrington is highlighted as a key partner in the Life Sciences and Digital Technology ‘super clusters’ alongside Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region. Finally, we will seek to engage with Government on exploring the opportunities associated with fiscal devolution – including the future Enterprise Zone strategy (Cheshire Science Corridor) and aligned programmes such as establishing new ‘AI’ Growth Zones. Further reporting will follow as this work develops.

- 14 To underpin the Industrial Strategy, Government has highlighted the importance of a focus on infrastructure to unlock new investment and growth. Their programme is headlined in the **10-Year Infrastructure Strategy** published on 19th June 2025.
- 15 The Infrastructure Strategy outlines at least a £725 billion investment over the next ten year in both social and economic infrastructure. Additional national investments will come forward via the newly created National Infrastructure and Service Transportation Authority (NISTA) as well as via place-based infrastructure plans to unlock growth across regions – particular via Strategic Spatial Development Strategies which go across local authority boundaries (primarily led by Combined Authorities alongside their constituent councils).
- 16 It should be noted that the Government’s definition of infrastructure is a broad one across the strategy – and will enable a comprehensive approach to unlocking growth across Cheshire and Warrington. Areas of investment and support include:
 - (a) Transport and digital connectivity, noting a specific reference to investing in better connections between towns and cities in the North and Midlands, with over £24 billion across three years for motorway and local road improvements.
 - (b) Unlocking new housing development, with an emphasis on social and affordable homes (including a £39 billion Affordable Homes Programme) and availability of water and energy to new developments.
 - (c) Resilience, including tackling flooding.
 - (d) Clean energy, including increasing the use of new nuclear and decarbonisation, both significant opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington.
 - (e) Environment, with a focus on nature recovery, the circular economy (including waste) and net zero.
- 17 These are all priorities for Cheshire and Warrington – with a number of opportunities in the strategy to make the case for directing investment to our area. It should be noted that an announcement on Northern Powerhouse Rail is still awaited (and was specifically referenced in the Spending Review) as

well as further opportunities for cross-boundary collaboration to unlock growth across the emerging Northern Growth Corridor and The Great North.

- 18 **The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill** was introduced to Parliament on 10th July 2025. It builds on the English Devolution White Paper published in December 2024 and sets out how the Government intends to provide the tools to deliver devolution.
- 19 The Bill will create in law a new category of authority in England – the ‘Strategic Authority’, the aim of which is to ‘make it quicker and easier to devolve powers away from Westminster to local government’. This will replace the term ‘Combined Authority’ once the Bill becomes legislation.
- 20 Each Strategic Authority would belong to one of the levels of devolution outlined:
 - (a) Foundation (non-mayoral)
 - (b) Mayoral
 - (c) Established Mayoral (A Mayoral Strategic Authority with additional governance requirements. New Mayoral Strategic Authorities can become Established after 18 months in operations if they meet these requirements).
- 21 The Bill makes it very clear that Strategic Authorities do not replace councils. They will be created to tackle regional issues and capitalise on those opportunities that exist over a significant geography, such as a more integrated transport network.
- 22 Subject to the decisions of the three Councils in Cheshire and Warrington in September 2025, Cheshire and Warrington could become a **Mayoral Combined Authority** in 2026 – shifting to a **Mayoral Strategic Authority** once the Devolution Bill passes into legislation.
- 23 The Devolution Framework outlined in the 2024 White paper is further detailed in the Bill. In particular, underlining that the Framework would act as a standardised set of legal powers, funding commitments and partnership/collaboration arrangements with Government. This is a move away from the current devolution landscape which, via individually negotiated Deals over the past decade, has led to inconsistent powers between places.
- 24 The Framework sets out what Strategic Authorities will be entitled to at each level of devolution. It is clear that Strategic Authorities without elected Mayors have a less expansive offer than those with an elected Mayor.
- 25 The Bill also sets out consistent decision-making; a simple majority, including the Mayor where there is one, will be required to make most decisions. It outlines the Mayoral powers of competence and clarifies a consistent operational framework for Strategic Authorities. It should also be noted that, subject to the Bill’s passage through Parliament, it is likely that from May 2027

the voting system for Mayoral elections will be via a Supplementary Vote system. This means that voters will be able to set out up to two preferences for Mayoral candidates – ensuring a broader level support for the winning candidate. This is likely to apply to Cheshire and Warrington if Mayoral Elections are held in May 2027.

- 26 The Bill also reaffirms and gives additional detail to Statutory Authority functions/ 'areas of competence', as set out in the 2024 White Paper:
 - (a) Transport and Local Infrastructure
 - (b) Skills and Employment Support:
 - (c) Housing and Strategic Planning
 - (d) Economic Development and Regeneration
 - (e) Environment and Net Zero
 - (f) Health, well-Being and Public Service Reform
 - (g) Public Safety
- 27 The detailed explanation for each competency is included at Annex A. In terms of the opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington, focusing on the agreed vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable inclusive and growing place in the country, we can highlight the following areas where new powers, influence and funding could be used:
 - (a) Based on what other areas have received, Cheshire and Warrington could expect to receive a 30-year investment fund (potentially between £450 – 600 million) as well as greater control over a number of funds currently managed by Government Departments, including adult skills, employment support, brownfield land investment and business support.
 - (b) With this funding we could, in the first few years of the Combined Authority for example, increase funding for training and support to help people back into work, deliver much-needed transport improvements, unlock land for development and regenerate town centres.
 - (c) The greater profile and voice that comes from a seat on the Council of Nations and Regions and the new Great North Mayoral partnership would amplify our work to, for example, get Ministers to support the regeneration of Crewe; make the case for investment in expanding hydrogen production and CO² capture at Origin, cementing our position as a world leader in decarbonisation; and ensuring Ministers and Northern Mayors recognise the huge growth opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington.
 - (d) Develop fully integrated public transport inspired by the Manchester Bee Network and Transport for London (TfL). We would be able to make bus travel more convenient, reliable, affordable and attractive,

better connecting our rural areas, and providing tickets that can be used on both buses and trains.

- (e) A Combined Authority's new role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network would give us greater influence in the Liverpool-Manchester and West Midlands-Manchester Railway discussions, including influencing the delivery of Crewe Hub Station improvements.
- (f) Make homes warmer and more affordable to heat and improve the health and well-being of residents by accelerating the retrofit of properties with green, energy-saving technology such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps, funded through devolution and via the Government's Warm Homes Plan.
- (g) Invest in and support the growth of the Cheshire Science Corridor and transformational opportunities in life sciences, advanced manufacturing and clean energy.
- (h) Turbocharge our promotion of Cheshire and Warrington as one of the best places to live, work, invest and visit.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board (BAB)

- 28 The Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board believes current national policy signals a pivotal shift: future economic investment will be concentrated in devolved areas with the capacity to deliver. Without devolution, our region risks exclusion from critical funding streams and sectoral support. The emphasis on high-growth clusters – where Cheshire and Warrington already lead in advanced manufacturing, clean energy and life sciences – presents a clear opportunity. But unlocking these benefits requires devolved powers. A local framework that empowers our businesses, strengthens supply chains and delivers investment with precision is essential to long term growth.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 29 As work is progressed to take forward opportunities that may emerge as a result of these new policy and investment routes, they will be integrated into our communications programmes – either via individual council-led opportunities or, subject to council decisions, via a future Mayoral Combined Authority.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 30 There are no immediate legal implications in this information report. As work is progressed to take forward opportunities that may emerge as a result of these new policy and investment routes, including the potential creation of a Combined Authority (and its associated governance), all legal implications will be considered and communicated.

Finance implications

- 31 There are no immediate financial implications in this information report. As work is progressed to take forward opportunities that may emerge as a result of these new policy and investment routes, including the potential creation of a Combined Authority, all financial implications will be considered and communicated.

Risk Management

- 32 There are no immediate risk management issues as a result of this report. Any future investments or other policy impacts will be considered as they are taken forward.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 33 There are no immediate ED&I impacts. ED&I will be fully reflected in any future work that may emanate from these new policy and investment routes.

Policy

- 34 Any future work that comes from these policy and investment opportunities would ensure that due regard was taken for any key council policy impacts, sub-regional opportunities would also support the Cheshire and Warrington vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Gemma Davies, Chair, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Steering Group/ Director Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council Gemma.Davies@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A: Government Devolution Framework Explainer
Background Papers:	2025 Spending Review UK Modern Industrial Strategy 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

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The framework below sets out the statutory functions of **Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs)** as set out in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and other legislation.

As set out in the Devolution Framework in the English Devolution White Paper, different categories of Strategic Authorities are also guaranteed access to other non-statutory offers, including partnership and funding arrangements.

General Mayoral Powers – not included in the Devolution Framework but included in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill:

The Mayoral Powers of Competence are suite of powers which will be conferred on Mayoral Strategic Authorities. The powers provide new legal force to Mayors’ existing “soft powers” and convening role, and will help drive growth, collaboration and improvement across geographies. The MPC is made up of:

Statutory Function	Governance – where “Standard” means: • Voting is a simple majority inc. the Mayor • Exercised solely by the SA	Related Clauses
The General Power of Competence This is an existing broad general power which will enable Mayoral Strategic Authorities, and their Mayors, to do anything an individual can do in relation to their areas of competence	To be used at the discretion of the Strategic Authority and its Mayor independently of each other.	Clause 20 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill & Schedule 4 in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

A Power to Convene and a Duty to Respond This will enable Mayors to convene local partners to address local challenges. It will also place a duty on local partners to respond to a Mayor's request when they make use of the power to convene. The specific local partners covered will be set out in subsequent secondary legislation.	To be used at the discretion of the Mayor of a Strategic Authority.	Clause 21 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill
A Duty to Collaborate This will ensure that Mayors of neighbouring Strategic Authorities have a formal process by which they can enter into collaboration with one another.	To be used at the discretion of the Mayor of a Strategic Authority.	Clause 22 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Area of Competence – Transport and Infrastructure

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Local Transport Authority functions Strategic Authorities are the Local Transport Authority for their area, with responsibility for preparing and publishing a local transport plan and powers to secure the provision of passenger transport services where not otherwise provided. Strategic Authorities also have powers and duties to prepare a bus strategy for carrying out their bus functions, enter into partnerships with bus operators, enter into franchising schemes, and manage travel concessions.	Standard, with the exception that functions relating to Local Transport Plans and the decision on whether to make a proposed franchising scheme are exercisable only by the Mayor. However, final approval of a Local Transport Plan is subject to a simple majority vote of constituent members where the Mayor must be in the majority. If the vote is tied, the Mayor has an additional casting vote.	Clause 29 and Schedule 9 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Transport Act 2000 – Part 2 Transport Act 1985 – Parts 4 and 5
Transport Levy Strategic Authorities can issue levies to their constituent authorities to meet the cost of exercising their transport functions, where otherwise not met.	Standard. Apportionment between constituent councils is subject to the Transport Levying Bodies Regulations 1992.	Clause 13 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Local Government Finance Act 1988 – s.74

Agreements between authorities and strategic highways companies This allows Strategic Authorities to enter into agreements with local highway authorities (upper-tier local authorities) and/or National Highways to delegate or share the maintenance and improvement of roads.	Standard, with the exception that: • The function is exercised concurrently with local authorities. • Use of these functions requires the consent of the relevant constituent authority where the function would be exercised.	Clause 24 and Schedule 6 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Highways Act 1980 – s.6 and 8
Civil enforcement of road traffic contraventions These powers enable Strategic Authorities to enforce parking, bus lane, and moving traffic contraventions through penalty charge notices. This is only possible if the relevant constituent council already has those functions and consents to the SA using them. The SA must follow existing statutory guidelines for charge levels for Fixed Penalty Notices and provide information on appeals processes.	Standard, with the exception that: • The function is exercised concurrently with local authorities. • Use of these functions requires the consent of the relevant constituent authority where the function would be exercised.	Clause 25 and Schedule 7 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Part 6 and Schedule 8 of the Traffic Management Act 2004
Key Route Network Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have a duty to set up and coordinate a Key Route Network. This	This function is exercisable only by the Mayor, on behalf of the Strategic Authority.	Clause 27 and Part 1 of Schedule 8 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

will allow the most important local roads to be strategically managed. Mayors will also hold a Power of Direction over constituent highway authority exercise of their traffic, permit, street and local highways authority powers on Key Route Network roads to support delivery of the Mayor's agreed Local Transport Plan. This means Mayors can direct councils with responsibilities for roads in their area to use their powers in a certain way; for example, to create a bus gate.	However, final agreement of which roads are included in the Key Route Network will be subject to a simple majority vote where the Mayor must be in the majority.	Host legislation: Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 – s.107ZA Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 – s.22-24
Transfer of duty of principal councils to make reports on Key Route Network roads Mayoral Strategic Authorities will be required to prepare reports assessing local road traffic levels and forecasting their growth on their Key Route Network. These reports may include targets and proposals for achieving these targets.	Standard	Clause 27 and Part 2 of Schedule 8 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: The 1997 Road Traffic Reduction Act - s2
Road User Charging	Standard, with the exception that this function can only be exercised jointly with the relevant constituent local traffic authority (the upper-tier	Chapter I of Part III of the Transport Act 2000

These powers enable a Strategic Authority to make a joint road user charging scheme (e.g. congestion charging) with relevant constituent councils.	local authority) where the scheme would take place.	
On-Street Micromobility Schemes These powers enable Strategic Authorities, in their role as the Local Transport Authority, to license micromobility schemes operating on public roads and pavements. This allows them to have greater control of bike and e-bike rental schemes run by private companies. Other types of shared micromobility impacting on public space could also be included in the framework in the future.	Standard	Clause 23 and Schedule 5 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Area of Competence: Skills and Employment Support

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Adult Education Functions Subject to a transition period for new Strategic Authorities, some powers of the Secretary of State relating to education and training of adults will be devolved to Strategic Authorities. These powers support the delivery of devolved adult skills funding. Powers relating to apprenticeships and people subject to adult detention are not devolved.	Standard, except that the relevant functions in section 90 and 100 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 are exercised concurrently with the Secretary of State.	Clause 30 and Schedule 10 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 - s.86, s.87, s.88, s.90, s.100(1), s.100(1B)

Area of Competence: Housing and Strategic Planning

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Spatial Development Strategy All Strategic Authorities will have a duty to produce a Spatial Development Strategy. These documents enable them to strategically plan for development across their whole area. <i>(Note: This duty will also be mirrored for all principal local authorities in areas without Strategic Authorities, where authorities will be required to collaborate via Strategic Planning Boards where necessary.)</i>	This function is exercised by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority. However, approval of the strategy requires a simple majority vote of the Mayor and constituent members. The Mayor must be included in the majority for a vote to be carried. If the vote is tied, the Mayor gets an additional casting vote.	To be introduced through clause 52 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill: Part 1A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
Housing and Land Powers, concurrent with Homes England These additional powers allow Mayoral Strategic Authorities to acquire housing and land for specific purposes (set out in the governance arrangements column). This includes powers to acquire land using the compulsory purchase powers previously solely held by Homes England. They also include the ability to provide financial assistance to any person (again in line with the	These functions are exercised concurrently with Homes England. Mayors exercise the compulsory purchase function on behalf of the Strategic Authority. Before exercising their compulsory purchase powers, Mayors must consult the local planning authority where the power is to be exercised.	Clause 34 and Part 1 of Schedule 15 (Acquisition and development of land) in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 – s.5-10; s.19; p.19 & 20 of Sch.3; p.1-4, 6, 10, 20 of Sch.4

objectives set out in the governance arrangements column).	All other functions are exercised by the Strategic Authority and subject to the standard governance. All of these functions must be exercised for the purposes of, or for purposes incidental to the objectives of: • Improving the supply and quality of housing in the area; • Securing the regeneration or development of land or infrastructure in the area; • Supporting in other ways the creation, regeneration or development of communities in the area or their continued well-being; • Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and good design in the area.	
Housing and Land Powers, concurrent with Local Authorities	These functions are exercised concurrently with local authorities.	Clause 34 (Acquisition and development of land); Clause 35 (Housing accommodation); Part 2 of Schedule 15; and Schedule 16 of the

These powers enable Strategic Authorities to acquire and develop housing and land as well as provide services in relation to housing. The powers of local authorities conferred on Strategic Authorities differ from the powers of Homes England by placing a duty on Strategic Authorities to review housing needs in their area and enabling them to provide additional facilities in relation to housing they provide. The land acquisition powers can also be used for the purpose of providing housing, develop the land, or for planning purposes. These powers are held by lower-tier local authorities ordinarily.	Compulsory purchase powers under the Housing Act 1985 are only exercisable by the Mayor. Whereas all other powers, including compulsory purchase powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, are exercised by the Strategic Authority. Before exercising their compulsory purchase powers, Mayors and Mayoral Strategic Authorities (depending on who is exercising the function) must consult the local planning authority where the power is to be exercised. Apart from functions exercised by the Mayor, the standard voting arrangement applies.	English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Housing Act 1985 - s.17-18 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - s.226, 227, 229, 230(1)(a), 232, 233, 235, 236, 238, 239, 241
Mayoral Development Corporations These powers enable Mayors of Strategic Authorities to designate a Mayoral Development Area and subsequently establish a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) for that area. MDCs are statutory corporate bodies which can take broad planning and land assembly powers, have the ability to attract inward investment, and	These functions are exercisable only by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority. This means that the Mayor is responsible for establishing and overseeing a Mayoral Development Corporation. However, the designation of a Mayoral Development Area will be subject to a simple majority of voting members of the Strategic	Clause 36 and Schedule 17 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. Host legislation: Localism Act 2011 – Chapter 2 of Part 8; and Schedule 21

are well placed to harness private sector expertise to drive forward development.	Authority where the Mayor must be in the majority.	
Strategic Development Management Powers These powers enable Mayors of Strategic Authorities to intervene in planning applications of potential strategic importance (e.g. especially large or prominent developments) and the ability to call in these applications.	These functions are exercisable only by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority.	Clause 31 and Schedule 11 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Part 1, s2A (call-in); and Part 3, s74(1B) (direct refusal)
Mayoral Development Orders These powers give Mayors of Strategic Authorities the ability to prepare Mayoral Development Orders (MDOs). MDOs allow them to grant pre-emptive planning permission for a particular development instead of relying on an application to be submitted.	These functions are exercisable only by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority. Mayors must consult and gain approval of the local planning authority where the order would have effect. Where the local planning authority does not approve the order, the Mayor can request the Secretary of State approve the order instead.	Clause 32 and Schedule 12 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. Host legislation: Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Part 3, s.61DA-61DE.
Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy These powers enable Mayors of Strategic Authorities to charge developers a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy. This is a charge	These functions are exercisable only by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority. This means that the Mayor is responsible for	Clause 33 and Schedule 14 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.

which can be imposed on new development in their area. It can be used to raise funds to deliver infrastructure needed to support development in their area.	developing and applying the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy. However, the approval of a charging schedule for the levy is subject to a simple majority vote of the voting members of the Strategic Authority.	Host legislation: Planning Act 2008 – Part 11
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Area of Competence: Economic Development and Regeneration

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Mayoral Council Tax Precept The changes to this power will allow Mayors to issue a precept to generate revenue across all Mayoral and CA/CCA functions. Previously, a Mayor could precept only for Mayoral functions, and not CA/CCA functions.	Voting and governance arrangements will vary, depending on whether the precept is on Mayoral functions, or wider C(C)A functions: • Mayors will continue to be subject to voting rules set out in previous legislation on precepts raised against Mayoral functions, which is commonly 2/3 of constituent authorities can vote against or to amend a precept. • A Mayor wanting to raise a precept on wider C(C)A functions would be subject to the standard voting arrangements of a simple majority including the Mayor.	Clause 11 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill
Power to borrow up to an agreed cap This power will remove the requirement to lay bespoke SIs for Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) by automatically conferring on them the power to borrow upon establishment for purposes relevant to their functions. However, an MSA must	Standard, except that this function is exercised concurrent with local authorities. Exercise of the power to borrow will be automatically conferred for functions relevant to transport, police and crime commissioner and fire and rescue functions when an MSA takes on	Clause 12 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

obtain consent from the Secretary of State before the first exercise of the power to borrow money for a purpose relevant to a function other than its transport, police or fire and rescue functions.	those functions. This power may be exercised by an MSA immediately for these functions only, before a Mayor has been elected. Otherwise, Secretary of State consent will be needed before the power is used.	
Local Growth Plans Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have a duty to produce a local growth plan.	Standard	Clause 38 and Schedule 19 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill
Duty to prepare an assessment of economic conditions Strategic Authorities must prepare and maintain an assessment of the economic conditions of their area. This is a separate duty from the duty to produce a Local Growth Plan but both duties could be satisfied simultaneously.	Standard, except that exercise of function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 37 and Schedule 18 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: S.69 of Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
Power to pay grant to a constituent authority	This function is exercisable only by the Mayor on behalf of the Strategic Authority.	Clause 39 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation:

This power enables Mayors to pay grants to their constituent councils. This is most commonly used to pass funding for maintaining local roads to councils.	When paying grants for councils' road functions, Strategic Authorities must make sure payments are sufficient for them to exercise their functions.	s.32A of the Local Government Act 2003
Powers to encourage visitors and provide entertainment. These powers enable Strategic Authorities to encourage people to visit their area and provide, support, and/or contribute to the provision of entertainments, such as concerts, plays, or exhibitions, and incur expenditure for these purposes. This includes powers to provide premises, facilities, or publicity for cultural and recreational events.	Standard, except that exercise of function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 40 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: s.144 and s.145 of the Local Government Act 1972.
Power to arrange for publication of information relating to the functions of the Strategic Authority These powers enable Strategic Authorities to arrange for the publication of information related to their functions as well as services available in	Standard, except that exercise of function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 42 and Paragraph 2 of Schedule 20 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: Local Government Act 1972 – s.142(2)

the area. This means that they can collect, compile, and disseminate such information.		
Power to place staff at the disposal of other authorities These powers enable Strategic Authorities to enter agreements with other Strategic Authorities, local authorities, and other organisations like the NHS, to share staff services for their functions.	Standard, except that the function can be exercised concurrently with other Strategic Authorities, local authorities or other bodies such as NHS England.	Clause 42 and Paragraph 1 of Schedule 20 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: s.113 of the Local Government Act 1972
Power to prosecute and defend legal proceedings These powers allow Strategic Authorities to initiate or defend legal proceedings where they consider it expedient for promoting or protecting the interests of the residents of their area. This includes the ability to prosecute, defend, or appear in any legal action and to institute proceedings in their own name to address local concerns.	Standard, except that exercise of function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 42 and Paragraph 3 of Schedule 20 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: s. 222 of the Local Government Act 1972.
Research and collection of information	Standard, except that exercise of the function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 42 and Paragraph 4 of Schedule 20 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

These powers enable Strategic Authorities to conduct research and collect information on matters concerning their area to support their functions and share their findings.		Host legislation: s.88(1)(a) and (1)(b) of the Local Government Act 1985
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Area of Competence: Environment and Net Zero

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Heat Network Zoning coordination role This means that Strategic Authorities will be well placed to take forward heat network zones and create zone coordinators.	Standard	s228(5) of the Energy Act 2023

Area of Competence: Health, Wellbeing and Public Service Reform

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
A bespoke statutory health improvement and health inequalities duty When considering whether or how to use any of its powers and functions a Mayor or a Strategic Authority will have a duty to have regard to the need to improve the health of people in the Strategic Authority area and the need to reduce health inequalities in the local area.	Standard	Clause 43 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Area of Competence: Public Safety

Statutory Function	Governance	Related Clauses
Sharing of information in relation to crime and disorder These powers both enable and place a duty on Strategic Authorities to disclose information relating to the reduction of crime and disorder, including anti-social behaviour, to other relevant authorities (such as local authorities, social landlords and the police).	Standard, except that exercise of the function is concurrent with local authorities.	Clause 48 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host legislation: s.17A and s.115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
Police and Crime Commissioner Functions Mayors will be, by default, accountable for the exercise of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions where mayoral boundaries align with police force boundaries, or with two police force boundaries when taken together. Transfers will be subject to secondary legislation. The Secretary of State may by order transfer PCC functions to the elected mayor of a CA or CCA where there are coterminous borders. The Secretary of State, at the same time, may alter the boundary of the police area	This function is exercisable only by the Mayor. Mayors will have to delegate PCC responsibilities to a Deputy Mayor (for Policing, Fire and Crime for each police force area for which they have PCC functions).	Clause 44, 45 and 47 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host Legislation: Existing power, in statute in Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sections 5, 7(7), 16, 18, 21, 28, 29, 20, 31(3), 62-63, 64(3) to (4A), 65, 70 and Schedule 1, and the modification of several related pieces of legislation

(or areas) to which the transfer relates to achieve coterminosity.		
Fire and Rescue Authority Functions Mayors will be, by default, accountable for the exercise of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) functions where FRA and mayoral boundaries align, subject to secondary legislation The Secretary of State may by order transfer FRA functions to a CA or CCA where there are coterminous borders. The Secretary of State, at the same time may alter the boundary of the FRA area (or areas) to which the transfer relates to achieve coterminosity.	Mayors will have the option to delegate FRA responsibilities to a Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, or a Public Safety Commissioner.	Clause 46 and 47 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Host Legislation: Existing power, in statute in – Fire and Rescue Services Act, 2004 p2 sections 6-10 Transfer functions to a Mayor – Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, Section 107D



Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

25 July 2025

Devolution Programme: Update Report

Report of: Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme Steering Group

Report Reference No: JC/09/25-26

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No
Cheshire West and Chester	No
Warrington	No
Cheshire East	No

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is for information for the Joint Committee in its role as the overarching Devolution Programme Board, to update on progress against the agreed Devolution Programme and budget. It also outlines the latest anticipated timeline for local decision making.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report details progress to date against the agreed programme. Whilst key aspects of the programme have been delivered as planned, it should be noted that the overall programme has been impacted by a longer than expected response from Government following the statutory consultation. This has resulted in an increased overall risk rating due to constrained timescales over summer 2025. This has been reflected in the overall programme plan and a revised decision-making timeline. Now that the Ministerial Statement (made on 17th July 2025) has confirmed that Cheshire and Warrington have met the relevant statutory tests and,

subject to the consents of the Councils, are able to establish a Mayoral Combined Authority in early 2026 and defer a Mayoral Election by 12 months to May 2027, we are able to move forwards with a greater degree of clarity to prepare for the Councils decisions in September.

- 3 We continue to prioritise delivery of the devolution communication and engagement programme to ensure our residents, business community, stakeholders and Members have as much opportunity to understand devolution and share their views. This report details engagement to date, outlining in detail community and stakeholder feedback.
- 4 We remain well within the agreed budget for the devolution programme, and we continue to minimise spend in advance of any council decisions.
- 5 The report outlines anticipated next steps to ensure we continue to deliver to programme – including local key milestones and, subject to council decisions, formal Government milestones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the latest overall anticipated timeline, including local decision making, of the Devolution Priority Programme in Cheshire and Warrington.
2. Note progress against programme delivery – including latest budget position and risk register.
3. Consider the Ministerial statement relating to the Devolution Priority Programme that was made on 17th July 2025 (the date of publication of this report).

Report Detail

- 6 Programme workstreams continue to meet as required. Given the longer than expected period in receiving information from Government, some elements of the programme have not progressed as far as anticipated at this stage.
- 7 Nonetheless, we have continued to make good progress as far as possible. For example, we have now started a regular Workforce Engagement Board with key human resources leads and Union representatives. This Board is chaired by Cllr Mundry. A verbal update can be provided of the most recent meeting which took place earlier this month. We have also focused on preparatory work in both the finance and governance workstreams, so that we will be able to move as rapidly as possible once further details are received. We understand that much of the work around governance will be based on a template approach –

aligning with the content of the English Devolution Bill (as outlined in a separate report at this meeting).

- 8 The work around thematic content has now completed the initial focus on gathering evidence, initial prioritisation and developing a clear narrative. This is closely aligned to the development of the Sustainable and Inclusive Economy Strategy, including the significant consultation process. We will be using the outcome of this stakeholder engagement to further shape priorities as we move forward and the functions and timeline associated with the potential creation of the Mayoral Combined Authority in 2026 become clearer. The introduction of the English Devolution Bill to Parliament last week was an important milestone in moving to more detailed discussions.
- 9 The Cheshire and Warrington devolution communications and engagement strategy continues to be developed and delivered at pace. Key to this strategy are the aims of increasing awareness of what devolution would mean for the area, what the benefits are likely to be, and helping people to understand the general process and timescales around decision making.
- 10 A comprehensive engagement approach continues, with more than 500 dedicated in-person conversations with key partners and residents so far, alongside a wider media/public awareness campaign that has supported more than 1 million reads of Cheshire and Warrington devolution news coverage, with almost 900k impressions across the Cheshire and Warrington devolution social media channels. This work sits alongside a comprehensive and dedicated elected member engagement programme across the three councils.
- 11 A detailed report of communications and engagement activity to date (following the government's consultation) and information regarding the next steps for activity planned up to potential formal council decisions in September, is included as Appendix A to this report.

Budget position

- 12 On 30 May 2025, the Joint Committee approved an overall budget of £1.275m to deliver the Devolution implementation plan. This budget was fully funded by MHCLG Capacity Grant of £1m, further grant funding from the Local Government Association (£25k) and a pre-existing approval to utilise £250k from Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) Enterprise Zone balances for sub-regional activity. This approved funding package was put in place to ensure there would be no direct call on Council budgets, with approvals and budgets phased to ensure that costs would only be incurred when absolutely necessary.

- 13 As at the end of June 2025 total expenditure of £180k had been incurred against expected spend at this stage of £364k. This underspend of £184k has arisen due to several factors including:
- (a) Delays in the MHCLG timeline with approval to proceed following the statutory consultation still outstanding.
 - (b) The resulting rescheduling of the councils' decision-making timetable and the replacement of a two-stage decision making process ('in principle' and 'final'), with a single decision for each council in mid-September.
 - (c) The parliamentary by-election in early May and the associated restrictions on Council activity during the pre-election period.
- 14 Workstream leads have confirmed that expenditure on implementation activities has been postponed reflecting the unavoidable delays in the implementation timetable. Therefore, all unspent budget in the period January to June 2025 will be carried forward to the next quarter with spending plans realigned accordingly. An in-depth review of the budget and the assumed phasing of costs and funding will be undertaken over the next quarter, with the results reported to the Joint Committee at the end of the second quarter, in October 2025. At this stage, it is expected that all necessary costs incurred throughout the implementation period will be contained within the existing approved budget.

Table 1: Budget v Actual Spend as of 30th June 2025

Workstream	Total Budget £	Budget to 30.6.25	Actual Spend		Total Spend £	Budget C/Fwd £
			1.1.25 to 31.3.25	1.4.25 to 30.6.25		
Comms & Engagement	257,899	118,599	24,326	36,336	60,662	197,237
Finance	102,518	14,800	-	6,300	6,300	96,218
Governance	151,068	45,017	3,000	24,308	27,308	123,760
Growth	258,896	70,974	-	7,693	7,693	251,203
Programme Management	246,183	92,611	34,889	43,176	78,065	168,118
Workforce	90,000	22,500	-	-	-	90,000
Contingency	168,435	-	-	-	-	168,435
TOTAL	1,274,999	364,501	62,215	117,813	180,028	1,094,971

Anticipated next steps in the programme.

- 15 High level information sessions have commenced between all the areas in the Devolution Priority Programme and the lead Whitehall Department (MHCLG). These have been generic in nature to date. We expect more detailed engagement on implementation impacts for devolution in Cheshire and Warrington to commence now that we have received confirmation of the Secretary of State decision on the Statutory Consultation.

- 16 There are 6 areas within the Devolution Priority Programme. These are Cheshire and Warrington, Cumbria, Norfolk and Suffolk, Greater Essex, Sussex and Brighton, and Hampshire and the Solent. Aside from Cheshire and Warrington and Cumbria (who have also been given approval to hold Mayoral Elections in 2027), all the other areas are considering concurrent local government reorganisation. We are engaging with these areas, as well as those areas who have recently been through the process of creating a Combined Authority and hosting mayoral elections, to share learning and best practice. We will also be working closely with the Local Government Association to ensure that we provide the support and space for Members to fully explore the implications of devolution.
- 17 Following the 17th July Ministerial Statement, this will now trigger more detailed discussions on a Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Agreement. This will be based on the English Devolution Bill recently introduced to Parliament and outlined in a separate report to this Committee. We expect the agreement to include detail across:
- (a) Powers and functions for a Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority
 - (b) Confirmation of the date that key programmes and powers would be transferred.
 - (c) Governance arrangements
 - (d) The funding offer for Cheshire and Warrington
- 18 We anticipate we will now be in a position to report in detail to the Joint Committee at its August 2025 meeting.
- 19 In parallel with the development of a Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Agreement will be the development of the Statutory Instrument – the legislation that will allow for the creation of a Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority. Whilst this will be primarily a technical document, it will set out the initial core governance and set up arrangements of the new Authority. This will establish how the Mayoral Combined Authority will work – including how it will make decisions across the constituent councils, the role of the Mayor, how it will maintain effective engagement with stakeholders and communities, deliver any statutory duties and ensure transparent and accountable delivery of its powers and funding. Subject to Council decisions, we expect to complete the detail of the Statutory Instrument by the early autumn ahead of the legislation then going through Parliament. This Parliamentary process is expected to run through the autumn into early 2026. A Cheshire and

Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority could be created in the first few months of 2026.

- 20 This Statutory Instrument will be focused on the legislation needed to create a Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority. The legislation that will be required to increase the number of devolution powers and devolved programmes to Cheshire and Warrington is contained within the English Devolution Bill (see separate report) – and will ultimately create a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Cheshire and Warrington.

Local Decision Making

- 21 Officers across the councils, working with the devolution programme team, have been preparing for a number of scenarios in terms of timing and local decision making. Given the 17th July Ministerial Statement, the provisional timeline (which includes a requirement to potentially call additional and/or extraordinary council meetings) is now as follows:
- (a) **Cheshire and Warrington Join Committee:** 29th August 2025.
 - (b) **Cheshire West and Chester Council:** Full Council 9th September 2025, Cabinet 10th September 2025.
 - (c) **Warrington Borough Council:** Full Council 15th September 2025, Cabinet 22nd September 2025.
 - (d) **Cheshire East Council:** Full Council 17th September 2025.
- 22 The purpose of these meetings is to provide each Council's formal consent pursuant to s.110 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. It is proposed that each meeting will receive information on the contents of a Devolution Agreement for Cheshire and Warrington, including devolved powers, functions, timeline and investment package. The detailed recommendations will come to the Joint Committee at its August meeting for consideration and endorsement.
- 23 As Cheshire East Council operates a committee system of governance, its Full Council will be the relevant decision-making body for the purposes of giving its formal consent to the establishment of the Mayoral Combined Authority. As Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils both operate an executive system of governance, each Councils' Cabinet will be the formal decision-making body for the purposes of providing consent.
- 24 Cheshire East's Full Council will therefore receive the report and make a decision as to whether consent is given, whereas Cheshire West and

Chester and Warrington's Full Councils will formally endorse (or otherwise) the proposal and will recommend to each authorities' Cabinet whether or not to give consent to the establishment of the Mayoral Combined Authority. The Cabinets of Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington will thereafter further consider the matter with a view to providing each Council's formal consent.

- 25 Following each Council's decision, if all three Councils approve the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority, the Secretary of State will be informed of the agreement to progress, and the appropriate Orders will then be made through Parliament to create the new Authority.

Exception Reporting and Risk

- 26 As highlighted above, there have been changes to the initial programme outlined in January and May 2025. This shift in the programme can be managed effectively within the agreed work programme (and aligns with the cost plan outlined in the associated report at this meeting). Officers across the Councils have been preparing for this scenario. However, it should be noted that the timeline will be challenging across August and September 2025.
- 27 At the time of writing, all relevant Cheshire and Warrington specific documents from Government which are dependent on the successful outcome of the statutory consents have not yet been shared. However, MHCLG have undertaken detailed briefings and guidance on the content of the English Devolution Bill which has helped to frame preparatory work.
- 28 The risk register is included at Annex B.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 29 This is an information report to ensure the Joint Committee has the latest information on progress across the Devolution Programme and on the anticipated timeline for the creation of a Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority with devolved powers and investment.

Comments from the Business Advisory Board (BAB)

- 30 The Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board is clear: we cannot afford to stall. While we acknowledge the rationale behind the requested delay to the Mayoral Elections until 2027, many in our business community will be frustrated by loss of early momentum. Devolution is not a political distraction – it is an economic imperative. Maintaining progress throughout the summer is vital, and we urge the constituent councils to demonstrate their collective commitment. Full support for the devolution agenda will send a clear signal to Government, and to our

business base, that we are serious about seizing this once-in-generation opportunity.

Other Consultation and Engagement

- 31 A communications and engagement plan is fully operational – this is seeking to ensure that stakeholders across Cheshire and Warrington are fully informed of the process and how they can get involved.
- 32 As the detail of the elements of the timeline outlined in this report emerge, they will be integrated into our communications, supporting effective engagement in the development of a potential Mayoral Combined Authority.
- 33 We will also be looking in detail at the findings of the statutory consultation once these are released by Government, to review and take account of public feedback during the Government's consultation process.

Implications and Comments

Legal implications

- 34 There are no immediate legal implications in this information report albeit the decision-making process should be noted. As each element of the development process for the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority (and its associated governance) is developed, all legal implications will be considered and communicated.

Finance implications

- 35 The financial implications associated with supporting the devolution programme are set out within the report.
- 36 As each element of the development process for the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority (and its associated funding) is developed, all financial implications will be considered and communicated.

Risk Management

- 37 A full risk register is in place and managed via Programme Management, reporting monthly to the Devolution Programme Steering Group. The latest is attached at Annex B.
- 38 The Programme Team will remain in regular contact with Government and ensure that any timeline changes are reflected in on-going programme management.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 39 There are no immediate ED&I impacts. ED&I will be fully reflected in all outcomes across future Devolution Delivery.

Policy

- 40 Any devolution agreement would support the Cheshire and Warrington vision to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and growing economy in the UK.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Gemma Davies, Chair, Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Steering Group/ Director Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council Gemma.Davies@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A: Communications and Engagement Report Appendix B: Risk Register
Background Papers:	Joint Committee Report 31 st January 2025: Devolution Work Programme. Joint Committee Report 30 th May 2025: Devolution Work Programme Highlight Report

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Cheshire +
Warrington

Communications and engagement report

Bringing better jobs,
better transport,
smarter investment
- **now's**
the time.

July 2025



Background



Communications and engagement are critical to the success of devolution in Cheshire and Warrington. We need to ensure that regional stakeholders are fully informed of the process, how they can get involved, and what they can influence.

We have had a planned approach to engaging core stakeholders since September 2024, and we have engaged, at key milestones, with councillors, staff, MPs, relevant committees/boards, businesses, and partner organisations, as well as our residents through a programme of community engagement.

Activity to date – highlights



- Promotion of the government's consultation
- **Launch of ambassador programme** – sharing testimonials and continued engagement with identified ambassadors
- [Devolution newsletter](#) – first issue July 2025
- **Social media** – improving visibility/engagement across Cheshire and Warrington devolution accounts, myth-busting/dispelling misinformation, sharing FAQs etc.
- **Internal communications** – with staff across the three councils/ECW
- **Business engagement** – in partnership with the Business Advisory Board/ECW
- **Member engagement** – programme of activity across three councils/town and parish councils

Communications and engagement –

Key insights



Media coverage

- **34** pieces of news coverage
- **1.04 million** estimated views
- Detailed [CoverageBook report](#)

Community engagement

- 560 individuals engaged
- 453 via community pop-ups
- 64 people engaged via community events
- 43 young people targeted

Top devolution priorities from community engagement

44% - transport
28% - economy
16% - environment
12% - skills

Social media

LinkedIn (May/June):

- 10.5k impressions
- 5.3k members reached
- 6.42% engagement rate
- Followers have grown by 90 to 644
- Increase in re-posts by 18.2%*

Facebook (May/June):

- 189.2k impressions (up by 180%*)
- 81.1k reach (up by 248%*)
- 872 interactions (up by 179%*)

*all % figures compared to March/April

Paid-for advertising:

Promotion of animation

- 51.4k video plays
- 34.8k reach
- 68.2k impressions

Younger people campaign – targeting people aged 21-40

Ongoing – at campaign mid-point:

- 273k reach
- 627k impressions
- 1k link clicks



Community engagement programme



Community engagement is a key part of our overall communications and engagement strategy.

To support with this work, we commissioned an agency – **Social** – to facilitate a programme of community engagement across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington, with a key focus on targeted youth engagement.

A detailed report of this programme of activity follows (slide 9 onwards).



Next steps

- Following this initial phase of communications and engagement activity, we are refreshing our strategy
- Ahead of council votes in September, our focus is on engaging our elected members and communities of influence
- We will continue with myth busting/work to dispel misinformation – this is still common in the feedback we receive, so we must be relentless in correcting misinformation/raising awareness of the benefits of devolution
- Work will also focus on an intensive PR campaign and broadening our community engagement
- **This means...**

Updated strategy



- **Residents, businesses and partners** will understand what devolution is and isn't, the potential benefits, the process and timeline, and how it affects them
- **Staff** will understand what devolution is and isn't, how it affects their roles, the process, and what it means for their organisation
- **Members** will understand what devolution means for their authority and area, and the stages of the devolution process and decision-making, so they are equipped and supported to talk about devolution using consistent messaging
- **Members** will see the feedback of residents, businesses and communities in the evidence base for decision making and devolution priorities
- **All stakeholders** will know how to get involved and have their say and will be able to see that their responses are reflected in local decision-making

Social

Cheshire+
Warrington

Community engagement programme
evaluation and key insights

Purpose of this report

Cheshire and Warrington has been selected by government as one of six areas in England included within its **Devolution Priority Programme (DPP)**. Part of the government's commitment to expanding devolution to all parts of England – as set out in its 2024 Devolution White Paper – the DPP identifies those areas that could form the next wave of strategic mayoral authorities, benefitting from similar devolved powers and investment to the 15 mayoral authorities already established. Subject to statutory consultation, ratification by individual councils, and the laying of an Order in Parliament, this could see the first Mayor for Cheshire and Warrington elected by residents in May 2026.

Social was commissioned by Marketing Cheshire, on behalf of the three councils (Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Warrington Borough Council) progressing the DPP discussions for the area, to undertake **focused engagement with local communities** to inform councils' decision-making and planning in relation to the DPP process. This report provides an overview of the initial phase of engagement activity undertaken and summarises the key findings and conclusions for consideration by members of the councils.



Key insights summary – Cheshire and Warrington-wide

Sentiment about devolution

- ❑ **Awareness of the specific Cheshire and Warrington devolution proposals was very low** across the area. However, awareness of devolution and the work of elected mayors in other areas (especially Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region) was relatively high.
- ❑ **Interest and engagement were also high** – many residents were interested in the proposals and keen to discuss them and ask questions.
- ❑ Initial hesitation about the creation of new political roles was overcome when a **short explanation** was provided about the purpose of devolution. Messages that resonated particularly strongly with residents were around bringing **additional investment** to the area and having a **figurehead** to champion the area's cause nationally. Many residents commented on the positive impact that Andy Burnham and (to a lesser degree) Steve Rotherham were having in their areas – even if they did not share their political views.

“Anything that will bring more investment into the area seems like a good idea to me.”

Resident quote

“If we had a Mayor that was as good as Andy Burnham in championing the area, I would support that.”

Resident quote



Key insights summary – Cheshire and Warrington-wide

Sentiment about devolution – continued

- ❑ **Younger residents** were more likely to have a positive view of devolution than older demographics.
- ❑ Where **concerns about devolution** were expressed, these were mainly in relation to perceived costs to local residents in creating a new strategic mayoral authority, that investment and power would be concentrated in certain areas to the detriment of others, and a general dissatisfaction/disinterest in politics.
- ❑ There was **notable confusion** about the role of an elected mayor/strategic authority in relation to local councils and MPs. There were also misperceptions that devolution meant a merging of councils or a return to previous county council arrangements.

“Why do we need a Mayor? Why can’t we just make the existing council system work better? How will having a Mayor make a difference?”

Resident quote

“Sounds great in theory but there needs to be a plan, good people and collaboration for it to work. We need a Mayor who lives here and understands local issues.”

Resident quote



Key insights summary – Cheshire and Warrington-wide

Priorities for devolution to address

- ❑ **Transport** was by far the biggest priority across the area that residents felt a Mayor could address. Perceived transport inadequacies were an issue across all age brackets and demographics. Issues raised included:
 - Transport for education (especially FE) and leisure purposes among younger people
 - Bus services – especially Sunday services, connections to/from rural communities, and provision for older people
 - Road congestion – especially among commuters/those of working age
 - Connectivity with Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region
- ❑ The **economy** was the second biggest priority area for residents across the area, with particular emphasis on revitalising town and village centres, investment in places that residents feel have been neglected in recent years, and support for local small businesses.

“Buses are few and far between and we have to rely too heavily on cars to get anywhere.”

Resident quote

“We need to do something about all the empty shops and invest to keep our towns alive.”

Resident quote



Key insights summary – Cheshire and Warrington-wide

Priorities for devolution to address

- ❑ Lower numbers of people mentioned the **environment** as a key priority. When mentioned, this was primarily in the context of improving local environments (for example, addressing fly-tipping or rubbish) or concerns around over-development. Very few people mentioned climate change and net zero as priorities, despite the significant investment and employment opportunities in low carbon industries in the area.
- ❑ **Skills and employment support** was the lowest-rated priority among residents and communities, however, this could be at least partly explained by the demographics of participants as a clear majority of residents who took part in the community engagement activities were of an older working age or post-retirement demographic, for whom skills and employment support is less likely to be an issue.

“The environment is a big priority for me. We have to protect our green spaces and address flood risks.”

Resident quote

“We need more of a focus on skills to get young people into jobs, not into trouble.”

Resident quote



Key insights summary – Cheshire and Warrington-wide

Priorities for devolution to address

- ❑ Although mentioned significantly less frequently than transport, a lack of **affordable housing** in the area was also mentioned in all three council areas. There was particular concern about housing affordability for young people, who might be priced out of the area they grew up in, and those on lower incomes.
- ❑ **Large numbers of residents** cited issues that would not be within the direct control of a mayoral authority as their top concern. Local NHS services (availability of GP appointments and access to hospital care) were of particular concern, along with a view that investment in local amenities (particularly healthcare facilities) must go together with new housing development.

“We must protect the green belt, but we need more affordable housing across the region – especially social housing.”

Resident quote

“We can’t continue increasing the number of houses without investment in public services. I just want to be able to get a GP appointment!”

Resident quote



Social

Community engagement

Community engagement – approach

Community engagement delivered by Social consisted of:

- ❑ **Community pop-up events** – three community pop-up events were held in May – one in each of the three council areas. These consisted of market stalls in town centres, held as part of local makers'/artisan markets to take advantage of higher levels of footfall. Display boards were created, providing summary information about key aspects of the area's devolution proposals, along with takeaway postcards that included a QR code link to the dedicated Cheshire and Warrington devolution website. Insights were captured on post-it notes, and residents were also asked to vote on their top devolution priority using a token voting system.
- ❑ **Community engagement events** – three community focus groups were also held (again, one in each council area), to allow for more in-depth discussion about the devolution proposals and the issues local people would like to see addressed. In Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, these consisted of public events, promoted to residents via council channels, including local press releases, social media, and emails to virtual Citizens' Panel mailing lists. In Warrington, a small-group discussion involving representatives of community organisations was held, with participants invited directly to reflect a broad range of community interests. At each event, there was a short presentation about the devolution proposals by elected members and senior officers, followed by an interactive discussion facilitated by Social.



Community vox pops

Across the three community pop-up events, Social captured a number of vox-pop interviews featuring Cheshire and Warrington residents sharing their views about the devolution proposals in their own words:

[Watch the video on the Cheshire and Warrington website](#)



Social

Youth engagement

Overview

With almost 1 million residents, young people aged 17 and under equate to circa 20% of Cheshire and Warrington's population.

What matters most to this group now will play significant role in the area's future. Capturing their views will ensure they benefit from, and contribute towards devolution, allowing future generations to inherit a sustainable, inclusive and well-connected place to live, work and play.



Youth engagement – overall summary

- Engaging with a wide variety of youth voices, both in these early stages and as a future combined authority is essential. Our approach, which included politics students in Crewe and Warrington Youth Zone's 'Young Leaders', helped to identify clear priority patterns, as well as unique priorities within each area.
- Career-minded young people (**26%**) feel opportunities in the area do not meet their aspirations. With the potential to become the most productive area in the North by 2045, devolution could realise this ambition. However, the creation of more innovative, high-quality jobs will be essential to inspire young people to build their futures here.
- Health, both physical and mental, is an emerging priority for young people across all three areas, with particular concern around access to, and support from, local services – particularly highlighting their value within smaller towns. As outlined in the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES), devolution offers a pathway to address these challenges and could help raise life expectancies above the national average by 2045, creating a healthier, more resilient area for the long-term.
- Shopping and retail is a priority for **64%** of young people. Despite town centres being less important, young people shared the value of having somewhere to spend time with their friends outside of education.

Methodology overview

The local engagement programme delivered by Social ran for an approximate six-week period, from 4 May to 13 June 2025. This timeframe was determined by the government's DPP process, with engagement beginning after the government's own statutory consultation into the area's devolution proposals (which ran from 17 February to 13 April 2025) and before the submission of papers to the three Cheshire and Warrington councils to determine whether the councils wish to proceed with the proposed devolution arrangements.

The community engagement programme, which Social was commissioned to undertake, identified three strands of activity, with tailored engagement methods and approaches designed to meet the needs of three key local audiences:

- 1. Local residents and communities**
- 2. Young people**
- 3. Businesses and stakeholders**



Methodology overview

Due to constraints on the engagement programme as a result of the government's DPP process and timeframe, it was agreed to **prioritise resident/community and young people's engagement** through the initial six-week period of work delivered by Social.

The three councils and partners, including Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, have already undertaken substantial briefings and engagement with key stakeholders and business representatives across the area and, as such, it was decided that the **stakeholder and business engagement strand** of activity would be more effectively undertaken later in the year, once details of specific devolved powers and investment for Cheshire and Warrington have been confirmed by government.

Resident and youth engagement activity was **replicated in all three council areas**, ensuring a representative and reflective view from all parts of the area and that local nuances could be captured and presented to the respective councils.



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Risk Register

Reference No	Risk Description	Raised by	Without Mitigations		RAG status	Status	Proposed Mitigation	With Mitigations		RAG status	Responsible	Status (Open, Closed)	Actions	
			Probability (1-5)	Impact (1-5)				Probability (1-5)	Impact (1-5)					
R001	Member engagement: Waiting until summer/autumn 2025 for formal decisions from Councils is an added risk, with considerable work (and associated costs) being undertaken prior to that date.	PM	3	4	7		Clarity on local decision making and interim arrangements. Note timing of evaluation of Stat Consult - needs to feed into decisions. It will also be important that appropriate non-JC Members are engaged as much as possible in both process and in the development of the thematic work of the Devo Programme.	2	4	6	SR/MJ	Open	Proposed dates agreed for Full Council meetings in September. Member support group operational. Cross party, cross council meetings planned. Bespoke devo meetings in member forward plans.	
R002	Failure to deliver consistent comms and engagement across whole programme. Disengaged Members, business and stakeholders in development of thematic work will lead to lack of ownership and 'buy-in' as well as poor narrative.	PM	2	4	6		Embed comms plan across Programme and build in engagement time to content development.	2	2	4	EL/KM	Open	Comms plan agreed. Additional support for delivery now in place. Regular newsletter developed.	
R003	Development of Agreement: Truncating the development work phase (through a fast-track approach to analysis and appraisal) increases the risk of not fully understanding all operational implications – leading to confusion and potential failure of delivery.	PM	4	3	7		The work to achieve this phase would need to be condensed into a short timeframe, probably requiring additional support (and cost). Devo content workstream tasked with this - additional PM resourced to move at pace. Whitehall engagement commenced. More templated approach than expected which will support work required.	3	3	6	SR	Open	Initial timeline now shared from MHCLG. Information expected to flow post stat consult decision. Additional PM support in place.	
R004	Content: Fast-tracking the work to fully develop content – and specifically how the CA will undertake its operations – increases the risk that either the C&W devolution proposal will not pass Government due diligence or that the CA will not be able to function effectively in its first years.	PM	3	4	7		Due diligence will be conducted by relevant Whitehall Departments who are devolving programmes (e.g. DfE, MHCLG and DfT). It should be noted that there is also likely to be a significant performance management requirement, at least in the early years of the CA. Latest timetable front ends basic governance with detail on content to follow late 2025 and into 2026 whilst EDB goes through parliament. This will give additional time for set-up. Proposal to extend election gives additional time for set-up and assurance.	2	3	5	SR/PJ/VW	Open	Work in progress - note Assurance Framework requirement.	
R005	Finance: Development costs will not be forthcoming from MHCLG until Council consent in place (autumn 2025). Cash flow will be needed. A truncated timeline may increase (at risk) costs. Spending Review not complete until Summer 2025.	PM	4	4	8		Full budget plan in place (agreed by JC on 30/05/25). Utilise EZ surplus and LGA grant. Letter of confirmation for development costs now received from MHCLG. Financial modelling to commence as part of TOM work. Confirmation received that Mayoral Election costs borne by CA.	4	3	7	PJ/SW	Open	Finance workstream managing all budget and spend principles.	
R007	C&W capacity/resource: Given the limited time for transition to the CA, there could be impacts on recruitment and the potential for challenge during any HR process from impacted staff (which may also add delay to 'go live').	PM	2	3	5		Workforce workstream leading. Staff FAQs agreed and circulated. Capacity review now taking place. Likely focus on statutory posts only in first instance - subject to completion of TOM. Ensuring engagement of unions.	2	2	4	GH	Open	Workforce Engagement Board established and meeting regularly.	
R008	MHCLG capacity/Resource: MHCLG have a challenging timeline to meet requirements across supporting all 6 DPP areas. Timelines have slipped.	PM	4	4	8		We continue to be concerned by lack of pace. Anticipating this will improve now that the statutory test process is complete. We are still awaiting detailed information - but expect this to arrive before Summer recess.	3	4	7	SR/DC	Open	Escalated concerns of delay to officials and Minister.	

R009	Staff retention: Given the levels of uncertainty for staff with Devolution potentially impacting them directly. There are concerns around staff retention over the next 12- 18 months until the CA is established and impact on staff is clear.	PM	3	4	7	No immediate impacts - ensuring regular communicaitons with all staff.	1	1	2	GH	Open	
R010	Consistent internal communications across all four organisations: Ensure consistent messages coming out of and across all four organisations is clear and consistent to prevent mis communication, confusion and lack of clarity.	PM	2	3	5	Additional resource in place in Comms and Engagement	2	2	4	CO	Open	Newsletter and staff FAQs
R012	External impacts: Managing the impacts of external factors which are not within the programme - but have direct implications: E.g. Unanticipated election (by-election) and Best Value Notices.	PM	3	4	7	Programme Management to work with partners to understand impacts and seek additional mitigation actions. For example, change to programme timeline and review of capacity implications.	2	3	5	SR/DC	Open	
R013					0				0			
R014					0				0			
R015					0				0			
R016					0				0			
R017					0				0			
R018												
R019												
R020												

JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2025/26
Version July 2025

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
B	29 th August 2025	Cheshire West & Chester Council. Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 OBG.	Devolution related business	To consider a future Devolution Agreement and Mayoral Combined Authority and endorse recommendations to Councils.	Cllr Louise Gittins	Gemma Davies	
A			ECW related business	TBC	TBC	TBC	
B			Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy	To consider results of consultation and strategy	TBC	Philip Cox	
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction	Cllr Louise Gittins	Gemma Davies	
B	26 th September 2025	Cheshire East Council Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.	Devolution related business	TBC			
A			ECW related business	TBC			

PART A/B	Joint Committee Date	Host & Venue	Title (draft where not complete)	Purpose of Report	Member Lead	Officer Lead	NOTES
A/B			Joint Committee Forward Plan	Update and seek direction			