

Cheshire West and Chester Council Helping the Borough Thrive

Thriving Economy



A great place to do business

The following document summarises how the outcome outlined above will be achieved by 2020 in a context of significantly reduced resources. The plan provides a clear overview of the major transformational elements over the upcoming years to ensure that customers and communities experience the best possible outcomes.



Your Outcome

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What is the problem we are trying to solve?

Strong businesses are a vital part of sustaining a strong economy, providing valuable jobs and a good quality of life. Creating the right conditions to support the success and growth of local businesses is an important role for the Council as well as encouraging inward investment. There are many benefits to having a strong, balanced and resilient business base including generating business rates to help fund local services.

The Council plays a major role in supporting local business through many of its functions;

- approach to business support and advice
- supporting the development of skills in the local population
- providing premises and environment for growth
- regulatory services to support business' activities
- investing in development and regeneration programmes
- promoting inward investment opportunities
- functions in planning and housing
- supporting transport and digital connectivity infrastructure

Increasingly, the Council works with neighbouring councils, stakeholders and the private sector to ensure actions are well-targeted and coordinated.

What are we good at?

We know locally that:

- The area starts from a strong position. From 2009 to 2013 there was a 52.5% increase in business start-ups which is greater than the national average of 47.7%.
- There are over 15,900 businesses that employ over 149,000 people in Cheshire West and Chester. Working with businesses needs to be done in the most efficient and effective ways possible with the resources we have available and we must engage partners to contribute.
- There are c. 15,000 people employed in key growth sector businesses – that is those that undertake higher value activities, usually pay higher salaries, and invest in their workforce and supply chain. Working with businesses in these sectors is a priority as is building on the sector strengths of the borough.
- We have continued on a downtrend of unemployment and are below the national average. 18.6% of those claiming Job seekers allowance have been doing so for more than 12 months. Mental health conditions amongst claimants have increased in recent years, particularly in some hot spot areas of the borough. There are a number of individuals who face a range of barriers to the labour market and there are strong relationships between health issues and unemployment which need tackling collectively.

- We are targeting an increase of 5,000 jobs and at least £500 million of new private sector investment in the borough by 2020. Between 2013 and 2016, 4399 new jobs were created and we achieved £541 million of investment. We recognise that the private sector will drive these targets but we need to be committed to working alongside our private sector partners to maximise growth opportunities and ensure our actions are supporting the conditions to enable business investment.
- We have 4 place programmes with ambitious investment programmes over the next 4 years including major town centre schemes, employment growth and infrastructure projects. This includes working cross border with North Wales through the Mersey Dee Alliance and with Cheshire East, Stoke and Staffordshire on the Constellation Partnership. Managing the capital programme on a reduced level and the need to future plan investment strategically will become increasingly important working on a sub-regional level. The Council also have a key part to play in driving regeneration and providing quality advice to business, and use its buildings to support new enterprises.
- There Council is committed to supporting ways to boost the local economy and enable ambitious growth plans, significantly contributing to the Northern Powerhouse agenda.

What areas do we need to improve on?

- ✓ **Ensure** that this success is felt across all areas of the borough. The numbers of new medium-sized enterprise are slightly below the regional figure. This shows that despite great progress, more could be done to support, encourage and expand small and medium enterprises in the borough to promote business start-ups and increase job opportunities. Further action could also be taken to support businesses to increase exports and productivity by building in resilience.
- ✓ **Improve** the support and advice that we offer to local businesses by bringing together the range of services that are currently provided on a sub-regional footprint. This integrated offer will improve the coordination of advice, and will offer more holistic support to local business as well as meeting local needs by shaping support locally. This will include actions like reviewing support and interventions for small and medium size businesses and working with our sub-regional partners to deliver the best business support possible within the resources we have;
- ✓ **Make** sure our corporate services are fully integrated within the sub-regional growth hub. This will include rolling out our successful Growth Advocates programme and working with internal departments such as planning, trading standards and environmental health to address the needs of local business, and support economic growth;
- ✓ **Explore** issues of economic growth at a sub-regional level through the proposals for closer working. This will involve working increasingly with our neighbouring councils of Warrington and Cheshire East but also involve working closely with other councils particularly in North Wales, Staffordshire and Stoke on joint projects for business growth. Key priorities will be to work with the Cheshire and Warrington business growth hub, to maximise the opportunities from the Northern Powerhouse and ensure we are positioned as a key player within it, maximise the benefits of major infrastructure improvements including high speed rail, national road schemes and increasing digital connectivity and smart cities. We will also aim to improve relationships with all our neighbouring councils;

- ✓ **Invest** in regeneration across the borough.
 - In Chester city centre through schemes including the Northgate development and new cultural centre, which will support businesses in the borough by investing in the city's retail and cultural core. Ensure the city is as connected as possible to neighbouring economic hubs, particularly by rail and continues to perform as a centre of Financial Services excellence;
 - **Deliver** the Barons Quay development in Northwich which will help to develop a thriving retail and leisure quarter in the town. This development of more than 30,000 square feet will include restaurants, cafes and shops, and is expected to create 1,500 jobs in the borough. Deliver the Townscape Heritage scheme for the town centre and re-develop Weaver Square;
 - **Continue** the regeneration of Ellesmere Port to encourage investment and local employment opportunities in the town. In recent years, there has been a £41 million investment in the college campus, £60 million investment in the flagship Marks and Spencer store, as well as the new leisure complex and school academy. Plans over the next few years include delivering a new Public Services hub in the town centre, which brings a number of public agencies together in one place and unlocks wider regeneration opportunities in the town centre, working with partners to improve the waterfront area and continuing to promote investment opportunities for employment and housing;
 - **Implement** the Winsford Masterplan which focuses on reinvigorating the town centre, expansion of the industrial estate and creating a single identity for the town by improving connections and encouraging movement across it. Investment in HS2 and the growth benefits of the Constellation Partnership will be particularly important for Winsford, Northwich, Middlewich and parts of our rural area;
 - **Deliver** prioritised actions to support and grow the economy in rural areas, this includes improving connectivity between our businesses and communities in rural areas and with urban centres, working with the business base and key sectors in the rural area to support their growth and help to address their needs, and promoting and sustainably exploiting the natural assets of the borough and region.
- ✓ **Use** Council assets and properties to attract businesses and investment. This will include the Council's investment in the redevelopment of Watling Street and Weaver Square in Northwich;
- ✓ **Continue** to work successfully with our range of partners and stakeholders including the BIDs, Mersey Dee Alliance, the LEP and our development boards to maximise the opportunities of working jointly with the private sector to drive growth.
- ✓ **Work** with local employers and skills providers to ensure that the skills supply meets demand both now and in the future and help to equip local residents to benefit from emerging job opportunities. This also includes facilitating collaboration between employers

and schools to help build the future workforce and increasing the take up of apprenticeships in the borough;

- ✓ **Integrate** our approach to supporting residents into sustainable employment. Based on delivery through our Work Zones model, this means; providing targeted support to unemployed adults that maximises their chances of entering and sustaining work; working with employers to provide them with a coherent and systematic programme of support to recruit from a well prepared pool of local labour; and focusing on adults in insecure, low paid jobs and older adults to support them in work and help them to progress;

How do we compare now?

In terms of business start-ups in the borough, the latest annual figure was 1,935 in Cheshire West. It's expected that by 2020, there will be a 40% increase in the number of businesses surviving across the borough compared to 2016.

Of these new business start-ups, the businesses in Cheshire West surviving into year 2 are 77% in comparison to 75.8% of Cheshire East businesses and Warrington 77.4%. This is in line with the average in England of 73.9%.

The levels of gross value added (GVA) across the borough in Cheshire West is £27,900 measured as income per head of population. In Cheshire East the GVA is £29,984 and in Warrington £30,495. The growth projections show an increase for Cheshire West of 3.5% based on the median growth rate 2004-2014. This presents as 4.3% for Cheshire East and 2.1% in Warrington.

The unemployment rates across Cheshire West among our residents are decreasing, currently presented at 3.8% with a projected further decrease by 2020. This is lower than the regional and national averages of 4.4%. These figures are based on the economically active population (16+) .

The JSA claimant data from November 2015 on the resident population counts for long term unemployment is 585 (0.3%) of population aged 16-64. The local authorities across the region have a comparative JSA count in Cheshire East of 630/0.3% and 535/0.4% in Warrington. Cheshire West are aiming to reduce this to 206 (0.1%) by 2020 of working age population of 16-64. Cheshire East is aiming to reduce by 227/0.1% and Warrington 261 (0.2%).

What will good look like?

- An increasing business base and new investment into our borough
- Businesses providing sustainable jobs for our residents
- Economic inclusion for our residents
- Residents and businesses will recognise the council as leaders and influences in delivering economic growth
- An intelligence led approach to decision making and policy shaping
- Strong and effective partnerships with public, private, community and voluntary organisations to deliver the growth agenda
- Consistent 'Open for business' approach and responsive to customer needs
- Always acting as advocates for growth

- Optimising strategic relationships to deliver efficient and effective services
- An openness to innovative approaches to growth – new ways of working
- Higher levels of business start-ups, survivals and growth
- Increased levels of productivity
- Reduction in average length of time to pay providers
- Our local economy grows in underperforming areas

Resources and Partners that will help us to get there:

The Key Council services or functions and Partners that will support the delivery of this outcome are:

Key Services or Functions	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Growth • Growth Strategy • Planning and Strategic Transport • Skills and Employment • Regeneration • Regulatory Services • Capital Delivery • Housing • Education • Health • Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development board (Chester, Mid Cheshire, Ellesmere Port and Rural) • Local Enterprise Partnership • Cheshire East Council • Warrington Council • Chambers of Commerce • Employers • Developers • Job Centre Plus/DWP • UK Trade and Investment • University of Chester • West Cheshire College • Mid Cheshire College • Mersey Dee Alliance • BIS/CLG

By 2020 we are planning to see a surplus of £7.2 million a year on this priority which will be reinvested into services. We will also invest £28 million into capital schemes that support this priority.

What have we already achieved?

Since this Outcome Plan was first agreed in 2016 we have already achieved a number of key actions through the work of all of our partners. These key achievements include:

A Public Sector Assets Board is in place and operating effectively.	A new integrated planning process is in place.	Sub-regional joint strategic transport team is now in place.
North Wales and Mersey Dee Partnership collaborating on priority areas.	The refreshed Growth Strategy and Area Programmes have been agreed and are in place.	Phase 1 of the Winsford Master Plan has been completed to budget.
A refreshed Strategic Economic Plan for Cheshire and Warrington was published in July 2017.	High-level Skills Plan in place and implementation of the agreed actions has commenced.	Approval of Local Growth Fund conditional offer in place for delivering employment land.
Phases 1 and 2 of development work at Barons Quay have been completed.	The Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone is in place and delivering against the portfolio.	Phase 3 of the Work Zones Programme, focused on local employer needs, is in place.

How we will measure our impact on the outcome:

KPI	Measure	Baseline	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target
KPI	Increase the number of business start-ups in CWAC (two year time lag, ONS data)	1,715	1,900	2,000
KPI	Increase the proportion of new businesses, over £68,000 turnover, surviving beyond two years (two year time lag, ONS data)	76%	79%	80%
-	Amount of new investment secured through council-lead programmes (City Place, Science Corridor, Mid-Cheshire and ERDF workspace)	-	1	1
-	Amount of commercial floor space created by CWaC and partner schemes (Northgate, Barons Quay, Winsford Industrial; Ellesmere Port Enterprise Zone, City Place)	-	150,000	160,000
-	Proportion of commercial floor space occupied in CWaC and partner schemes (Northgate, Barons Quay, Winsford Industrial; Ellesmere Port Enterprise Zone, City Place)	-	67%	67%

KPI	Measure	Baseline	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target
-	Increase the number of businesses directly supported through the Economic Growth Service	-	480	500
-	Increase the number of businesses to whom consultancy services provided	5	100	200
-	Increase the number of businesses with whom the Council has a Primary Authority Agreement	4	7	8
-	Increase the proportion of businesses that achieve a hygiene rating of 5 on initial inspection	55%	70%	80%
KPI	Increase the rate of people in CWaC who are employed (Annual Population Survey data based on population aged 16-64, 6 month time lag on publication)	72.7%	74.0%	75.0%
KPI	Decrease unemployment among CWaC residents (Annual Population Survey data based on economically active population aged 16, 6 month time lag on publication)	4.3%	3.7%	3.5%
-	Maintain the number of job starts via CWaC Work Zones	-	480	480
-	Number of apprenticeship starts amongst 16-18 year olds in the borough (Apprentices that are 16-18 years old at the start of the apprenticeship)	3,255	5,500	6,500
-	Increase the level of Gross Value Added (GVA) – measured as income per head of population at current basic prices (18 month time lag)	£25,812	Increase at least above rate of inflation	Increase at least above rate of inflation

How we will deliver our outcomes:

Strategic Theme	Key initiatives
1. Operate more effectively across the Cheshire and Warrington sub region to drive growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure agreement on key areas for the borough, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housing and employment investment ○ Transport and infrastructure ○ Skills ○ Business support ○ Public Sector assets / one public estate ○ Mersey Dee Economic Axis ○ Constellation Partnership ○ Science Corridor • Continue to work more collaboratively across the sub-region • Take a lead role in the Northern Powerhouse discussions and

Atlantic Gateway		
Key actions:	Action Deadline	Action Owners
A.9.1.1 - Agree detailed propositions with Central Government, including sustainable future for business growth.	December 2018	Director of Places Strategy Senior Manager - Economic Growth
A.9.1.2 - Prioritisation of economic activity around transport and skills through Growth Track 360 and Mersey Dee Alliance	December 2018	Senior Officer – MDA Senior Officer – Growth Track 360
A.9.1.3 - Identify sites of skills expertise (further and higher level skills) and explore how they could be accessed by learners and employers across the region (including cross-border)	September 2017 and annually reviewed	Senior Officer Employment Strategies Senior Officer – MDA
A.9.1.4 – Sub-regional skills delivery model agreed	March 2019	Director of Places Strategy
A.9.1.5 - Joint property vehicle fully in place across wider public sector	March 2019	Director of Places Strategy
A.9.1.6 - Refresh strategic policies and priorities	March 2020	Director of Places Strategy

Strategic Theme	Key initiatives
2. Deliver the regeneration programmes including business and skills support to drive business growth and local employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus the development boards to ensure they are well placed to oversee new area based regeneration programmes • Fully engage with the Northern Gateway Development Zone ensuring the benefits of HS2 extend to Cheshire West particularly in the communities of Winsford and Northwich • Mersey Dee Alliance – focus on key cross border transport and skills initiatives • Deliver the Public Service Hub in Ellesmere Port and secure the wider regeneration of the area • Implement the Winsford Masterplan • Deliver the Barons Quay development in Northwich • Deliver the Northgate development in Chester • Design and deliver a comprehensive programme of regeneration for rural areas • Actively ensure that the area based review of FE skills provision meets local priorities and business needs • Develop a new social value policy framework to ensure that the Council’s purchasing power encourages local employment and local supply chains

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with delivery partners to promote Cheshire West and Chester as an attractive investment location • Work with the Business Growth Hub and local partners to increase the number of successful small and medium size enterprises • Support the next phase of the Workzones with a specific focus on in work employment progression and health related worklessness • Implement the Cheshire Science Corridor ensuring that Ellesmere Port fully utilises its Assisted Area and Enterprise Zone status 	
Key Actions:	Action Deadline	Action Owners
A.9.2.1 - Deliver the actions contained within the refreshed Growth Strategy under the priorities of Enterprise & Business; Infrastructure; Employment & Skills; Enabling Behaviours.	December 2018	Senior Manager - Economic Growth Growth Strategy Programme Manager
A.9.2.2 - Deliver each of the regeneration programme action plans	March 2020	Regeneration Programme Managers
A.9.2.3 - Update town centre master plan for Ellesmere Port including the Shared Public Services Hub	July 2018	Senior Manager - Economic Growth Regeneration Programme Manager
A.9.2.4 - Redevelopment of Watling Street and interim works to Weaver Square in Northwich	December 2018	Regeneration Programme Manager
A.9.2.5 - Delivery of phase 2 of the Winsford Masterplan	March 2019	Regeneration Programme Manager
A.9.2.6 - Delivery of the Northgate Development	March 2020	Director of Places Strategy
A.9.2.7 - Implement the key priority projects identified in the rural action plan	2017/18 and ongoing	Regeneration Programme Manager
A.9.2.8 – Implement actions from Growth Strategy with partners across the Constellation Partnership.	March 2020	Director of Places Strategy
A.9.2.9 - Refresh Development Boards and review model of delivery	March 2019	Senior Manager – Economic Growth

Strategic Theme	Key initiatives
3. Ensure all council services are integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement the new customer focused approach to planning applications and investigate conditions for skills

<p>in the sub-regional growth hub</p>	<p>plans to be included in planning permissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and consultancy service for regulatory services and link to business support service • Fully utilise the Council’s commercial property and markets to support business growth including specific support for small and start-up businesses, end user facilities and serviced plots • Optimise use of the Council’s own assets to support economic growth • Continue to improve the Councils growth advocates programme to ensure all council services understand the benefits and opportunities of business growth • Embed the new business growth hub, bringing together a range of business support services under one umbrella • Develop a targeted approach to developing the skills support for priority sectors • Work closely with other services to look at how we use business rate flexibilities and support for Business Improvement Districts • Work closely with transport colleagues to link new jobs and growth to sustainable travel routes • Further utilise skills and intelligence to address inequalities across the borough
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Key Actions:	Action Deadline	Action Owners
A.9.3.1 - Improve relationships with Town and Parish Councils to foster a better understanding of the development process.	Ongoing	Senior Manager – Planning and Strategic Transport
A.9.3.2 - Growth Advocates programme continues following review and refresh.	Refresh annually	Growth Strategy Programme Manager
A.9.3.3 - New business premises created under the ERDF and property re-investment programme.	36,000 sq. ft. new premises by September 2018	Growth Strategy Programme Manager Asset Manager
A.9.3.4 - Review the new integrated Planning process.	December 2018	Senior Manager - Planning and Strategic Transport
A.9.3.5 - New Business premises created by Phase 2 of Property Reinvestment Programme.	45,000 sq. ft. new premises by March 2019	Senior Manager – Asset Management and Development
A.9.3.6 - Provision of serviced plots phases 1 and 2 on Winsford Industrial Estate.	10 acres by March 2019 10 acres by March 2020	Regeneration Programme Manager Senior Manager – Asset Management and Development
A.9.3.7 - Develop and introduce a range of value-added regulation and compliance services	March 2019	Regulatory Services Manager Business Excellence

		Lead
A.9.3.8 - Explore trading options for regulation and compliance, including within the option of an alternative delivery mechanism	March 2019	Regulatory Services Manager Business Excellence Lead

Risks

Risk	Mitigation	Owner
Market and commercial risks – economic downturns and low productivity	Building in resilience, strong and balanced economic sectors, supporting higher productivity sectors	Director of Places Strategy
Political – working across the local authorities with different plans and leadership	Communication strategy, early buy-in to key decisions	Director of Places Strategy Senior Manager - Economic Growth
Financial – reducing capital budgets, revenue budgets and removal of national business support programmes	Targeting resources appropriately, local capacity to respond	Director of Places Strategy Senior Manager - Economic Growth Senior Manager – Asset Management and Development
Major projects are held back in delivery due to lack of viability, commercial interest, escalating costs	Robust programme management and the relevant skills invested in major projects. Investment tools and delivery models in place.	Director of Places Strategy Director of Place Commissioning & Commercial Management
Lack of capacity in existing physical infrastructure to support growth and reducing funding sources to deliver new infrastructure	Strategic transport plans. Investment plan that is thorough to take advantage of any opportunities for funding.	Director of Places Strategy Senior Manager – Planning and Strategic Transport

Interdependencies

Programme / Project / Activity	Describe the dependency
Well-connected and accessible borough	Infrastructure is a key component in our regeneration programmes. Ensuring that people and businesses are well connected areas of employment, suppliers, markets, homes, schools, leisure facilities etc. This includes transport infrastructure and digital connectivity.

<p>Well educated and decent living</p>	<p>Well educated and decent living - Increasing business base provides increasing job opportunities for our residents. Ensuring the resident working population has the right skills at the right levels to meet the employment needs of businesses. Having good schools attracts inward investors to an area.</p>
<p>Cleanest, safest and most sustainable neighbourhoods in the country</p>	<p>Improving the borough as a place to live and work.</p>
<p>Quality and affordable housing</p>	<p>Providing the right tenure of housing in the right locations sits alongside providing employment opportunities and creating a healthy vibrant place to live.</p>
<p>Vibrant and healthy communities with inclusive leisure, heritage and culture</p>	<p>This is hugely important to encourage business growth but also to attracting new investors.</p>